FACT AND FIGURE: THE RHETORICITY OF THE DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

The least remarked of sociological practices is the one without which its investigations would come to a standstill: the writing up of research results, both theoretical and substantive. This inattention is dependent upon a widely held view of writing as a technical apparatus which is more or less competently employed by researchers to represent those features of the social world with which they are concerned. The question addressed is whether and to what extent this commonplace commits sociology to a very old version of representation and a companion account of the true, which when expressed in other idioms are readily identified as problematic. With the aid of a type of analysis known as deconstruction, it is shown that a technical construal of writing is inseparable from and indispensable to the construction of fact, and thus to the very idea of documentation as a sheerly mimetic or descriptive relation of writing to a referent. The idea of a document is accordingly treated as the most powerful expression of a largely unacknowledged system of sense-making organizing sociological discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rhetoricity of the Document

> But, it is said, melody is merely a succession of sounds. No doubt. And drawing is only an arrangement of colors. An orator uses ink to write out his compositions: does that mean ink is a very eloquent liquid? (Rousseau, in Derrida 1976:209)

It will be the task of the thesis as a whole to rise in a particular way to the occasion of Rousseau's epigrammatic reminder that there is more to composition than meets the eye. The following must therefore content itself with giving brief indications of the value of such a consideration for sociology. Certainly questions concerning the premises and effects of scholarly writing have been providing material for a variety of analyses, and lively debate, elsewhere. The American philosopher Richard Rorty for example has taken analytic philosophy to task for organizing its accounts around a naive 'foundationalism' which promotes an equally naive correspondence version of truth and representation (e.g. Rorty 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984b, 1985a, 1985b). With others' analyses (e.g. Cavell 1985; Daniel 1982; Danto 1980, 1982, 1985; Davidson 1978; Hacking 1984, 1985; Lang 1983; MacIntyre 1977, 1984; Rorty 1983; Taylor 1984b) this attention to the production of philosophical accounts has found counterparts in studies of economic argument (Gudeman 1984; McCloskey 1985), historiography (Boucher 1985; Canary and Kozicki 1978; Condren 1982; Dover 1983; White 1973, 1978, 1980, 1982) and political theory (Connolly 1983; Sandel 1984; Shapiro 1984), among others. Taken together, such works argue forcefully for attending more closely to the letters of our respective laws. It is a recent exercise in sociological composition, however, which brings these issues into focus on more familiar territory.

In his <u>Matters of Fact</u> (1979), the sociologist Stanley Raffel poses a number of questions concerning the routine conduct of sociological investigation and the equally routinized assumptions which support it. These questions take on particular significance in relation to two recent developments. The first is a widely diagnosed malaise within the discipline which has been finding expression in the use of such terms as 'crisis', 'indirection', 'chronic disagreement', 'cross-talk', 'non-communication' and the like. The second, not unrelated, is the increasing use of such phrases as 'post-empiricism', 'post-positivism' and 'the postmodern', along with such designations as 'metatheory' and 'meta-analysis', to indicate if not the deed then the desirability of leaving behind what has been ailing us and getting on with more important matters: matters of fact, which as Raffel points out have come largely to define sociology's self-understanding.

Crediting this compelling sense of malaise (as well as the desire to rectify it) Raffel makes a strong case for its being, not an accident that befalls sociology from outside, but a consequence that is built into its routines and thus a function of their very exercise. In what is an extremely fine-grained analysis, Raffel applies to sociology one of sociology's most productive insights, namely, that it is in the most obvious and taken-for-granted of practices and artifacts that one is apt to find the most powerful and unexamined workings of a tradition or institutional arrangement that would elsewhere elicit questioning. Sociology's is a peculiar self-understanding, Raffel suggests, for if its world is liberally, perhaps even too liberally populated with phenomena, there is also one phenomenon which is supposed to be absent from it at all times: the sociologist, in his capacity as an observer. "We need", says Raffel,

> a rendering of the standard normative order of social science which methodically selects and distinguishes truth-producing scientific recording, apparently on the basis of presence and absence (1979:13)

It is in the routine practice of observation and its artifact, the record or the

document, that this system of presence and absence is most powerfully operative, expressing and perpetuating a very old idea that representation is a relation of words to things.

Raffel's analysis converges in a potentially instructive way with those of a school of contemporary French philosophy which has come to be known as "deconstruction". Its chief practitioner, Jacques Derrida, has suggested that the common construal of writing as mere notation or as a technical apparatus is the last and most powerful of Western ethnocentrisms (Derrida 1976). This is a provocative challenge to the interests of the social sciences in accounting for the institutional configurations of modern societies.

For present purposes, the connexion the thesis intends to explore is that between a technical or notational view of writing and what Raffel terms "truth-producing scientific recording" as embodied in the document. Observation as the process of documentation of phenomena would then depend upon an opposition that the idea of a record already implies -- the opposition of literal or technical, and literary representation. The question to be addressed is how the truth value of a document is made to depend upon the maintenance of this opposition, and at what cost.

Some of the most powerful deconstructive analyses have been directed at the uses of this opposition of the literal and the literary, or of technical versus metaphorical language, in the non-literary disciplines (e.g., n. 3, pp. 24-25 infra). These works ultimately offer a difficult and extensive redirection of the concept of writing which in complexity passes well beyond the scope of the thesis to present. It will therefore be concerned with developing a context in which the need for such a

reconceptualization would have sense, in terms of the question given above. It should be noted only, as a variety of orienting device, that deconstructive analyses often proceed by juxtaposing what is ordinarily taken as the primary signification of a given term with 'subsidiary' connotations which may disturb this meaning, place it in a different relation with its surrounding text, or call up unusual associations which are also to be given argumentive value. This is not an easily accommodated practice, a circumstance the following takes into account as best it can without sacrificing the insights this type of analysis can bring to bear.

CHAPTER ONE

Beginnings that have already Begun

> However the topic is considered, the <u>problem of language</u> has
> never been simply one problem among others (Derrida 1976:6)

If the difficulty of finding alternative formulations is any indication, the problem of language is indeed conceived in sociology as a technical one: a problem of securing adequate descriptions, for which methodological prescriptions abound. Similarly it is a description which the following purports to offer: "If sociology could speak" says Jeffrey Alexander, "it would say, 'I am tired' " (1984:xiii).

This interesting construction occurs at the beginning of an introduction, as the first formal utterance of a scholarly text which announces its disciplinary filiation in its title: <u>Theoretical Logic in Sociology, Volume One</u> .... Its interest lies in its adumbrating a certain reception, or counting on an audience which can be expected to know, and very probably assent to, 'what it means'. While the latter is no simple question, it has with respect to this probable audience a simple, i.e. conventional, answer: it is 'just' a figure of speech. <u>If</u> sociology could speak it might say any number of things, but of course sociology does not speak: its objects do. Both author and audience, in this sense, already begin by subordinating the language of the document to the language of the documented.

Nonetheless, this mere metaphor does a considerable amount of work, permitting some operations that may well occasion recognition. Because sociology does not speak, it tells us, it is necessary that someone speak on its behalf. That is, as itself an object of sociological interest, sociology requires like any other

sociological object an independent observer to record the verities of its condition. The figure consequently comes to assert a fact, a transubstantiation which would seem to disturb its conventional disposition as an inessential extra. Sociology, in the manner of exemplary facts, is currently informing all qualified or sufficiently attentive observers that it is suffering from a sort of fatigue. In particular, it is suffering from the sort of fatigue which requires a remedy: "Sociology is tired. It must be revived, or revivified" (Alexander 1984:xv).

This 'mere figure' consequently (or from the start) warrants a remedial project whose urgency and imperative it serves to locate 'in the object itself'. Nor does it leave untouched possibilities concerning the nature of the remedy, trading on the situation's being known or knowable as an ill(ness) per se (or from the start). It seems reasonably certain that the recommended treatment will not be a good night's sleep. The very idea seems trivial or frivolous, calculated to offend, whereas the figure under consideration above all delineates a terrain which could be called serious -- a habitation or a property to which the text and its project may lay claim.

It is because such a response is so easily envisioned that its occasion deserves closer scrutiny than it usually receives; and it is because the response speaks precisely to a natural and obvious understanding of its occasion that such scrutiny proves difficult to negotiate. What is to be made, when writing already has a place in sociology, of the place of writing in sociology? If the introduction has sought to give some sense of the pertinence of this question, it will be the task of the first chapter to begin to give it a context: first, by asking whether the relation between the literary and the literal which is being asserted in Alexander's figures does not draw upon a largely unexamined history for its effectiveness; second, by considering an instance of its effectiveness in the way it has prefigured a particular reception of

deconstructive analyses among Anglo-American scholars; and third, by preparing for a closer consideration of its sociological uses in the construction of 'matters of fact'.

I.   A Persistent Malaise

Thus, while it might rather seem that the introduction has answered the question in terms of a pervasive rhetoric or ideology and that the first chapter now inexplicably threatens some species of literary analysis, it is worth considering that the opposition of content and form which such a gloss assumes, or the stability of opposition it requires, speaks again to the already-constructed place of writing in sociology. Alexander's figures are invoked not as objects of aesthetic appreciation but for their evocation of and complicity in a familiar convention of introductions. They refer us to a fact, in this case to the presence of a malaise whose meaning, qua malaise, is self-evident. The convention thus entails the construction of acquaintance being effected in a 'now' to which both author and audience are typically party. There is no reason to suppose that this practice is any less determinate in its end and powerful in its operation than the familiar and complementary closure of conclusions (the figuration of an acquaintance made: of a knowledge duly revealed, finally fixed or completely captured).

Accordingly, there may be no better way of broaching the strangeness of introducing than by acknowledging a point of entry as the fruit of already having entered that to which it is to give access. Such an acknowledgement is pertinent, à propos Alexander's figures, to the extent that it raises the possibility of their belonging somewhere rather than nowhere, that is, to a structure or system of deeply sedimented practices rather than to a curious insubstantiality 'given' by the fact that they are mere signs. If there is a very powerful sense in which their meaning is

known before their meaning becomes a question, surely it is because the call for renewal has already been heard.

One such call was offered some 350 years ago and retains a good deal of the forcefulness with which it diagnoses a similar malaise. "I will say nothing of philosophy," says Descartes in the Discourse, "except that it has been studied for many centuries by the most outstanding minds without having produced anything which is not in dispute and consequently doubtful and uncertain" (1960:8). The whole of Descartes' introduction is bent on demonstrating the inevitability of this diagnosis to an audience for whom it would not have had the self-evidence Alexander can assume. That is, Descartes must produce, in a way that Alexander need not, the 'self-evidence' of the fact he wishes to secure. It is therefore worth paying close attention to the rhetorical operations of his text: we are not only actively persuaded to the fact of this malaise but to those assumptions concerning the nature and purpose of inquiry which make it one, and accordingly to the sort of remedy they underwrite. This is of no small importance in beginning to get a grip on what Alexander (or sociology) must assume about the literal and the literary in order to assume the self-evidence of its 'current' malaise.

"I will say nothing of philosophy except that it has been studied for many centuries by the most outstanding minds without having produced anything which is not in dispute and consequently doubtful and uncertain" (ibid.). This pronouncement also occurs in an introduction, then, near its end, and after a great deal has been said or intimated concerning philosophy, the school and the departments of knowledge. Descartes' 'now' is like Alexander's a recapitulation of something known or knowable, something to which assent could be envisioned: "Good sense is mankind's most equitably divided endowment . . ." (1960:3). So far is this the case that even the

"most difficult to please . . . do not usually want more than they have of this," which goes to show

> that the ability to judge correctly, and to distinguish the true from the false -- which is really what is meant by good sense or reason -- is the same by innate nature in all men; and that differences of opinion are not due to differences in intelligence, but merely to the fact that we use different approaches and consider different things (1960:3-4).

In consequence, only incredulity and disaffection can greet philosophy's failure to recuperate in its proceedings the original unity of reason which is its (true) foundation.

The vehicle of this assessment is the personal history Descartes relates following his assertion of the universality of reason ("I only propose this writing as an autobiography, or, if you prefer, as a story in which you may possibly find some examples of conduct which you might see fit to imitate . . ." 1960:5). The disingenuousness of this construction is a complex one. Since the unity of reason is a unity repeated in every man (that "most equitably divided endowment"), and its community accordingly the aggregate of such unities, the (true) experience of any man, properly apprehended and reported, will be the (true) representation of this whole. Descartes' disillusionment with the "world of books" then becomes a disillusion grounded in Reason. It is Reason's disillusionment, revealed in and by means of Descartes. The emptiness of the school's promise to provide by means of books "a clear and assured knowledge of everything useful in life"; its resultant culpability for the fact that Descartes reports himself at the end of his course

> saddled with so many doubts and errors that I seemed to have gained nothing in trying to educate myself unless it was to discover more and more fully how ignorant I was (1960:3);

all of this becomes Reason's indictment of a fallen philosophy, its characterization of the history of philosophy 'until now' as a repository of quarrelsome misadventure.

Reason has, therefore, very definite opinions as to the proper place of philosophy, its proper time, and the corresponding propriety of its (true) knowledge. Descartes/Reason grants that there is some purpose to the study of languages, fiction and history. The first gives access to "the works of the ancients", the second in its "delicacy . . . refines and enlivens the mind", while the third, provided it is "read with understanding", may not only "ennoble" the mind but help quicken its judgement (1960:6). Reading the greats "is like conversing with the best people of earlier times: it is even a studied conversation in which the authors show us only the best of their thoughts". "Eloquence" likewise "has incomparable powers and beauties", poetry "enchanting delicacy and sweetness" and ethical argument "very useful teachings and exhortations to virtue", while theology secures heaven for the latter's many supplicants. Mathematics receives the least summary treatment in this almost affable catalogue, offering "very subtle processes which can serve as much to satisfy the inquiring mind as to aid all the arts and diminish man's labor", while a tone of faint praise becomes sharp with respect to philosophy 'until now', which in its primary value "teaches us to talk with an appearance of truth about all things, and to make ourselves admired by the less learned". The catalogue concludes, or nearly so, with "law, medicine and the other sciences", which "bring honors and wealth to those who pursue them", but remain as conspicuously removed from generating truth(s) as any other aspirant on the list, including mathematics, whose 'subtle processes' are invoked as a potential yet to be realized, or as the adumbration of a promise. In the end, then, the value of the school lies in its revealing the absence of Descartes'/Reason's desideratum in any of its departments. What is "finally . . . desirable" about the disciplines is "to have examined them all, even to the most superstitious and false, in order to recognize their real worth and avoid being deceived thereby" (1960:6).

To "read with understanding", that is, to exercise the judgement quickened

in the most urgent sense by the disastrous history of all previous philosophy, is consequently to accept the partition and reconstruction of philosophy already underway in this carefully disposed tribute. It will come as no surprise that while it is good to study languages and the thought of the ancients, as well as their fictions and histories, it is not a good proper to Reason:

> For conversing with the ancients is much like traveling. It is good to know something of the customs of various peoples, in order to judge our own more objectively, and so that we do not make the mistake of the untraveled in supposing that everything contrary to our customs is ridiculous and irrational. But when one spends too much time traveling, one becomes at last a stranger at home; and those who are too interested in things which occurred in past centuries are often remarkably ignorant of what is going on today (1960:6-7).

That engagement with the past is 'like travel' suggests that the past is essentially rather than accidentally or contingently foreign to the present. What could be more foreign than the customs of other peoples, since their otherness is what forces a conception of the own-ness of one's own into sharpest relief? It is not interest in philosophy 'until now' which is wanted, but attention to philosophy 'from now on'. Since the past does not communicate essentially with the present, since it is essentially other than the present, why indeed spend more time there than is necessary to discover or confirm this truth? Nevertheless there is talk of judging our own customs by means of this essentially alien(ated) past, which suggests equally that the home to which travelers are urged in no way coincides with the mundane present of a literal reading of "what is going on today". On the contrary, the figure of travel reacts as much on existing arrangements within and beyond the school as it does on past custom. What is wanted above all is that the addressees of Descartes' autobiography should not remain strangers to their true home, the community of Reason. The past is not invoked to corroborate a difference already realized in the present but to justify a project -- a homecoming -- beginning 'now' and entailing the

repudiation of both past and present. Like the pursuits of the ancients, then, those of the existing school (and of society, seen as the larger embodiment of custom) are to be found good only on condition that their goods are essentially rather than contingently foreign to the Good of Reason. So it happens that every subject of the syllabus reappears (with favourable dispensation again reserved, not for the existing but for a potential 'mathematics') accompanied by the "but . . . " which, excluding it from the discourse of Reason, defines and re-defines the latter's property.[1] The incitement is to 'remedy', i.e. the recuperation of this property in a reality which, though always secured by it, has always been disposed to it in the <u>wrong way</u>.

Convention or custom in its several guises thus invokes a villain against which all of Descartes' writing is mobilized. One learns from travel that the essence of custom is that it can always have been otherwise, that it is in this sense 'arbitrary', while it is the very property of the true that it cannot have been, and can never be, other than what it is. In its mundane course in the world, custom <u>differs</u>, from itself viewed from the pivot of its own history and from other equally mutable customs with which it may be juxtaposed from time to time, while it is the very property of the true that it is always the same, i.e. <u>remains</u> the same in its self-sameness. The whole of existing philosophy has been an offense and a corruption ('false', consigned to 'appearances') because it has permitted dispute, while it is the very task of Reason to regain or return in its accounts to its original unity, an imperative supplied and secured by the fact of this unity (or this origin) itself. Nothing need be said of philosophy for its history is replete with examples of its cardinal error: the "many different opinions learned men may hold on the same subject, <u>despite the fact that no more than one of them can ever be right</u>" (1960:8, emphasis added). Similarly society, for one finds there "just about as much difference of opinion" as is to be "remarked among philosophers" (1960:9).

The error of custom with respect to its true ground is consequently that it has always constituted a corruption of its proper representational function. The community of Reason will eschew the time and place of custom altogether so as to be(come) the perfect representation, the complete picture, the proper copy in all of its parts, of the unity from which it springs. The true place of this community is therefore to be removed from the particulars (differences) of any particular place, and its true time is to be removed from the particulars (differences) of any particular time. The timeless, placeless unity out of which this community will proceed is already known, for we are told at the beginning of Descartes' story that differences are so many accidental accretions or impingements on a self which is defined essentially by the fact that Reason is "fully present" within it (1960:4). Descartes-the-traveler attains this ground at the end of the introduction ("I eventually reached the decision to study my own self, and to employ all my abilities to try to choose the right path" 1960:9) but his pilgrimage is related by the reconstituted Descartes (Reason), "possibly" for imitation (1960:5). The right path is consequently also available from the start. Since "differences of opinion" are purely accidental, "not due to differences in intelligence, but merely to the fact that we use different approaches and consider different things" (1960:4), we should use the same approach and consider the same things. That is, we should adopt a mimetic approach, since the right relation of the community of Reason to its ground is one of faithful reproduction (imitation), and consider the things proper to this relation: only such things as present themselves with the same unity or presence as the universal subject of Reason. So begins the Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Field of Science.

Now, questions of 'method' (proper representation or adequate description) have become perhaps as familiar to sociological practice as questions of 'rhetoric' or

of the 'literary' have become foreign. That they have become in this sense such familiar opposites, so obviously foreign to each other as to go without saying, is very much to the point. Alexander's figures depend upon this opposition of the literal and the literary for their ultimate or commonly supposed 'literality', i.e. for their propriety in evoking a situation which disposes not only an object but an audience, not only a fact but knowledge of what to do about it. Reading them through Descartes is one way of recalling how extensively situated they already are, i.e. how they utilize and recapitulate a history of signifying practices to which they belong. To be sure, Descartes' story proceeds out of and returns to a 'subject' called the self or reason while that of sociology stakes itself on regaining an 'object' called the social, but the name of the homecoming in each case is 'method'; the imperative of the return an impaired correspondence with its origin or ground; the means of return a reproduction of that with which proper correspondence is to be restored; and the moment of restoration envisioned as an identity established once and for all: an imitation so perfect that it will cease to be imitation, not a picture or a story but the picture or the story, the picture-become-literal and the story-become-document. Both claim the literal as their proper domain, mutatis mutandis, by asking not to be taken as writing: rather the record of a purer form of speech or perhaps the purest speech, viz. the presence of that of which they are the re-presentation.

Sociology already positions writing, then, within and among its situating practices. Writing already has a value and a particular efficacy in its production of knowledge, one expression of which is the belief that one can always come 'now' or 'newly' to a text or a body of work. In this belief, Descartes' essentially reasonable subjects and sociology's essentially communicable objects meet in that timeless, placeless essence of a text or corpus called its meaning, faithful to a mode of reading which believes itself fundamentally innocent of any determination or construction of

what it reads. Meaning, like a fact, is supposed already to be present or self-evident in the text, and reading, like observation, only a matter so to speak of receiving it 'without distortion'. It is not infrequently with this expectation, and at its least remarked or differentiated, that deconstructive analyses have been approached.

II.   A Version of Deconstruction

In his critical and descriptive account of contemporary French philosophy, commissioned specifically for English-speaking readers, the French philosopher Vincent Descombes remarks:

> It should not be believed that the authority a work may carry is the result of its having been read, studied and finally judged convincing. The reverse is true: reading derives from a prior conviction. Works are preceded by rumour (1980:4).

Although its immediate context is the reception and circulation of philosophical utterance in France from 1930 onward, the character of its publicity inside the university and out in its pedagogical, professional and everyday appropriations, the remark also has application to the itinerary of the work in question, elaborated in French philosophical circles during the 1960s and, since roughly 1970, finding its way in translation to and through the institutional configurations of Anglo-American universities. 'Rumour' in particular offers an apt characterization of the situation of its reception.

Descombes quotes Maurice Blanchot: " 'What I learn from rumour, I have necessarily heard already' .... the text with which we fall in love will be the one wherein what we already know can be learned and relearned" (ibid.). One implication of Blanchot's remark is that reliance on rumour both expresses and requires the conviction that nothing regarding the parameters of its givens is in need of articulation. Descartes writes with the utmost assurance of rumour in this sense. He

already 'knows' what inquiry is, what it is for, whence it comes and that it in no way affects the fundamental nature of its objects: quite the contrary, if the Discourse is read with the understanding it solicits.

Here it is intended that 'rumour' should capture the peculiar availability of this conviction as it informs responses to deconstruction. In its ordinary uses, 'rumour' always implies a context which is never self-evident: while it is known to arise 'somewhere', this is typically acknowledged in the phrase that it appears 'out of nowhere'. We 'just know' what rumour has to tell us: its message is as palpable, in the form of the already known, as its context is effaced. We might therefore speak of a rumour of readerly innocence or of unconditional receptivity which at once accomplishes the highly specific prefigurations of meaning considered in Descartes' and sociology's malaise, and effaces the accomplishment, submerging the expectations and the tradition which give it force.

Jacques Derrida has given an instructive characterization of the way in which, as commonly practiced, critical commentary no less than exegesis subscribes to this tradition:

> The security with which the commentary considers the self-identity of the text, the confidence with which it carves out its contour, goes hand in hand with the tranquil assurance that leaps over the text toward its presumed content, in the direction of the pure signified (1976:158).

In this assurance it is not too difficult to find traces of Descartes' and sociology's mimetic aspirations. One can 'leap over the text' only on condition that the text is believed to be essentially rather than contingently foreign to the content it conveys. Thus, rumour already knows what (there is) to look for in its reading material. That is, it already knows that reading is a matter of looking, or rather, of leaping. In relation to its being conceived as a picture or a record, ideally a species of mirror for

the presence which precedes and secures its reference, such features of a text as its materiality, the workings and history of its form(al devices), its language or its belonging to language, in a word its 'textuality' or its 'written-ness', take on a decidedly marginal cast, presenting themselves, if at all, precisely as things to look over. Not that these are unimportant as such, it may readily be admitted by philosophers and sociologists alike, but such considerations are, well, literary or at best a matter for literary history. And literature is foreign to the language of the real.

It is thus worth considering, and a circumstance which sits rather poorly with the conviction of unconditional receptivity, that while Derrida is by training, proclivity and profession what would ordinarily be called a philosopher, native to the linguistic and scholarly tradition Descombes undertakes to make accessible, his work has nevertheless entered the institutions of Anglo-American scholarship by way of literature: literary theory and criticism. Among the works introduced under this entry, or assigned this heading, the first paper published in English translation (Derrida 1970) deals not with what would ordinarily be understood as a literary topic but rather with the place of a certain problematic, viz. interpretation, in ethnology and more generally in those disciplines designated in France as the 'human sciences'. Similarly, and again in terms of quite conventional classifications of subject matter, the remark cited above occurs in the course of a sustained analysis of the way in which a complex valorization of speech in relation to writing (or of presence vs. absence) deeply informs Saussure's reform of linguistics and its more recent variants, Lévi-Strauss' anthropology, and Rousseau's husbandry of the idea and the absolute value of a natural, spontaneous subject in a range of his writings (a project Lévi-Strauss' indebtedness to which is examined in detail). Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibnitz, Condillac, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Freud, Pierce,

Austin and Searle number among still others drawn into the engagement pursued in these and other texts, an engagement which continually crosses paths with and examines its own rootedness in the history of the latter valorization (see e.g. Derrida 1973, 1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1981a, 1981b, 1981c, 1982b, 1982c, 1984b).

This is not to suggest that Derrida has not treated of literary matters. Indeed he has, not infrequently in the same texts which address philosophical matters (e.g. 1978b, 1980, 1981a, 1981d, 1984a, 1985b), but cohabitation of the literary and the literal in one text is not unprecedented. Many of the thinkers noted above have written on such literary matters as aesthetics, theatre, poetry and the novel, without it ceasing thereby to go without saying that they are engaged in a serious or consequential undertaking. Derrida's supposed literarity on the other hand, seems to have marked for a decade and more a certain dubiousness or unease, precisely as regards the seriousness or consequentiality of his work 'outside of literature'. Similarly it is in a typical reading that Alexander's figures no less than Descartes' pass without comment. This is the most interesting thing about them, if in fact it should be the figures themselves which are credited with the effect.

Perhaps a warrant for identifying Derrida's work with the literary should therefore be sought in some explicit statement or manifesto? Here rumour might suppose itself confirmed in its conviction for many utterances could be thought to secure it, for example the comment in a recent paper that

> my most constant interest, coming even before my philosophical
> interest I should say, if this is possible, has been directed toward
> literature, toward that writing which is called literary
> (1983b:37).[2]

It is not inconceivable, however, that an interest in literature, in writing <u>which comes to be called</u> literary, could as readily designate a political, historical, philosophical or sociological question as it could a literary one: and again even with reference to its

own experience rumour would be obliged to admit that it has. The text above continues, giving some sense of the scope of Derrida's interest:

> What is literature? And first of all what is it 'to write'? How is it that the fact of writing can disturb the very question 'what is?' and even 'what does it mean?' To say this in other words -- and here is the saying otherwise that was of importance to me -- when and how does an inscription become literature and what takes place when it does? To what and to whom is this due? What takes place between philosophy and literature, science and literature, theology and literature, psychoanalysis and literature? (1983b:37-38).

It is not difficult within the terms of rumour, or of a mode of reading with aspirations to literality, to reconstruct the offending 'implication' here. It might run a little as follows: 'An interest in literature is fine, but this interest has nihilistic tendencies. It promises not a philosophy or sociology or history of literature, not a politics or theology or psychology of literature, and least of all a science of literature. Instead it proposes to combine, indeed to mix up these obviously distinct undertakings and concerns. Since the consequences of such a leveling are well known, how can a body of work proposing it be taken seriously in the final analysis?' What this response fails to take into consideration is that the reception of deconstruction (or any other body of writing) already implicates a complex institution, a structure or a signifying practice in which philosophical, scientific, sociological, historical, political, theological, psychological and literary questions are not in danger of merging, but already have, in the form of a particular ensemble or arrangement which has become too obvious for words.

Within this institution, then, whose form like Alexander's figures might also be seen to belong somewhere rather than nowhere, i.e. to the mode of reading espoused in its several departments rather than to a curious immanence 'given' by the fact that the world has obligingly divided itself into subject matters, the name like

writing already has a place, value and situating capacity. If there is a principle governing the self-identity of the disciplines, for example, perhaps it is the belief that they should be essentially rather than contingently foreign to each other, and that any with a claim to serious or consequential status should certainly stand in this relation to literature. Posed in this context, the question "What is literature?" offers at least this much for consideration: however one may seek to define the presence or essence it too may be thought to name, it has what would appear to be an essential (irreducible) function in securing the identity of other names. Philosophy, sociology, history and the like have been defined or ascribed essence by their opposition to literature; which is to say that writing, or the literary, has a very powerful role in the espousal and negotiation of identity, property and propriety, that is, in the construction and maintenance of boundaries, both of disciplines and of sense and in both senses of discipline and sense.

If there is a principle which has guided much of the reading of deconstruction within the disciplines, then, perhaps it is the belief that there should be an essential (impermeable) boundary between the essential and the contingent, the literal and the literary, fact and figure, the documented and the document, content and form, i.e. between presence and absence (non-presence), whatever their proxies. The construction of deconstruction as yet another, and faulty or improper, name is then a consequence of rumour. Though Derrida himself now employs 'deconstruction' (" . . . a word I have never liked and one whose fortunes have disagreeably surprised me" 1983b:44) as an ellipsis, it is not as an ellipsis for the essence or meaning rumour anticipates and finds lacking. Rather it remains in his work and that of some other very able practitioners one of many reminders (with, e.g. 'de-constituting', 'de-sedimenting', 'undoing', 'disassembling', 'unravelling', 'displacing', 'de-posing') of the situation and task of analysis which necessarily begins by already having begun.[3]

III.   Sociological Sense-Making

It seems not inconceivable, even quite evident, that an undoing must differ a little from what it undoes. This need has nevertheless proved perhaps the major stalling point in attempted appropriations of Derrida's work, often serving as the fulcrum around which prior knowledge turns to conviction. A reason suggests itself as well, for a typical reading does not conceive of itself as _doing_ anything. The presumption of readerly innocence or of unconditional receptivity is at the same time the presumption that the object of reading is self-communicating. A fortiori, therefore, reading itself is not doing anything that needs undoing, and it _is_ inconceivable that the object of reading (meaning, content) could do other than what it does, or be other than what it is, in presenting itself. In this context, which is always inexplicit or effaced by the very guidance of its presumption, differing or undoing would imply at the least what Descartes found intolerable in the essentially 'literary' departments of his school -- a licence to "embroider" (1960:7) or to make inaccurate representations. At the limit, it would be seen to threaten the complete collapse of representation, as was noted above.

Put otherwise, the collapse of representation would imply the permanent exile from truth that it is precisely the destiny of Reason to overcome. Taken as the emblem of both the homecoming and the home announced in the _Discourse_, the idea of representation (imitation) sediments a very complex inheritance. That it is not an inheritance to which sociology is too foreign on the one hand may be gathered from Alexander's call to remedy: Descartes' method is above all conceived and executed as remedy, and with reference to the same ill(ness). That it remains an inheritance not yet too familiar, on the other hand, may also be gathered from Alexander's call to remedy: like Descartes' it foregoes or forecloses any queries as to the possibility of

the remedy's belonging to the ill(ness) it seeks to cure.

In sociology, as Raffel shows, 'matters of fact' are taken to define the limit of inquiry and the truth of its instances independently of its conduct. That fact is self-sufficient or capable of revealing itself in its entirety, that as meaning or presence it persists in a 'before' or a 'beyond' of its cursive or discursive presentation, is what makes it the guarantor of the latter imitations, i.e. the property which secures their propriety (truth) -- in other words, a ground. Here the more specific expectations apt to be brought to reading material concerned with inquiry find their place. To be expected is a fully justified set of procedures for a right relation to the facts (a method), or at least the justification (a theory), i.e. a properly mimetic account of the facts to which procedures for a right relation remain to be elaborated.

It is proposed to differ a little from the way in which method and theory so construed seem to exhaust the possibilities for such talk. Rather than passing to a catalogue of rights and wrongs and thence to corrections, the following chapter will attempt to trace how fact belongs to the system at work in Descartes' investiture of reason and in the reception of deconstruction, first in a general way and then as regards a case of sociological sense-making which is not yet finished, though it has produced a battery of conclusions.

As Raffel reconstructs them, 'matters of fact' are above all a set of representational requirements whose effects and whose roots extend well beyond the assumed boundaries of theory and method. Sociology's preoccupation with matters of fact, then, is already a preoccupation with a certain kind of writing. The reception of T. S. Kuhn's work may offer a more compelling consideration of the way this foreknowledge of 'writing' passes into 'reading'. Perhaps it is significant, for

example, that one of the 'difficulties' of his work seems to have been the suggestion that a 'paradigm' is not, strictly speaking, a theory. If the term has become common coinage, a process 'deconstruction' is also undergoing, perhaps it is less the result of an improved understanding than of an approved incorporation.[4] At its most inclusive, and as it has already been introduced, the itinerary of concern to the thesis is consequently the way in which sociology's preoccupation with fact (or its treatment of writing) is also a preoccupation with a very old and very powerful story about the true.

NOTES

1   Thus for example, Reason's habitation in the true is marked by its difference from fiction, which "makes us imagine a number of events as possible which are really impossible"; from history, which inevitably falls short of accurate representation either by augmenting the real with the imaginary or by failing to attain completeness, omitting "the meanest and least illustrious circumstances so that the remainder is distorted"; from 'eloquence' and poetry, which subsist on the order of "gifts of nature rather than fruits of study" (1960:7). The extrusion of rhetoric from (true) philosophy is particularly interesting. In juxtaposition with poetry it becomes possible to intimate to good effect that the former is as essentially superfluous to Reason as the latter is foreign by virtue of belonging to the imagination, and to align both with convention qua art(ifice) -- i.e. to promote an ironic reading of 'gifts of nature':

> Those who reason most cogently, and work over their thoughts to make them clear and intelligible, are always the most persuasive, even if they speak only a provincial dialect and have never studied rhetoric. Those who have the most agreeable imaginations . . . cannot fail to be the best poets, even if the poetic art is unknown to them (1960:7, emphasis added).

2   This paper is one of the contributions to an anthology conceived in the same spirit of communicative exchange between two latterly 'separate' or for the most part inwardly elaborated scholarly traditions as is Descombes (1980). It is especially noteworthy in its departure from the anthologizing convention which would divide the field ('French philosophy') by topic or controversy and solicit comprehensive reviews under each heading. The eleven contributors were instead requested "to present to the English-speaking reader their own view of their own work as they now see it in relation to the context in which they are working and, perhaps, to the reactions which they might expect it to provoke" (Montefiore 1983:viii). The result is an exceedingly provocative representation covering in its way much the same historical terrain as Descombes' account, and recurring with equally instructive diversity to the analytic challenges posed by the institutional imbeddedness of the conventional idea of representation and its correlates. See in addition to Montefiore's introduction the contributions of Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-François Lyotard, Pierre Bourdieu, and again Descombes.

3   Only brief indications can be given of an indebtedness which the thesis will not be able to discharge. It follows from much of the preceding discussion that an important consequence of deconstruction's long sojourn in the 'literary' departments (literary criticism, literature, comparative literature, languages), where it has been elaborated into a considerably differentiated set of discourses, is that its practitioners are apt to be overlooked by virtue of their 'belonging' there. See therefore, for a sense of the shape of this work and its internal debates, but also for the way in which it continually and often provocatively addresses its 'outside' (philosophy, history, the social sciences), Jonathan Culler (1982, which remains

perhaps the most accessible point of entry for the unfamiliar; also his 1981 and 1975 on structuralisms and semiotics); Paul de Man (1978, 1979, 1982a, 1983a); David Carroll (1978, 1982); Barbara Johnson (1980a, 1982); Timothy Bahti (1979a, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1985); Suzanne Gearhart (1983, 1984); Gerald Bruns (1980, 1984); Eugenio Donato (1977, 1984); Davis & Schleifer (1985); Krupnick (1983, which includes a contribution from Michael Ryan: "Deconstruction and Social Theory: The Case of Liberalism"); and finally, the symposium in which Derrida's (1970) occurs.

4   Raffel is not the only sociologist to have made inroads into this territory. In very different ways, the German sociologist Wolf Lepenies' work on the construction of disciplinary identities (see in particular his 1984; also Graham, Lepenies & Weingart 1983), and the British sociologist Ricca Edmonson's formal study of rhetorical construction in sociological argument (1984), speak to the need of undoing or resituating what we routinely do. The American sociologist Charles Lemert has also been indefatigible in undertaking both to familiarize Anglo-American social scientists with their French counterparts and to make fruitful appropriations of Derrida's and others' work (see e.g. Lemert 1979a, 1979b, 1979c, 1981 and Lemert & Gillan 1982). Finally, Derrida's 1982c occurs in a special issue of the journal Social Research devoted to contemporary French philosophy (see there, among others, the articles of Rosset, Michaud, Le Doeuff and Descombes).

CHAPTER TWO

Facts, Figures and the Principles of Accounting

> Now, "everyday language" is not innocent or neutral. It is the
> language of Western metaphysics, and it carries with it not only
> a considerable number of presuppositions of all types, but also
> presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics, which, although
> little attended to, are knotted into a system (Derrida 1981c:19)

> It was not very difficult, either, to decide where we should look
> for a beginning, for I already knew that one begins with the
> simplest and easiest to know (Descartes 1960:16)

In one sense it could be said that an appreciation of the non-neutrality of everyday language stands at the very core of sociology, finding expression in each of its subject areas and generating an immense volume of work concerned with its consequences. Derrida's linkage of everyday language and the history implied by "Western metaphysics" could thus easily be read as a commonplace that sociology has long since installed among its givens. If there is one thing that we all know, for example, it is that there is no presuppositionless knowledge.

The instruction to be drawn from Derrida's remark, however, is less the reassurance that we know this than a reminder that our knowing takes place within a system which generates such 'knowings' and accords them a particular and consequential value in the production of our accounts. It is not _that_ we know, but _how_ we know which is of interest here, and more particularly how _what_ we know takes the form of a fact. The metaphysics to which Derrida attends in all of his works is the metaphysics of this 'form', in which being or any consequentiality is equated with presence. This metaphysics of presence is not localized to any particular "ism" but drawn upon by even the most acrimoniously opposed of "isms",

learned long before it is a question of (professional) philosophy. Similarly, Raffel traces how an identification of fact with presence organizes not only the mundane production of hospital records but of sociological methodologies for the uses of records and its own activity of recording.

"I already knew," Descartes tells us, "that one begins with the simplest and easiest to know" (ibid.). The 'simple' is a term Descartes uses repeatedly in the Discourse to invoke presence, most often in conjunction with generality, that is, both ease and completeness, of apprehension. He also provides there a figure of its phenomenality in repeated identifications of the true with the 'clear and distinct', a figure which interestingly retains currency as a metaphor of good writing.

It deserves emphasis that it is good writing which is somehow clear and distinct: what ordinarily passes for a description of technical writing is at the same time a criterion or an evaluative standard. That writing is good which offers a 'clear' view of what it represents; bad, which 'obscures' what it should rather be describing. Clear or 'literal' writing issues in a document. By the same token, writing becomes 'literary' in proportion as it becomes difficult to treat it as a picture of something else, which is precisely what a document is thought to be. So far as the production of sociological accounts is concerned, then, the opposition of the literal and the literary functions less as a description of two kinds of writing than as a means of ensuring that description is what sociological writing will amount to: that we will concern ourselves with the facts.

The preceding chapter has sought to give some sense of the plasticity with which this concern finds expression, how it permeates the least remarked of sense-making operations qua valorization of presence. Here it is not a matter of

summarizing but of letting these instances resonate, so to speak, in an examination of the system of this concern on home territory. It is being suggested that in the practice of documentation form already implies a particular content in that 'contents' are known and required to take a specific form, in aid of realizing the promise or desire iterated (not for the first time) in Descartes' story. Speaking of fact, then, we will necessarily be speaking of writing and of the particular relation to the true which 'good' writing is supposed to institute. There is every reason to proceed slowly in this, and so we shall.

I. The Facts (in Two Figures)

It may prove useful to begin with a version of Raffel's question as to whether in its accounting procedures sociology does not participate in the construction of its own maladies. Here the question is whether it is not so well-subscribed a feature of recent sociological practice to situate our accounts of social inquiry in terms of the concerns they speak to, as it is to acquiesce in one such concern in particular. This is the idea, which has both metaleptic and proleptic force or suasion, that our accounts should present us with a history of successively better or more comprehensive stories of what inquiry is, its nature or its fundamental lineaments. Such a history could potentially come to an end, since the best story of inquiry would also be the final story, the story which could divest itself of what we take to be the more disquieting susceptibilities of stories (such as their liability to hearsay, error, idiosyncrasy, ambiguity or indeterminacy of meaning) and become instead a statement -- of the truth of the matter.

It is not at all difficult to see what this concern might in the first instance express: among other things a desire for positive acknowledgement or vindication of

the intellectual labour expended in the production of our accounts over an entire virtual history of such endeavours. Its form is such as to provide us with, or provide us with a warrant for constructing, a 'past' which because it locates us and our work as the cumulation and best resolution so far of the work begun by our predecessors, simultaneously justifies a construal of the 'future', of the continuation of inquiry, as going 'further' rather than, say, 'going on'.

Similarly, it is not at all difficult to identify this concern as a reiteration or retelling of a very old story underwriting nearly all of our intellectual history. Appearing here (as in a good many other realms of social practice) as a teleology of progress/redemption, the story is perhaps best characterized as a story about foundations. That is, not a story about the way things are (in this case, perhaps, about what history looks like), but a story whose object has been to render intelligible (inform and give persuasive force to) the intellectual end of securing the certitude and immanent sense of our inquiry, to give it a centre or point of referral which is fixed. Such a centre or ground would be in a particular way external to the mutability of our formulations, and thereby (as we seem to want to hope) the guarantor of some transhistorical value nonetheless lodged in or conveyed through this same mutability.

What might be difficult to entertain, however, given the familiarity of this version of the story and the fact that its shortcomings and insufficiencies are routinely rehearsed as a matter of professional training in sociology, is the possibility that we may still subscribe to it in a non-trivial way. Everything about recent characterizations of the state of social theory which stress e.g. the plurality of 'paradigms', 'perspectives' or 'theoretical frameworks' on offer, seems to push for a reception of the question of this possibility, its placement within and by means of our

current readings of 'the problem of inquiry' in the social sciences, as a species of archaism. We are no longer so naive as to really believe, the story may run nowadays, in 'progress' as a function of the cumulative subsumption without residue of earlier by later theories-and-Weltanschauungen. The notion that progress is vouchsafed by the simple expedient of the linear succession of such structures belongs to simpler times if not to simpler minds, and 'times' are no longer so simple. The sheer fact of multiple frameworks is ample argument, if any is needed, against a retreat or regression to what we all recognize as a pseudo-explanatory notion of progress.

This seems a fair rendition of the kind of story that a sizable community of practitioners might marshall in reply to the question posed above. Though it would seldom be considered in terms of the way temporality is used and enters into the persuasive force of the reply it is worth noting that the 'facticity' of multiple frameworks receives almost all of its punch from their contemporaneity (or presumed contemporaneity). It is not the fact that there are many accounts that works to dismiss the question before it can be further formulated, but the fact that there are many now. In a rhetorical structure of some complexity, this 'now' (this 'fact') serves to posit and oppose an intellectual present to a past whose dimensions are given by what this present is not. It is not (we take it) a present in which univocality of thought is readily accessible, not a present characterized by agreement as to fundamentals, and consequently not a present in which a question arising out of such conditions (virtual, so-conceived, or both) has significance. Here, then, is a familiar sounding deployment of a matter of fact. Like Alexander's and Descartes' facts, it goes about its work by opposing a presence (diversity) to an absence (unity), or a 'now' to a 'then', in this case with intent to set us straight regarding what it views as a rather simplistic question.

It will take some development to see why the particular relation this reply establishes between itself and the initial question should matter. Perhaps the first requirement is to resist what is apt to be a very strong temptation to treat the relation between the reply and the question in the same way that the reply treats the question (or the way that the second story treats the first), namely, as presenting, and only presenting, a problem of documentation. Despite the possibility, already noted, that the first story is more and other than (or does more and other than tell) a story about the way things are, the second gains its plausibility, and justifies its documentary operations, by reading it in just this way, i.e. as a factual claim, a statement about the way things are.

The task that follows from the presence of such claims (anywhere, at any time, in terms it should be noted of either story) is that of deciding their truth value. Truth value is to be adjudicated and resolved on the basis of 'evidence', that is, adduced in the end in one or more factual claims taken to correct or confirm the original(s). This adjudication is the only task the second story sees itself confronted with (or perhaps, the only task it is willing or able to acknowledge) and this is the task it performs, it was suggested, through the vehicle of a rhetorical figure which establishes two domains of facticity ('evidence' in the form of a history) by opposing and hierarchizing a complex present and a simple past.

It would seem an ill-fated job, then, that would attempt to put the legislative operations of this story in question by adopting them simpliciter. If operations associated with what is here being called documentation and this or similar figural uses of history are intimately connected, one could hardly do worse than to proceed to formulate the relative truth value of both stories, perhaps with respect to a third possibility defined by hypothetical access to an ideally complete

body of evidence. The first story (which, it will be remembered, is already a repetition or citation as given here) can be read as a presentation of the project of such documentation, thus read as being as dependent on figural uses of history for its persuasion to a desire for univocality as the second. The second story, in turn, can be read as an enactment of the project, thus as another citation, recurring to the first in more ways than it effects to differ from it. In this connexion it may be noted that the multiplicity of frameworks adduced to differentiate it from the past (the first story) does not function so much to open a question about the desire for univocality as it does to restate the problem of securing it 'under changed conditions'. If, then, the seemingly natural course of further documentation were adopted, as it has been in recent social theory with a few notable exceptions, we might justifiably expect ourselves to be caught up in yet another reiteration of this structure of concerns, contributing both to its workings and its history, without gaining any especial analytic purchase on either of these.

Since some insight of the latter kind is the object of the following, we must proceed a little differently. This is not an easily articulated difference, since whatever else occasions disagreement among sociologists, there is near unanimity (to be found in their productions if not their pronouncements about these, though often here as well) that sociological writing is writing that documents: documents problems, solutions, the appearance and disappearance of characteristic positions and styles, empirical and theoretical findings or breakthroughs, methodological controversies and the like.

We can put the matter this way: the disciplinary history sociology thus documents for itself may prove a peculiar guide to the history it makes, exercising its documentary concerns. That the second story works in such a way as to efface its

commitment to a very old concern in the very act of exercising it is not available as a self-description within the terms of its own practice, i.e. is not a constituent in its own particular mode of reflexivity. Accordingly, it is to this system of self-description that we turn.

II.　　The Figuring

In terms of the latter understanding, what it is to document something is presumably to give a report, the giving of which does not (or does not essentially) affect the thing reported on, but merely represents or describes it. A report, then, presents something (a theory, a finding, a problem, a development) but is not taken to be complicit in the presentation of what it brings into view. That is, reporting 'itself' is not taken to have a history. The business of bringing things into view is not taken to speak to any end other than the one it ascribes to itself: representational accuracy or a best approximation (pro tempore) of the phenomena under review.

Consequently, history subsists in the terms of this understanding as that history (purveyed in both stories) given by the succession and/or contemporaneity of the things brought into view. Put otherwise, the documentary understanding licences and requires a history of results, and not of the particular formulative practice (its own) which gives and has given us 'results' to arrange in such histories ('facts' to adjudicate, whether these bear, e.g. on the relative merits of two theories or the actual course of some historical development). This is to say that the documentary understanding licences and requires its own absence qua formulative practice from any instance of that practice. The formulation of evidence must appear on its view as something other than formulation, something without a history, for it holds that it cannot establish a claim to have adjudicated the facts if it is complicit in their

formulation. The facts must be there <u>before</u> they are 'written down'.

We can now begin to see that the rhetoricity of the report (the form in which adjudication is presented, or the form in which documentation presents itself to itself, viz. as the 'mere' presentation of something else) is not peripheral to the question of what it may mean that inquiry is organized by and oriented to this concern: in Rorty's evocative characterization, to speak "Nature's Own Language," or to reveal Nature by means of "Nature's Own Vocabulary" (Rorty 1982:194-195). The report, insofar as it aspires to document, just is and continually revives this project of getting the best story, the one the phenomena provide, the one the things present. It does so by treating what it speaks about as something securely other than itself. The report typically begins (and ends) this way, by inviting the reader to concur in the facticity of what it presents, or to concur in the facticity of what it presents itself as being about. Such beginnings (and endings) are already formulative achievements modelled on documentation's end. They already fulfil the requirement that what is (which is always what a report is about) should coincide with what is present, with what is other and with what, being both present and other, presents itself, in such a way that the means of presentation -- writing, the report itself -- is a mere conduit or transparency.

From this vantage, the self-effacing character of documentary writing is not available within the terms of its practice because the desire for the invisibility or transparency of any writing which purports to inquire <u>is</u> available, and governs the practitioner's understanding of what he is doing. The royal road to truth is one which, analytically speaking, the documentary practitioner travels in reverse, in the hope that as he retreats the phenomenon will advance to fill the space he has vacated with its presence. His view (the writing responsive to this project) is always directed

'outward' (oriented to the constitution of fact, its presentation, and the truth that is held to obtain in the presence of things).

Accordingly, we can begin to see why it is important not to take up the second story's invitation to be read as a report. This is after all what it asks of a reader, but to concur is to permit the achieved character of what it does to be covered over or suppressed by the typical mode in which it presents its achievement. It is to acquiesce in and repeat what documentation does from the other side, so to speak, by making oneself the reader required by its version of writing: the one who will read as if the writing 'itself' is unachieved, 'Nature's Own' because it is merely allowing Nature to bring itself into view. The alternative is not simply to treat the story as achieved, however, because it is perfectly possible (indeed, common recourse both in theory and what is sometimes now called metatheory in the social sciences) to treat its achieved character as one more fact which is other than our interest (external to any possible concern of ours: this is what the 'mere' concern to document insists upon) and therefore itself the chief determinant of what there is to say about it. This would amount to a failure to take into account that one of the chief requirements of the documentary orientation is that anything be formulable as a thing, factualized or concretized, in this manner. Documentation can no more exempt itself from this requirement than it can anything else (any other possible object) if it is continuously to realize its end (adjudicating so as to give the right answers).

Consequently, our alternative is to treat the story, in any of its many versions and instances, as achieved in light of or with constant reference to this end, and ask about the possibilities it forecloses in so orienting itself (its achievement). To treat documentation as achieved in light of this end is to undertake to restore it

to a history it denies or establishes itself against. We can give voice to the alternative, then, by treating documentation as historiography: a particular historiography, not of things, but of the desire that things and the real should be coextensive and self-disclosing. This, it may not seem so odd to suggest, has a very lengthy history indeed.

Within this history, we have seen that 'history' has a particular place, value or historiographic capacity, as a figure by means of which fact is accomplished. If only those things are fact which are 'historied' or storied in the manner described above, it follows that what is not so storied is not a fact, not a thing, not an object or event, i.e. 'literally' nothing in terms of the figurality documentation requires of its facts. It could then be said that history enters documentation so as to come to its (documentation's) end: to distinguish fact from non-fact, or the real from what (not being present) is not even an eventuality, so that documentation can then present the difference, which means: need make no difference itself. Since 'it' is absent from the making of distinctions that history does, it is not even an eventuality that it could affect the way distinctions -- facts -- are made. We can thus restate the intimacy of the relationship between history and documentation. History enters the terms of the documentary project in such as way as to preserve the ahistoricity of reporting 'itself' (its absence from what it talks about), and it does this precisely by entering as the possibility of asserting, among other things, that everything about reporting (for example, its possible objects, procedures and practitioners) is irreducibly historical, subject to historical influence or, as may be said, 'historical through and through'. History or historicity is just a fact about inquiry, that is, supplies it with the meanings (facts) it presents -- and when it presents itself, supplies it with its own meaning (facticity) to present -- and this is where a good many treatments of the matter come to a close. They come to a close here, one suspects, because to present

a fact is to give the right answer (is to inquire and to have concluded one's inquiry) in the only sense documentation can give to the undertaking.

This, on the contrary, is where we begin. Endings of this sort, if more elliptical expression can now be given to the desire of which documentation is the historiography, speak to the imperative that whatever is said should 'have foundation'. If documentation is treated as a particular historiography, that is, as a characteristic, interested mode of reading, what arises is <u>not</u> e.g. the need to rush immediately into the lists to resolve the question of whether history is in fact the ground of inquiry. It becomes a question what 'the lists' are; what it is to be 'about' something (it might be more or other than this reading characteristically provides for); what it is to report, describe, present, document, assert, deny or inquire into something; what it is to ground something -- whether grounds or foundations (no less facts, things, objects, events, histories or history) must or even can answer to the imperative which shapes their discursive configuration in documentary reading -- and so on. The image of rebuilding the boat one is floating in is in some respects serviceable, provided it is recognized that there is no drydock available for the purpose, and that the building is in aid of retrieving our need for building rather than the claim, ultimately, to have produced a new and better boat. We turn, then, to our 'case'. As it accounts for quite a bit of recent disciplinary historiography, the second story will do nicely.

III.   The Principle in Practice

Versions of this story, which concur in adducing the polyvocalic present for the social sciences noted earlier, invariably locate themselves in relation to the work of Thomas Kuhn (particularly if not only <u>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</u>). Whether they then differ over the significance of having a discipline characterized by

multiplicity of orientation (theory and method), all such accounts treat Kuhn as something on the order of an honorary progenitor, i.e. as having brought to our attention, or as having given us the means to bring into view, this fact about our field.

We are already, then, well within the purview of a documentary reading with these accounts. Of interest to us, though not, it seems, to the authors, many of whom do indeed profess allegiance to self-described schools of sociology, is that out of their multiplicitous orientations they agree on something. They positively insist that there are many (or too many) paradigms in sociology. There 'are' many, but only if, in accordance with the requirements of a documentary reading, one treats self-description as fact (as the presence with reference to which a difference may be constituted, by means of another such presence). This is retrievable as a legislative act rather than the ostensive gesture it hopes to be, however. One need not accept the circumscription of practice to self-description accomplished by treating self-description as present. We have already seen the form of this accomplishment: if self-description is present (fact), it can only be circumscribed by the absent (by non-fact, by 'nothing'). If many self-descriptions are present, there is 'nothing' more to say (that is the fact, and the problem then becomes one of responding to it) -- though we have already seen how elaborate are the operations which bring us to this conclusion, and how the conclusion is repeated or reaffirmed whenever the 'facts themselves' are looked upon. Indeed, if we were not so thoroughly accustomed to privileging the content of statements (again their facticity: the achievement of transparency such that content is the presence that a statement is 'about'), we would see this act and the one that establishes the notional history discussed earlier (the couple: 'uncomplicated past/complicated present') as the same act. In other words, we would neither require sameness to be the unity or self-identity of what presents

itself, nor difference to be what obtains between two or more presences.[1]

Here, since we have some contingent grasp of the discursive structure of documentary accomplishments, we can reformulate what is at issue in the agreement these accounts display but fail to notice: not the fact which is presented again and again for review (assent), but the desire it speaks to, viz. that the facts should be secure (the limit of what we have to deal with), that we should get things right. Insofar as the accounts agree that this should be the accomplishment (i.e. perform or enact this agreement) their very agreement subverts the claim to 'differences'.

Thus the latter result as a picture of the state of the social sciences cannot have been got 'from Kuhn's text' without Kuhn's text having been treated as itself an instance of documentation, as a presentation of facts and therefore itself readable as one more fact calling for documentation. It is in terms of this recognition that one can fashion a structural key to these readings which is other than the structure they adduce for themselves ('Nature's Own', i.e. analytically none, for what they claim for themselves is the structure -- facticity -- of the fact which 'produces' them). In much the pattern noted above, we may expect 'differences' to arise (as they with some notoriety have) over the proper definition of a paradigm (its proper or real constituents/content), but not over the presence (facticity) of paradigms as objects for documentation (for differences or difference-making of this kind): over the nature of normal and extraordinary science, crises and revolution, but not over the presence of these (or Kuhn's text generally) as objects for documentation. Debate may rage over the _facts_ of facticity (the right definition, the best presentation of what there really is), but not over facticity 'itself' (not over the commitment to a world conceived as independent of our conceptions as itself the only possible ground of knowledge: not therefore, over the commitment to a world which is available for

documentation in documentation's terms). The commitment is already exemplified by these readings in their particular formulation of the givenness of polyvocality: as that which stands to their achievement as cause to effect, or as that which independently inaugurates (therefore cannot already embody) their achievement, where achievement is taken in the now familiar sense of 'whatever follows' -- both 'comes after' and 'is determined by' or 'a consequence of'. The solutions to our differences proposed in these readings then also remain, from our perspective by means of rather than despite their differences (their facts), true to their historiographic tasks. Whether the call is for resignation to the supposed babel of sociological paradigms, for their integration or synthesis, or for optimism in the form of the assertion that paradigmatic diversity has potential fruitfulness, their self-ascribed sense lies in their being able successfully to sustain some articulation of facticity 'itself' as a limit/ground. Since articulations under the auspices of these solutions can (and do) take any number of forms, the concern here is with the system which permits them to do so rather than with a sampling of 'what they contain'.[2]

1.   Thus resignation, for instance, has reference to a conception of univocality or fact as presence. This conception (requirement) is made weighty by, and gives weight to, the apparent absence of a single self-description in the discipline. The need to resign would have no sense (would not arise) without this requirement because its acceptance is what generates the 'many' (the differences) as a problem. That the many are 'seen' (that is, seen to matter, endowed with factual status) means that they are seen as frustrating its achievement. What is interesting about this response is that it declines recourse to the documentary version of the old saw that 'there are different ways of saying the same thing'. Specifically, it refrains from an attempt to resolve the differences (the problem) by making another difference (by adducing another fact, in this case either by inflecting or projecting the given fact such that a

'new' claim to have stated the fact of the matter, to have uncovered the 'real' unity of the social sciences, can be presented). This is neither a departure nor a lapse, though the resigned and the community which reads their work may find it an acutely uncomfortable posture. Rather, resignation's documentary coherence resides precisely in its withdrawing before the fact which is seen to determine its starting point. That it ends where it begins is not only legitimate, provided that the fact provides for it, but speaks to a characteristic relation of beginnings and endings which has already been noted.

2.   Where resignation's coherence consists in this withdrawal before its 'inaugural' fact, that of integration consists in differentiating it (presenting the facts of the fact). It therefore speaks to the same requirement, articulated in the necessity that interrelations of fact take the form of aggregation. The formulation of fact as presence licences only the proliferation of discrete essents (more facts), whether 'internal' or 'external' to the fact with which one begins. That is, a part of a fact is analytically identical to that of which it is a part in that its status as essent resides solely in its presence (and presence is what is indivisible, offering only its complete temporal and spatial self-containment to view). Integration, and with it a well-established vocabulary -- of 'parts' and 'wholes', 'components', 'elements', 'combinations', 'structures', 'composites' and so on -- expresses and perpetuates this specific discursive fecundity of fact (its supra- and intra-numerability as fact), but it does not 'follow' from it as something necessitated by a world in which parts and wholes disclose themselves. The need for integration only has sense in relation to the prior commitment to such a world, i.e. to the prior commitment to a discursive distinction of internality and externality such that the latter may be secured as the proper provenance of truth. It would not arise (as a problem of aggregation, of making distinctions among undifferentiated differences) if presence were not the

limit of fact and fact thereby the domain of this externality (the domain of what is other than and immiscible with any effort expended by us in its coming into view). Integration, insofar as it accepts its problem, must then trade on relations of isomorphy and replacement, for its acceptance of the problem means that there are no other relations in which the facts may stand to each other without ceasing to be facts. There will be nothing to say of a fact whose facts have been reallocated except that it is no longer present (is therefore nothing, or: nothing for the present, therefore past, passed on, passed beyond or replaced), while the 'new' one is present (is therefore something, or: something for the present, therefore present, here-and-now, current, proximate, immediate, evident, evidence, and so on). 'That's history', as the saying goes: one must attend to 'what is going on today'. Integration is then as much a citation of history as resignation (from point of view of practitioners it is the preferred citation or citation form) for what it accomplishes in its reallocation of fact is the very substance of 'subsumption without residue'. That is, like resignation, it permits no hint or remnant of 'non-fact' to enter its presentation (which here consists of the replacement of one collocation of 'parts' with another which claims to be 'whole').

3.   Optimism, finally, displays its commitment neither by 'ceasing' to document, nor by 'proceeding' to document, but by calling attention to the inevitability of documentation. That is, it displays its allegiance to a figure of unity as presence by calling attention to the inevitability of a state of affairs coming about which will make itself available as the optimal solution of our current differences, and so 'will' be there to document in the same way that facts 'are' and 'have been' available for documentation. By holding in effect that something will bubble up out of the paradigmatic stew, optimism offers an undiluted affirmation of the promissory history which drives and is continually reinvigorated by any instance of

documentation: it makes of any practitioner the potential conduit, not for more of the same (for if it were the case that differences were all he could foresee, the optimist would hardly consider that he had cause for optimism), but for a final unity which will come from the things themselves. Optimism then places complete faith in the rather occult ambulatory capacities required of facts and says (reaffirming one of many versions of the documentary conception of ground or limit) 'it's only a matter of time'. Since history (the fact of the workings of the things themselves) has provided for the current facts of the matter, it will also provide for their replacement (supercession), and we need only wait in readiness to document the moment of arrival. This response seems capable of occasioning as much discomfort as resignation, sometimes expressed as stemming from its lack of analytic vigour. The lack is as responsive to documentary requirements as vigour (presumably integration) is, however, and it is not inconceivable that its responsiveness rather than its purported deficiency accounts for some measure of the uneasiness expressed in like criticisms. Further demonstration may not add to our characterization of these responses as articulations of a discursive system organized by the commitment to a determination of fact as presence.

IV.   The Practice 'in Principle'

Thus far, the system of the documentary reading of Kuhn has only been considered from point of view of its enabling the production of a 'fact out of Kuhn's text' which is simultaneously the production of Kuhn's text as a 'fact' (as a presence or unity of meaning which comprises an aggregate of facts available for a potentially inexhaustible array of documentary operations and responses). What needs to be considered, if only briefly, is the way in which the success of this reading also constitutes its limitation.[3]

By requiring that Kuhn's text be appropriable as fact, each of the three responses discussed above establishes a relation with Kuhn's text which makes of the latter not a text (not a discursive accomplishment) but a pretext -- that is, an occasion for the exercise of the project to which, as moments of documentary reading, they are already committed (and already committing). Documentation will not itself see this as limiting: on the contrary, it will consider itself in a position (of disengagement or removal from the discursive) to say everything there is to say about Kuhn's text. As pre-text it is before or other than the discursive and so, just what is wanted, for it will say what there is to say in the way that the 'facts always speak for themselves'. It is for us to give this positioning a twist it cannot help providing for, by retrieving what 'Kuhn's text' so constituted has to say about documentation. It says a great deal in the limit because it is constituted precisely and only as what documentation is prepared to say. Thus documentation will 'take' from Kuhn (attribute to 'Kuhn's text') only so much as already belongs to its project, which means, it will make of 'Kuhn's text' an exercise in fact which shows greater or lesser felicity to its own requirements (on its own reading of these). Where 'Kuhn's text' shows signs of escaping propriety -- that is, where documentation in its own engagement with Kuhn finds itself in danger of having to acknowledge the discursive character of its engagement -- that is where 'Kuhn's text' will be arraigned on charges of 'implications': plainly intolerable, ambiguous, incoherent or error-ridden implications (in view of the facts, which is to say, in view of what is wanted of the facts).

If there is one feature of Kuhn's work which has been subject to more frequent characterizations of this kind than any other (or, in a parallel tactic from point of view of its efficacy as a means of suppression, more urgently ignored: see Ritzer 1980) it is his attempts to come to grips with what he calls the

incommensurability of paradigms. This is when, to give the figure its due, 'Kuhn's text' strikes back. There is nothing in principle to prevent documentation from formulating incommensurability as one more fact about paradigms, in much the same way as the paradigm is formulated as a fact about the success of the natural sciences in generating knowledge (results). On its principles this is just what it should be doing, but instead it 'modifies' their application. It makes of incommensurability an hypothesis (a _possible_ fact) and thinks (warrants the sense of) something like the following: if incommensurability _were_ a fact, we would be unable to compare paradigms because they would have nothing in common. Kuhn is then charged with promoting a thesis of 'extreme relativism'. The charge at least is common: as may have been anticipated, it is not only compatible with but produced by each of the three responses.

From point of view of the systematicity of the charge, then, there is here again no question of paradigms having the facticity required by documentation. The question is only whether incommensurability deserves to be a fact, i.e. in this inflection of 'about', a _component_ of paradigms. Since it is already formulated as fact, i.e. since all of the substitutive relations of presence have already been invoked, the question cannot be answered unless incommensurability is treated as a fact, and this is where documentation runs into problems (encounters its own limit qua a thing that disrupts the stability of the known or knowable). As facts go, that is, in terms of the discursive system that generates relativism as a sensible response, incommensurability has a strange 'content' for it is about difference (there is no change of sense here; 'about' still has reference to the idea of mirroring a self-subsistent thing in the world: predicating such a thing, thus 'the' world it is to come from). Worse still, it is about irreducible difference. To predicate incommensurability of paradigms is to invite calamity, _not_ because the result will be

a multiplicity of paradigms. This fact is quite supportable under specific conditions, if the number of commentators who accept it is any indication. It is because, if 'the' fact about paradigms is their irreducible difference, the result will be a multiplicity of worlds, which we may translate as the loss in principle of the documentary conception (requirement) of ground or foundation. If paradigms 'are' incommensurable (if their difference rather than their presence is the fact) then what their difference will present is the absence of a single authorizing presence which could account for them all. They will cease to have in common one ground and will thereby lose the possibility of discovering one voice. The promise of univocality will be forfeited if difference is permitted to matter.

It is this chain of sense-making that the idea of relativism recapitulates, or what its urgency says. But then we must acknowledge that relativism belongs in the most thoroughgoing sense to documentation, not as a thing (for example, one of its components) but as an internal, discursively generated necessity: as one expression of its discursive limit. The urgency of the warning that paradigms will cease to be 'comparable' has point, for it is a way of saying that, if what is other than fact (the discursive) should become fact (should matter, make a difference to what fact is), then any fact will cease to be fact; presence will cease to be the limit of things or of the real. Documentation sees its project jeopardized by such an eventuality, and relativism is its way of saying that such an eventuality is to be treated as inconceivable (in this, it says what every fact says). If the very best that can be imagined is unity, then the very, very worst is multiplicity that cannot be aggregated on the formula 'unity in difference', multiplicity whose difference cannot be 'reduced'. Differences are supportable -- that is, many facts are supportable -- because qua facts they do not disturb the security of the realm of the factual in the least: on the contrary, they affirm it. Insofar as paradigms, for example, are

exemplary facts, their difference does not matter. What it means that they are fact is that <u>fundamentally</u> they are the same. It is simply 'known' that they are proper objects (they do disclose their unity and will disclose their greater unity in due course). But to be confronted by this other sort of difference (a sort which persists in mattering or 'resists' assimilation to fact) is to verge on the meaningless, to come to the very limit of meaning and so to be presented with the absolute imperative to retreat (reaffirm unity or reassert presence as all there is). Relativism says 'this far and no further: we must go back on pain of utter chaos'.

That Kuhn's uses of incommensurability should occasion this response is not then a merit (or demerit) of Kuhn's text but a consequence and expression of its documentary readings. The charge of relativism brings with it, so to speak, the entire system of that particular mode of reading, and to say this is not to consign Kuhn's text to oblivion. The latter would also be a documentary conclusion: if Kuhn's text is not fact, it is nothing; if not present, absent; if not indivisible or self-same, an offense against Nature; if not independent of us, unthinkable, and so on. It is to say that there is nothing in the term 'incommensurability' which <u>causes</u> this response -- that is, makes for this response and no other, independently of the readings which invest it with the sense it has acquired for so many in sociology. Rather, that sense enacts the prior provision, among others, that incommensurability can 'be' a term, 'have' a content, and insofar, 'cause' responses which, because they are caused (inaugurated from outside) 'are' valid, real or themselves present (despite possible fluctuations in analytical vigour). What the canonical readings of Kuhn tell us is not that he bungled when he came to the relationships between paradigms (though certainly this is one version of what they say), but that the canon privileges (produces and limits itself by producing) relations of the sort we have been trying to retrieve from their more usual immersion in (construction of) the 'obvious'.

Ordinarily, efforts such as these would be expected to issue in a replacement account of Kuhn's text, in the most literal sense of the documentary figure of replacement.[4] Instead, we return to the rhetoricity of the report with at least the beginnings of a difference.

It is an important claim -- whose basis is not Nature unless that figure too can be reinvested as an expression of the belonging to language instanced in both documentation and our discussion of it -- that it is not immediately obvious what a truly alternative reading of Kuhn would consist in, if it could 'consist' at all. This is because it is not immediately obvious what a truly alternative mode of reading in the social sciences would consist in. Such a reading would not be presentable as fact (and might therefore be thought very unpresentable indeed) because it implies, and takes shape as, an undoing of what fact has meant (accomplished) as an expression of the particular relation inquiry has traditionally established with the discursive. It therefore proceeds by means of the tradition though not by means of the end which comprises the tradition. If the canonical figurations of fact may be read as enactments of the relation to discourse that inquiry has preferentially stipulated for itself, viz. the denial of the necessity of this relation, we can ask what it would be to inquire if fact enacted the affirmation of what it necessarily affirms by denying in any (every) case.

It has not on the other hand similarly proved a necessity to stress throughout the preceding that 'facts are discursive accomplishments after all'. Taking facts qua denials, this may seem more accessible than it may seem to have been elsewhere in our remarks, but this may only express the power the invitation to conclude has for us, since that in rhetorical terms is what repeated stress on 'the fact' would accomplish. 'Kuhn' (similarly 'history') has been used as an occasion in aid

not of 'new conclusions' but of making the question above available as one which could be taken seriously, where what is serious in the question will depend on our developing this implied shift in end, from denial of language as 'the' only means to truth or the intelligible, to its affirmation as our only means. A historiography of our accomplishments cannot require any other means than our historiography of things has, rather the elaboration of ways of making available a different relation to these.

Thus it is not here a question of developing an alternative reading of Kuhn, though it is nonetheless possible to indicate how one might begin (i.e. what we might require of ourselves in order to make a good start in relation to this shift in end). We would have to commit ourselves to treating statements like the following:

> The commitments that govern normal science specify not only
> what sorts of entities the universe does contain, but also, by
> implication, those it does not. It follows ... that a discovery
> like that of oxygen or X-rays does not simply add one more item
> to the population of the scientist's world (1970:7),

as something other than the provision of two more items for documentation's world: for the question 'Is it (immediately, obviously, clearly and of itself) true?'

Put otherwise, we might begin to find it curious that an infinite capacity to generate truths (this is the promise Descartes makes on behalf of method: if we "follow the order necessary ... there cannot be any propositions so abstruse that we cannot prove them, nor so recondite that we cannot discover them" 1960:16) comes at the price of strict adherence to a version of the true which prefigures the proper form of questions and answers. The belief in the possibility of documentation, it is being suggested, is not other than that earlier exercise in belief which attempted to make the true a representation free from all opinion or custom -- though to be sure it is not identical with it, i.e. it does not look the same.

Perhaps it will have become less and less self-evident that looking is what sociology does in order to produce its documents. In this sense, the foregoing may suggest how Derrida's emphasis on the characteristic leap of reading is well-placed (p. 16 supra). Our considerations are certainly intended to represent something, but could they constitute a document, or the thing represented, a thing? Does one paint a principle (produce its 'genuine reproduction')? and if it were somehow less problematic to address a principle on this model of representation than it is a fact, would such a picture secure the commonly sought repose of a conclusion?

NOTES

1   We might obtain some leverage for asking what other uses history could be put to, or for situating a 'paradox' stemming from its current employment: our need to rely on the 'words' in statements to tell us whether what they say is the 'same' or 'different' -- by 'looking', i.e. by themselves presenting the assertion or appearance that what they say is the same or different. This is less a paradox than a perfectly faithful application of documentary principles, in light of which we might rather want to question the principles than rule on the propriety of the words.

2   Appropriations of Kuhn in sociology include Barnes (1972, 1982); Bottomore (1975); Denisoff, Orel & Levine (1974); Doppelt (1978); Eckberg & Hill (1979); Effrat (1972); Eisenstadt & Curelaru (1976); Kuklick (1973); Langsdorf & Reeder (1985); Lehman & Young (1974); Potter (1984); Ritzer (1975, 1980); Westhues (1976). To the extent that the boundary separating it from philosophy of science is one that sociology has not been averse to crossing, pedagogically and in terms of publication, the assessments in Lakatos & Musgrave (1970) and Gutting (1980) are pertinent. A not inappropriately extended use of 'publication' would include, perhaps most importantly, seminars and lectures given in methods courses and elsewhere, and the notes, sections and prefatory remarks found in theoretical and methodological texts of a variety of stripes, in which the fact under discussion is perhaps most effectively propagated, and the courses of action it is thought to necessitate argued or propounded. Paterson (1981) departs this company quite interestingly, for present purposes.

3   This could be shown for each 'response to Kuhn' except that it can as readily be done 'jointly'. Here it might prove useful to consider resignation. It may be that neither the resigned nor a large part of the community which reads their work can find anything of positive value in this response, but this is only to say that it lacks value by the standards of documentation: where 'forward action' is wanted, ceaseless documentation of the differences, the resigned do nothing. This would be understood as a basis for reprisals (or would be understood to constitute one). But of course the resigned do something. They refrain, and this restraint, hesitation or pause is precisely what, from our vantage, calls for formulation as a positive achievement: as speaking, not to the facts, but to the promissory end of fact-finding operations. Resignation can be read as having given itself pause, i.e. as having produced its own uncertainty about the viability of the documentary project in the very course of prosecuting it. It is surely this relation which accounts for the harshness of reprisals when they occur. It is not that the resigned do 'nothing', but that they come to hesitate by doing what they are supposed to do. It could then be said that what gives them pause analytically is the fact that they produce for themselves the fact of their production: not a thing, but the necessity of their having a hand in the determination of the facts of the matter, which is then expressed in the worry that perhaps fact-finding will not lead 'anywhere', i.e. to the real story, which ought not to be adulterated by such engagement. So also, mutatis mutandis, for the other responses.

4   Components of such an account might include the assertions that the real unity of the social sciences has been under our noses all along, in the fact of its use of a discursive system based on a particular definition of fact, and that Kuhn or Kuhn's text in fact criticizes this very orientation. In it, it might be said, the problems of an old view of scientific inquiry in the philosophy of science are confronted and its characteristic claims refuted, so that Kuhn's text itself (what Kuhn really means) offers a replacement for the responses discussed, which misrepresent (or simply miss) the facts in their pretensions to objectivity, comprehensiveness, or whatever else may be adduced as the cause -- the fact -- of their failure. In other words, we would see discursiveness 'raised' to the status of a fact about inquiry in the same way that history can be (p. 36 supra). We would be treated (again) to a conclusion, while by contrast, one expression of the questions our example could be used to raise would be some attention to the systematic foreclosure at work in 'conclusions', taken as the proper end of any report and the proper expository setting or orientation of any example.

CHAPTER THREE

Readings that have yet to be Done

> It is less a question of confiding new writings to the envelope of
> a book than of finally reading what wrote itself between the
> lines in the volumes . . . . Because we are beginning to write, to
> write differently, we must reread differently (Derrida 1976:86-
> 87)

> And, whatever else they may be, texts are events in the history
> of language . . . . one must learn to pose anew the question of
> 'what really happens' in them and in the reader who actually
> reads them (LaCapra 1982:31)

I.   An Old Story

It may prove instructive, on the way to a stock-taking and a necessary

pause, not to leap over the text of the following conclusion: "For Derrida all cats are

grey in the night of 'writing'." Offered by no less authoritative a figure for the social

sciences than Habermas (1985:85), it is the claim of this utterance to report a

conclusion whose implications speak for themselves. Certain that he has received

Derrida's meaning, sure of the facts of the matter, he informs us immediately

following this deployment of the literary in aid of the literal: "I would not wish to

draw this conclusion" (ibid.). Perhaps sufficient context has been generated to

suggest some of the irony of this erstwhile passage from fact (essence) to value

(accident), or from a publicly available (self-communicating) object to a personal

response (the purely supplementary remarks of a reasonable subject). The passage is

worth quoting at length:

> We are now well aware, since Mary Hesse at the latest, that
> even the language of the sciences is shot through with
> metaphors; this is plainly true of the language of philosophy,
> which can never of course be entirely absorbed into its role as a

stand-in for scientific theories with strong universal claims. But one cannot, like Derrida, conclude from the unavoidably rhetorical character of <u>every</u> kind of language, including philosophical language, that it is all one and the same -- that the categories of everyday life and literature, science and fiction, poetry and philosophy, collapse into each other. For Derrida all cats are grey in the night of 'writing'. I would not wish to draw this conclusion. The use of language in the practices of everyday life stands under different restrictions from the language used in theory or art, which is specialized for the solving of problems, or for an innovative disclosure of the world (ibid.)

Rhetoricity, it seems, is just a fact about inquiry. Somehow, Derrida's relation to this fact is a damning fact about Derrida and what he does. Will it do to construe this text in turn as a fact about Habermas, damning or otherwise?

The short answer is no. A more complicated answer, and in terms of the position taken here as regards deconstruction's implications, a more satisfactory one, is yes and no. Yes, if one is willing to displace the requirements of fact so as to admit what they already admit by denying. It then becomes a highly consequential 'fact about Habermas' that his assessment belongs in a profound way to the metaphor of drawing conclusions -- that is, to a history of citation which gives his particular restatement meaning and rhetorical force. No, on the other hand, if this fact in turn is thought to settle matters. It would then already have become an exemplary fact for documentation and an espousal which it has been precisely the task of the thesis to problematize.

If we were to reread Habermas' text in light of its belonging to this history, a history as heterogeneous and non-linear as the tangle of custom, convention and language whose history it is, we might come to appreciate that its message is not, as might appear on first reading, the fact that Derrida has failed to tell us something we did not already know about the language of inquiry. Rather 'Derrida' is being faulted for failing to tell us something (or some thing) that we desire to know, i.e. something

known or knowable <u>in the manner to which we have become accustomed</u>. It is not a fact at all, then, but a threat which is being addressed in this text. Its concluding utterance functions much less as a neutral description than as a restatement of the imperative the text performs and espouses via the rhetorical device of a catastrophe. "The use of language in the practices of everyday life <u>stands under different restrictions</u> from the language used in theory or in art . . ." (1985:85, emphasis added). That is, it <u>must</u> so stand: "one cannot" explore the possibility that this opposition of theoretical and everyday language is not given but the tenuous issue of a problematic attempt to impose a standard; one "would not wish" to venture too near the foreign shores of such a possibility, lest the home urged by this standard should itself come to seem strange.

But surely it is strange: a strange home that renounces the home to which it irremediably belongs; a strange necessity which requires this belonging to be renounced before anything meaningful can be said about it; a strange project which will accordingly accuse its adherents -- 'when it shows' -- of this same belonging; and a strange principle which betrays itself from the start by requiring for its renunciation the very belonging that it renounces.

In this context, Habermas' insistence on the fact of rhetoricity ("we are now well aware . . .", "this is plainly true . . .") becomes explicable as a means of keeping a safe distance from a threat posed, not by 'Derrida' but by the very principle of a documentary commitment. If inquiry can be made "unavoidably rhetorical" in the same way that it can be made unavoidably historical, viz. in such a way that its rhetorical and historical elements will detach and present themselves from among 'the rest', then the danger will be averted that the language one uses to describe them might not be their own -- the one language exempt from "the unavoidably rhetorical

character of _every_ kind of language" because it does not belong to language at all.

It is presumably his commitment to this reserve of 'theoretical language' which leaves Habermas blind to the rhetoricity of his own text and more particularly to its complicity in the catastrophe it externalizes and mobilizes itself against. Elsewhere, and possibly unwittingly, we are given a very cogent statement of the stakes of this exercise: ". . . interests attached to the _form of presentation_ should not be allowed to get the upper hand; otherwise one could become cynical about questions of truth" (1985:88, emphasis added). But is it not precisely an entailment of documentation's own interest in attaining its strange home that the "form of presentation" will always be threatening "to get the upper hand"? Could one be dismayed by the necessity of writing if one did not already wish to suppress it, or be appalled at the need to 'use' language if one did not already seek to reduce it to an instrument that might otherwise (ideally) be dispensed with? We are coming at last to the crux of the matter, which is: that the writ served on writing is always served in writing; charges brought against language are brought from within language, must always bring language to bear. This is not a condition, Derrida and Raffel suggest in different ways, concerning which it makes sense to act _as if_ we had a choice of belonging or not belonging.

For documentation, however, the 'possibility' of making just such a choice is crucial. The true does not belong to language and so one must insist on an impossible possibility in order to attain it. It is worth noting in this connexion that Habermas figures the threatened collapse of "_every_ kind of language, including philosophical language" in _pairs_ of terms, each couple opposing the literal and the literary: "the categories of everyday life and literature, science and fiction, poetry and philosophy, [will] collapse into each other" (1985:85). Two categories are to be

secured, in other words: belonging (to which one does not want to belong) and not belonging (to which one aspires). Speaking <u>as if</u> he had already attained the literal, Habermas enjoins us to do the same. Put another way, denying the literary, Habermas seeks to enforce a boundary that he will necessarily violate in the attempt, and in every attempt. It is not that one "<u>could</u> become cynical about questions of truth" in this exercise (1985:88, emphasis added), but that 'cynicism' is so to speak built in.

Now this is not everything that writes itself between the lines of Habermas' text but it will serve to situate the question of whether he is 'right' or 'wrong', for it is only in terms of the story endorsed there that such an exercise has meaning. It is Raffel's and Derrida's merit to rigourously address the system of this meaning and its ramifications. The 'fact about Habermas' to which they refer us is thus neither a fact nor about Habermas: no fact, because our belonging to language nowhere presents itself in its entirety, and no picture of Habermas for we all write out of this condition. The suggestion is that like Habermas, we never more fully concur in a particular and problematic relation to language than when we are sure of having transcended the issue altogether, when we are sure that we are 'just writing' or 'just reading'. If it seems a difficult prospect to begin to examine how these ideas express and perpetuate the system to which they belong, and/or how the latter articulates a particular position, desire or principle as regards its condition, we might take heart from the likelihood that it will be no <u>more</u> difficult than securing the principle has been, and perhaps a good deal more salutary in its effects.

For suppose that documentation should finally realize its principle, and good writing finally achieve the absolute transparency that would entitle it to treat itself as the (true and proper) utterance of the things themselves. Would it not in the

same moment lose all possibility of savouring its success? There would be nothing more to say, not because in fulfilment of its story documentation had finally clinched the last word, but because, having taken up habitation in the timeless, the placeless, the wordless, it would have deprived itself completely of the means of producing stories with this or any other import. The end of the documentary story is not a triumphal return to pure communion with a world of pre-discursive meaning (presence), but rather a sad affair whose participants, if it would still make sense thus to evoke the human, would have no way of knowing even this. They would have no way of knowing, or knowing would have no analogy for knowers in a social and historical, that is to say discursive, world.

Habermas, then, is of interest not as an example of 'error' but for the way in which the message of his text exceeds and subverts his intention. He is not dissembling or otherwise at fault when he tells us: "I do not regard the fully transparent -- let me add in this context: or indeed a homogenized or unified -- society as an ideal . . . " (1985:94); nor in seeking to elaborate a "discourse theory of truth" (1985:85). The issues raised by our habituation to the system of documentation do not require, and are not well-served analytically by the production of, a villain in the form of a dogmatic, suspect or reactionary writer, a discipline of such writers, or an ethnos of such writers (that is, by the production of another fact, in any extension).

This is precisely the point, for 'Habermas' conceives and conducts his action from start to finish as a documentary exercise, 'dispensing' with the transparent society by means of transparent writing and 'avowing' the need for a discourse theory by means of the same disavowal of the discursive. It is in this respect that his text propagates and circulates within the rhetorically invested world

and history of the document. Whatever may be the referents of "everyday life and literature, science and fiction, poetry and philosophy" (1985:85), it is only their facticity which is in danger of collapsing, and only because, within the terms of this system, the appearance of what appears will quite literally cease to be at the suggestion that it may be other than it appears: if presence is not identical with itself, as we have seen, it becomes an absence or a non-thing -- it disappears. The collapse is therefore catastrophic only because a commitment to good or transparent writing already dictates the removal from language, custom and convention within which we might otherwise make more of the facts than the appearances they become, not without irony, in this persistent attempt to secure the true or a solid foundation. We say 'only', but not to minimize the very considerable artifact this project has generated by way of routine practice and belief. There is no fact in documentation's sense to which this history might be referred, but if rumour is groundless, as is often said, it is equally remarked that it is no less effective for all that.

II.   Readings that will always need Doing: Some Last Remarks

Perhaps the need for a non-obvious rethinking of the idea(l) of technical writing will have been given some justification in the foregoing, and equally the suspicion that this would generate not another reading, but as many readings as there are ways to take up our belonging to the story and the system it sustains. This would only be an alarming prospect, it may not need emphasizing, in view of the idea that sense-making _should_ come to an end. In the same way that we wish we could begin without having already begun, we would like to be finished before we start. There is no need to rehearse the problems of this legacy, whose promise we know with all the force of rumour but whose requirements we are less familiar with even as we fulfil them. When Derrida says that "there is no nonmetaphoric language to oppose to

metaphors here" (1976:67), he is saying for present purposes that there is no access to the workings of this story which is not made from within it and by means of its (our) history. There is not one 'word' in the thesis, for example, which has not been party to the telling of this story in many times and many places. If some sense is being made in the present instance, then, it <u>would not be</u> by effecting to speak in 'another' language which belongs to 'another' time or place, and no such claim is being made. Put otherwise, it is indeed a matter of reading and of writing differently.

A propos Derrida's work, we might begin seriously to consider the possibility that 'reading' is already a 'writing':

> If 'writing' signifies <u>inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign</u> (and that is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing in general covers the entire field of linguistic signs (1976:44, emphasis added).

That is, 'writing' already encompasses spoken and notational or technical language in the colloquial sense of these terms. What Derrida reworks and redirects of the concept of writing is the idea, already at work in its uses and etymology, of <u>making a mark</u> or <u>making a difference</u>:

> ...'to scratch,' 'to engrave,' 'to scribble,' 'to scrape,' 'to incise,' 'to trace,' 'to imprint,' etc. As if 'to write' in its metaphoric kernel meant something else (1976:123).

One could not ask, in a certain sense, for a more sociologically incisive characterization of the action of institution(s).[1]

NOTES

1   It is thus no accident that much deconstructive criticism concerns itself with reformulating in this light the conditions of reading, writing, translation, textuality, reception, formalisms and so on. In addition to sources cited in Chapter One, see also Graham (1985); Harrison (1985); Henning (1982); the particularly accessible work of the intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra (1978, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1985); Melville (1986); and Staten (1984, 1986).

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