Meta / Dia: Two Different Approaches to the Medial

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Introduction: Locating "Medium" in the Cultural Discourse

In his rare remarks on the question of the "medium," Hans-Georg Gadamer assesses above all that it is – as he somewhat complacently put it – an "interesting" concept (Begriff).[1] The philosophical interest in it is derived from its proximity to expressions such as 'mediation' or *Vermitteltheit* ('mediatedness'), which also play a prominent role in Hegelian dialectics and can be read as the basic function of the 'medial'. All terms – the 'medium' as well as 'mediation' and the 'medial' – belong together and turn out to be fundamental for the entire tradition of western thought; however it remains unclear if there is a specific structure – either to the "medial" or to its "mediality" – that conveys any process of mediation (or 'mediatedness'). I therefore begin my discussion of the full circle of notions by reconstructing their interconnections with other fundamental concepts of cultural philosophy such as the symbolic and the performative, in order to reveal its peculiarity. In the most general sense of a 'mediator' the 'medium' remains literally 'in the middle'; i.e. between two entities or processes and objects, creating transitions between them. Culture seems impossible without this transitiveness. The concept of "medium" thus has the potential to become a universal category or interface. It creates connections as well as differences and divisions just as much as it functions as a 'condition of the possible' for each and every cultural practice. Concepts of medium therefore prove to be indispensable where we deal with signs, representations and translations as well as with processes of understanding, communication and memory. Since men can actually do nothing but mediate – that is to say interpose "concepts" (Hegel) or "distances" (Cassirer) in order to posit a kind of spacing, so as to displace their displacements and in this way – to approach that which is new. Mediations and relationships belong together; referentiality requires mediality: The ability to differentiate, to cut in, to break or to rupture is then an essential part of the *conditio humana*, for any determination, meaning or cultural order requires differences, just as the form of the *Unter-Schiede* (dif-ferences)[2] can be said to originate in its historicity and constitute it.[3] However, there is still the question of whether or not the concept of media is adequately modelled here; or, put differently, if we are seeking it in a place where it does not even belong.

From the perspective taken thus far, we would be confronted with the medial, the 'middle' or with differentiality as the most fundamental guarantee of culturality, just as inversely, mediation amalgamated with the symbolic and the performative cannot be separated from them. The context has originates in the philosophy of language and art. It is thus not surprising that in particular Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Ernst Cassirer

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[1] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Kultur und Medien, in: Zwischenbetrachtungen. Im Prozeß der Aufklärung. Jürgen Habermas zum 60. Geburtstag, Frankfurt/M. 1989, p. 715.

[2] [Translators Note: Originated by Heidegger the term '*Unter-Schiede*' emphasizes the division, the separation as it were (symbolized by the hyphen) that occurs in differing one object from another.]

[3] See Georg Christoph Tholen, Die Zäsur der Medien, Frankfurt/M 2002.

or also Martin Heidegger and the French structuralists and post-structuralists are among the foremost contributors to a general media philosophy. Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, whose considerations might be suitable for those models, which are concerned with the intimate interconnection between art and language, should also be included here. Both arts and language obey an *ur-sprüngliche* (primordial) differentiality, which, as Heidegger and Jacques Derrida equally emphasized, does not refer to *anything* primordial, but rather to an *Ur-Sprung* (a primordial leap),[4] a movement generating a continual differentiation, which time and time again is 'over-written' and 'shifted' by new differences. Every *Über-Tragung* (trans-mission; literally: over-carrying) and every *Über-setzung* (trans-lation; literally: over-setting)[5] already imply a differentiation, as they modify both the transmitted or transferred as well as the process of transmission thus initiating a process that continues infinitely without finding a 'reference point', a point of arrival or an *adequation*.[6] In one of his first essays, *On Language as Such and the Languages of Man* (1916), Benjamin developed this notion in connection with the Jewish theology from the opposition of the 'pure' languages of the divine and the languages of man.[7] Underlying it is a direct naming of the name, which reveals, so to speak, the singularity of the "being" at every moment and which would only be suitable to a divine nature. In relation to the language of man this requires an incessant translation (latin: *transferre*), which at the same time suffers from an ongoing breach such as that specified in the preface to *Origin of the German Tragedy*[8]. Consequently, every expression, like every cognition, proves to be expelled from the paradise of immediacy and dependent on mediation, just as every mediation in turn is rooted in the process of a transmission which refuses its fulfilment and, as Benjamin adds, determines the basis "of all sadness and (seen from the perspective of things) all silence of nature".[9] Then, as Benjamin writes in the essay *The Task of the Translator* published five years later, the specific feat of the medial also exists in testifying to the difference between the languages as well as their "supra-historical relatedness."[10] However, this refers to a vague longing ultimately attached to the idea of a divine criterion lost forever to mankind and which can at best be touched through art that stems from "certain types of thing-languages" in order to save the "connection with languages of nature" from new ones.[11]

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[4] [Translators Note: The German *Ur-Sprung* (origin) allows for a primordial leap or act and allows for an opening up, as well as a singular appearance.]

[5] [Translators Note: *Über-Tragung* and *Über-Setzung* both carry with them the sense of transferring something (in the sense of the Latin *trans-ferre*) e.g., from one thing to another, from one point to another, or from one language to another.]

[6] See esp. Jacques Derrida, Différance, in: idem. [transl. Alan Bass], Margins of Philosophy, The University of Chicago Press 1984, pp. 1-27.

[7] Walter Benjamin: Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen. In: Gesammelte Schriften, Frankfurt/M 1977, Vol. II.1., pp. 140-157. Also, Winfried Mennighaus: Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie, Frankfurt/M 1995.

[8] Walter Benjamin: Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels. In: Gesammelte Schriften, Frankfurt/M 1977, Vol.I.1, pp. 202-430, here: p. 214ff.

[9] *"aller Traurigkeit und (vom Ding aus betrachtet) allen Verstummens"* ibid., Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen, loc. cit., p. 155. [Translators Note: All English translations found in the footnotes are my own.]

[10] ibid., The Task of the Translator. In: One-way Street and Other Writings, [transl. J.A. Underwood] Penguin 2008, pp. 29-45, here p. 35.

[11] "gewissen Art von Dingsprachen [...] *Zusammenhang mit Natursprachen*" ibid., Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen, loc. cit. p. 156.

It is illuminating that Adorno pursues this idea meticulously in his writings on aesthetics, intensified by a dialectic that puts art – and in particular music – at the mercy of the same adjustment or shift. A key passage in *Music and Language*: *A Fragment* (1956) states, "intentional language wants to mediate the absolute, and the absolute escapes language for every specific intention, leaves one behind because each is limited. Music finds the absolute immediately, but at the moment of discovery it becomes obscured (…)." Music thus reveals its similarity to language in "that, as a medium facing shipwreck, it is sent like intentional language on an odyssey of unending mediation in order to bring the impossible back home. But its form of mediation and the mediation of intentional language unfold according to different laws (…)."[12]

Once again we are confronted with the opposition between the naming of the divine name as the only suitable word for evoking the "non-identical" and the concept always estranged from it as a universal inherent to the irrevocable sign (*signum*) of an "idealistic pre-decision", as Adorno writes in his *Negative Dialectics*.[13] There is no conceivable place, where justice can be done to the materiality of the things themselves: "What the philosophical concept will not abandon is the yearning that animates the nonconceptual side of art […]"[14] – an art that to the same degree exposes its own supposed immediacy as appearance. The true, like the symbolic, owes much to an inescapable mediation – and similarly to the medial they will always contain the trace of an irreparable fissure, yet at the same time continue to refer to an interminability that seals the fate of humankind and its cultural practices.

One can reject this type of inherent theologism, its latent messianism, as well as its hidden reference to an absolute – or the difference between a medial and an immediacy that resonates within it, and upon which the former measures itself. It is not the questionable difference that is of importance in developing a philosophy of the medial but rather the figure of mediation as an original alienation therein woven in, because it seeks to fulfill both the notion of a *necessary mediatedness* of all human relations, the inner correlation between culturality and mediality, as well as their chronic *non-fulfillment*. Benjamin, like Adorno, has tried to derive these particulars from an irreconcilable break in the ontological, from a disparity between the sphere of the divine and the domain of men to in order to finallytransform the tasks of mediation into political practice. Nonetheless, the actual volatility exists in that a radical concept of media is thus formulated for the first time – one that defines the medial as an indispensible condition or a priori. Moreover, it is done in a way that the medium always already impacts the mediatized, transforms it and forges it. It is this 'art of forging', a literal 'forgery',[15] first systematically developed by Marshall McLuhan, that is a guide for all further media theory and at the same time poses a challenge for it – whether it be to decipher an inadequacy or a lack in the medial, to account for its permanent transitoriness, or, as McLuhan ironically expresses it, to posit a "massage" in mediation which works over all social and cultural domains.[16] Media philosophy

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[12] Theodor W. Adorno, Music and Language: A Fragment, in: idem. [transl. Rodney Livingstone], Quasi una Fantasia, Verso, London 2002, pp. 1-6, here: p. 4, 5.

[13] Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, [transl. E.B. Ashton] Continuum 2007, p. 6 -11, as well as indem., Aesthetic Theory, [transl. Robert Hullot-Kentor] Continuum 2004

[14] ibid., Negative Dialectics, loc. cit., p. 15.

[15] The Cynic, Diogenes, was accused of this. See Diogenes Laertius, Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen, Hamburg, 2nd ed. 1967, p. 304ff.

[16] Marshall McLuhan with Quentin Fiore and Jerome Agel, The Medium is the Massage, Penguin Design Series 2003, p. 26, also: p. 26ff.

involves the systematic spelling-out and reflection on this 'working over'. The relevance of media philosophy is primarily measured by the clarification of its transcendental indispensability, as argued by McLuhan in Understanding Media, where media are said to have the power to modify perception, thought, knowledge or action. The remarks made here are meant as a contribution to this work of clarification.

Locality of the Medial

I would now like to consider the systematic difficulty caused by a concept of media, whereby mediation is granted a type of universal status, and where every possibility of differentiating between the medial and non-medial withers, such that mediation itself disappears. It should be added here that the terms 'medium' and 'mediation' as well as 'the medial' and 'mediality,' form a circle that allows them to be separated from one another just as little as it allows them to replace one another. All of them occupy an interim space, a 'milieu', as McLuhan said, referring to Leo Spitzer,[17] within which we move and that shapes us – which is precisely why it seems difficult to fully fathom its concept, because as *tertium* (or as a third), it can only be localized by virtue of a differentiation. Neither internal nor external, the medial is like a phantom that refuses to materialize precisely at the moment when we try to get hold of it. However, unlike the symbolic, the medial does not describe a relation that would be decipherable; nonetheless, the concept of relation presupposes both the familiarity of the *relata* as well as its structure and rules for connections – the common mathematical formalization 'aRb' characterizes exactly that. The same does not apply to the notion of media, because it basically sets *three* unknowns in relation to one another, whose places, moreover, are first constituted through the mediation. Formally it should concern the sequence (a)–(M)–(b), whose places all have to remain in parentheses, insofar as both 'a' and 'b' are literally *be-dingt* i.e., conditioned by, M;[18] their undecidable centre, just as, inversely, the structure of 'M' can only be determined by 'a' and 'b' which already bear the medial as an index. In other words, all of the places remain unknown because that which is mediatized cannot be represented without the medium, just as inversely, the medium can only be represented by reverting to the mediatized. Obviously, we are moving in a circle created by a series of negations, which identifies the concept of mediation itself as well as its various facets as a 'negative'.[19]

Consequently, neither the medium nor the medial can be allocated a precise locality – a problem which has been seen as a characteristic "uncertainty" or "indeterminability" theorem" of "media theory" from the beginning: This is reminiscent of McLuhan's notion of media's constitutional blindness, since the effect is always a hidden ground and never part of a figure. McLuhan points out that what one sees is the figure, but that it is the ground, which creates the impact. Ultimately this is the meaning behind "The

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[17] Leo Spitzer, Milieu and Ambiance, in: Essays in Historical Semantics, New York 2nd ed. 1968, pp. 179-316.

[18] [Translator's Note: Whereas *be-dingt* can be translated as 'conditioned by' it also inherently contains a reference to *Dinge* or things.]

[19] This insight at the same time forms the insertion point of a 'negative' media theory, which attempts to systematically develop these; see for now my own attempts in: Medialität und Undarstellbarkeit. Einleitung in eine 'negative' Medientheorie, in: Sybille Krämer (Ed.), Performativität und Medialität, Munich 2004, pp. 75-96, Negative Medialität. Derridas Différance und Heideggers Weg zur Sprache, in: Journal Phänomenologie, Jacques Derrida, Issue 23 (2005), pp. 14-22, Tertium datur. Einleitung in eine negative Medientheorie, in: Was ist ein Medium, ed. by Stephan Münker, Alexander Roesler, Frankfurt/M 2008, pp. 304-321.

medium is the message": The medium is hidden, the content obvious.[20] No place is in the real that can be identified *as such*. The real can only be spoken of *indirectly* or through a persistent negativity by the mediation around it. And this mediality, moreover, is one that always withdraws from what it is able to accomplish in terms of its positive determination. For example, what would be the mediality of language? Would it be its propositional structure, as some philosophers allege, the figural power of rhetoric, its communicative function, the "illocutionary force" of the speech act, the entire scene of communication, the infinite creativity of syntactic and semantic concatenation, the voice that lends its presence, the writing, or the order of signifiers, which ensures the duration and historicity "beyond … (the author's) life itself", as Derrida formulated?[21] Granted, all of these qualificationsdeliver 'contributions' to what can be identified as the mediality of language; however, any determination or viewpoint already means the exclusion or subsumption of the others and with that comes a kind of reductionism – just as on the other hand, the recognition of all the aspects together would constitute a tautology. The mediality of language is language itself. Is this not also the reason why Heidegger reverted to the level of this tautological equation, to resist any attempt at a universal comment 'about' the linguisticality of language? "We encounter language everywhere"; "language itself is – language"; "language speaks," as Heidegger says in *Poetry, Language, Thought*.[22] There is no exhaustive media philosophy of language that does not fundamentally narrow it or truncate its own possibilities. For the same reason, Ludwig Wittgenstein recommended in his *Philosophical Investigations* that the practice of speaking shall be understood as based on "language-games", instead of drawing on language itself. Consequently, Wittgenstein ask us to "travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction" and to consider a "number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings".[23] One therefore could say that Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* demonstrate the mediality of language in an exemplary manner; language, in its mediality, reveals itself only by virtue of a plurality of uses, which can only be analyzed performatively. The medial then *appears through its use*, without being manifested *as* such: "I am only *describing* language, not *explaining* anything."[24]

McLuhan attempted to solve this problem by anchoring all of the ontological qualifications of the medial in relation to anthropological features of man, declaring it a basic condition of human culture in general. Consequently, McLuhan does not provide any general definition of media based on general properties; rather all of them are extensions of the senses or the human body – whether clothing, instruments, glasses,

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[20] McLuhan, The Medium is the Message, in: idem., Understanding Media, Routledge Classics 2001, p 7-23.

[21] Jacques Derrida, Signature Event Context", in: Margins of Philosophy [transl. Alan Bass] University of Chicago Press 1982, p 307-330, here: p. 313.

[22] Martin Heidegger: Poetry, Language, Thought, [Transl. Albert Hofstadter] Perennial Classics 2001 p.187, 188 passim.

[23] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations [Transl. G.E.M. Anscombe] Blackwell, 3rd Ed. 2001, Preface, p. IX.

[24] idem., Philosophical Grammar, [Transl. Anthony Kenny] University of California Press 1974, Book II §30, p. 66. see similarly idem., Denkbewegungen, Tagebücher, Frankfurt/M 1999, p. 84 (No. 183) as well as idem.; Philosophical Investigations, loc. cit. § 109, p. 66: "And we may not advance any kind of theory. (...) We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place."

books or artificial light sources.[25] With that he returns to the early philosophy of technology of the Hegelian Ernst Kapp, who already interpreted weapons and tools as projections of human organs in conjunction with an older anthropological concept of humans as being inherently deficient and in need of enhancement – as developed particularly by Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder's influence can be traced from Friedrich Nietzsche to Arnold Gehlen and especially in the understanding of technology in the 1950's, according to which men– the "wild beast" (Nietzsche) – produced art and technology as compensatory qualities, in order to overcome its inadequacy and to be able to survive. Furthermore, Sigmund Freud interpreted the prothetic nature of technology in *Civilization and Its Discontents* as an expression of the wretchedness of mankind, insofar as mankind set itself up as a "god with artificial limbs" who is "quite impressive when he dons all his ancillary organs" but is nevertheless pitiful because these organs have "not become a part of him".[26] McLuhan too noted the ambivalence of the prosthetic, in the sense that it enables as much as it restricts: "Any invention of technology is an extension or self-amputation of our physical bodies (…)."[27] The intervention is characteristic of the dialectical thinking of McLuhan, which remains frequently unrecognized., The moment we supplement our body through technology, we expose it to anaesthesia or desensitization. The gain suddenly changes into a loss; medial technologies do not submit to any clear position because they are paradoxically constituted.

Nevertheless, there is something not quite right with the image of the prosthesis. The medial principle runs counter to it because every prosthesis also functions as a source of vexation. Technology-based organ extensions supplement the human, just as inversely technology is extended into humans. The tool that extends the hand is reflected in the hand that extends the tool.[28] The medial then functions as a hybrid that does not take the interface into consideration, a hinge so to speak or a "change of aspect" (Wittgenstein) from apparatus and body. In particular, a fissure or a difference arises in the seam that joins the two, which as it were would be the place of reflection relevant from a media philosophical perspective, but which is again systematically faded out due to the subject of the extension. One might say: At the transition, there, where the machine projects into the flesh and the flesh into the machine, a monstrosity arises, a wound that gapes between men and medial technology and which emerges exemplarily based on the artificial hand that emulates the movement of the natural: through the whirr of the motor or the characteristic rigidness and coldness inherent in the prosthesis makes it shocking in many respects. Where the metaphor of "extension" strives to adapt the medial to the human and to reconcile itself with it, its necessary obverse side would be its irreconcilability or chasm, which admittedly says less about the medial itself than about the inadequacy of the prosthetic, that fixes its position precisely at the point where – literally – the gap remains open. McLuhan's theory leaves more questions unanswered than it can answer.

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[25] Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, The Medium is the Massage, loc. cit., p. 26ff.; furthermore: McLuhan, Understanding Media, loc. cit., p. 8ff.

[26] Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, [transl. David McLintock], Penguin Books, London 2002, pp. 1-82, here p.29.

[27] Marshall McLuhan, The Gadget Lover, in Understanding Media, loc. cit., pp. 45-52, here p.48-49.

[28] See also A. J. Mitchell: „If there is to be mediation, the tool itself can no longer function as intermediary but must itself be transformed." Andrew J. Mitchell Heidegger Among the Sculptors, Stanford 2010, p. 77.

Nietzsche's Typewriter again

In order to approach this difficulty of appropriately localizing the medial, we will first make a small detour that discusses the 'solution' to this paradox as exemplified in the positions of two of the most prominent media theorists in German speaking countries: namely, Friedrich Kittler's media materialism and Georg Christoph Tholen's 'metaphorology of the medial' followed by positing a third approach. Both theorists take as their point of departure Nietzsche's dictum – one frequently cited (in German at least): "our writing tools are also working on our thoughts."[29] From this Kittler derives no less than an emphasis on a mediatic a priori, i.e. the assertion that technical means do not just extend the possibility of our thoughts, but rather directly intervene in them.[30] The context of the passage to which Kittler alludes seems clear: "You are right", notes Nietzsche in his reply to a letter from Heinrich Köselitz: "Our writing tools collaborate on our thoughts. When will I manage to convey a longer sentence with my fingers […]."[31] A few days before, Köselitz had written to Nietzsche: " I would like to see how manipulation occurs with and through the writing tool. […] Perhaps you will find you express yourself differently with the instrument […] I do not deny that my 'thoughts' in music and language are often dependent on the quality of the feather and paper."[32] Hence, the original idea stems from Köselitz, who suggested that the 'writing tools' intervene not only in our thoughts but also in our creative processes. Nevertheless, not philological correctness is important, but the problem of constitution, which arose from it. It is vested above all in the prefix *mit*. What does the *mit* in *Mitarbeit* (collaboration) mean, what is its specific epistemic surplus? Often overlooked, it refers to the practice of the medial in the sense of its impact, its influence on thought. *That* mediality and thinking are entangled in one another seems to be trivial; nonetheless, it is critical to understand *what type* of entanglement this is, i.e., its particular modality.

Kittler does not hesitate to infer from *Mitarbeit* that all thought is a function of technology and thus 'always already' mediatized, that subsequent to the *mit* (with/co-) a transcendental sense is added. However, is it obvious what 'always already' means in this context and what status the 'aprioritic perfect' has in the medial? The prepositional *mit* (with/co-) connotes here an instrumentality, not a cooperation, whereof both sides of the process, the thinking as well as the tool, participate in. Kittler infers from it what he calls the "exorcism of the spirit" due to the triumph of the machine.[33] Here, he asserts a dependency, a one-sided determination, so that the specific modality of the *mit* (with/co-) leads to a technical 'condition of the possible' in a Kantian sense, a *conditio sine qua non*, without which we cannot do, a historical 'a priori'. Or is this just a

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[29] Cited here according to Friedrich Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, [Transl. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz] Stanford University Press 1999, p.200. Nietzsche wrote this in a letter to Peter Gast (a pseudonym used by Heinrich Köselitz) in Feb. 1882.

[30] Friedrich Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, loc.cit., p.109.

[31] "Sie haben recht, unser Schreibzeug arbeitet mit an unseren Gedanken. Wann werde ich es über meine Finger bringen, einen langen Satz zu drücken […]Können Sie das auch lesen!" Friedrich Nietzsche, Brief an Peter Gast, Feb. 1882, in: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Berlin New York 2002, Vol.III.1, p. 172. NOTE: Whereas Winthrop-Young translated Kittlerian quotation that the tools 'work on' our thoughts, I prefer to use collaborate here in order to emphasize the *mit* (with) aspect of Nietzsche's *mitarbeiten.*

[32] "Nun ich möchte gerne sehen wie mit dem Schreibapparat manipuliert wird. (…) Vielleicht gewöhnen Sie sich mit dem Instrument eine neue Ausdrucksweise an (…), ich leugne nicht, dass meine ‚Gedanken' in der Musik und Sprache oft von der Qualität der Feder und des Papiers abhängen (…)." ibid., Briefe III.2, p. 229.

[33] "(…) the exorcism of the spirit." Friedrich Kittler (Ed.): Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften, Stuttgart 1992.

discursive postulate, a claim that we have to fulfill when we want to speak of mediation as a basal structure of cultural practice? Even though Peter Strawson discussed the transcendental conditions from the perspective of *conditiones sine quibus non* in his analysis of *individuals*, this still needs to be differentiated from the Kantian 'conditions of the possible' as formulated in his *Critique*, because the title 'transcendental' is consistently only used in consideration of a subject and its ability to reflexivity.[34] Transcendental arguments would then be reflexive arguments. It remains questionable though what their equivalent in relation to media and their technical determinants would be. In particular, what can be referred to as 'conditions of the possible', requires a reconstructive gesture that reflects on its own inherent necessary presuppositions, while a medial transcendental, especially in its technical guise, points to real conditions or 'material' requirements, which in the form of apparatuses or technical arrangements enter into the symbolic and its production. Nevertheless, once again the question arises from which location this should happen, which discursive formation is responsible for it and who or what vouches for its validity.[35]

Consequently, we are either confronted with a theoretical gap, which we are still unsure how to close, or we need to be more precise about what *Be-dingungen* (conditions; literally, "be-thinging") means in the context of media theory and if the *mit* (with/co-) used by Nietzsche and Köselitz only means an influence, a coincidence or 'contemporariness' – or a conditioning in the strict sense, a 'condition of the possible'. Interactions are indisputably present – nevertheless, their presence and their 'present' or contribution prove to be as mysterious as the other formulations, especially where these only call on an existence, a 'that' that veils the 'how' which would be relevant in this context. Influences, interactions or coincidences have to be separated from *conditiones sine quibus non* (indispensible conditions) just as these, in the strict sense, need to be separated from generativity and transcendentality. On the one hand, claiming that thought, perception, space and time, or the symbolic, cannot manage without media would imply only to arrive at negative conclusions, which refuse to provide an answer to the question *in what sense* mediation is necessary. On the other hand, to speak of the media as generating meaning leads not only to numerous antinomies and inconsistencies, insofar as each construction of meaning needs an analysis that sees through it, but beyond that also invokes a phantasm of sovereignty, which at the same time credits mediation with 'too much' power, because media and technology triumph over knowledge itself. A strict constructivism refuses its own premises, that can only function as axioms, unless we are dealing with a mathematics, which nonetheless does not speak *about something*, but rather analyzes only the consequences of its self-generated structures.

The *mit* (with/co-) in the sense of inscribing the technical in our thinking thus raises more questions than it answers. Evidently, most literature in the field of media theory converges – with regard to the thesis of constitution – in the assumption of a genuine productivity of the medial as indicated in both Benjamin's and Adorno's philosophy of language and art, there, however, with respect to the dialectic between creating and

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[34] Peter Strawson: Einzelding und logisches Subjekt. Ein Beitrag zur deskriptiven Metaphysik, Stuttgart 1972; Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason [Transl. Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood] Cambridge University Press, 1998, A 1-6, B1-10.

[35] This doesn't mean that we would debate the possibility of medial self-reflexitivity – art does nothing but that. What is meant, however, is that in the medial, the discursive reflections on its conditions are not the subject of the mediation. Consequently, discursivity and mediality need to be differentiated.

limiting or enabling and refusing, just as they are felt – and in the same sense with reference to art – in Heidegger's 'struggle' between 'earth' and 'world'.[36] If we are dealing with a primordial chiasm, the significance of the productivity, its specific modality – not unlike the *Mitarbeit* (collaboration) of Nietzsche's writing tools – remains undefined. Moreover, it also remains undefined how the productivity of production or the generativity of generation can be reconstructed without falling back on the generativity of reconstruction itself and without taking into account their own mediality. Transcendental theories of experience or cognition always include both, because the ability of perception or knowledge coincide with their reflection, just as Michel Foucault's archives and their 'historical apriori' operate within the register of discursive formations, whereas the transcendentality addresses the conditions found in reality, which in turn have to be differentiated from the way they are addressed. Language speaks 'of' or 'about' language in the medium of language – comparatively, uncovering the constituitivity of media requires a theory of media that actualizes the insight in the discursive, i.e., in another medium. Hence, the exemplary position of language in philosophical discourse, which forms a challenge for every strict media theory, just as it acts as a model for it, because, as Heidegger expressed it in his later philosophy, we are always already reflecting "within language and with language", so that all speaking of language remains subject to the systematic limitation of trying to speak about language with language and by doing so entering into a circle, which proves that right from the start, even before it becomes a topic, we are already moving on its terrain.[37] Obviously, this circle resists being easily transferred to a general concept of media; at the same time it raises doubts regarding the durability of the generativity thesis and its postulation about constitution. A philosophy of language is unable to grasp language – just as a philosophy of media cannot seize the mediality of the medium – but rather only the 'ways' in which speaking marks "furrows" or intervenes into language[38] and how it is necessary to continually put these into motion again in order to coax other surprising or still unexpected ways from them. Moreover, a philosophy of media grasps how important it is to observe the medium as it 'works', that is through the work i.e. the practices themselves, which it in turn performs. There is, however, nothing obvious about what the term 'generation' should mean with regards to language or mediality, not only because it is not clear which place the medial occupies in language, but rather because the "speech act", the "conversation" or the "understanding" just as the structure or repetition (de Saussure, Derrida) is able to keep awake such *Be-Wegungen* (movements)[39] but not to constitute them – let alone thoughts, the communicativity of communication or the social etc.

Between Information Theory and Structuralism

In order to do justice to Kittler though, I would add here that this grasps the concept of technology in the original sense of *techné* to a very large extent and at the same time refers to Heidegger, especially to his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*. The expression *techné* invokes the entire circle of 'art', 'craftmanship' right up to

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[36] Martin Heidegger, The Origin of the Work of Art, in: idem., Basic Writings, Ed. David Farrell Krell, Harper Perennial 2008 pp. 139-212; see also my interpretation in: Posthermeneutik, Berlin 2010, p. 109ff.
[37] Martin Heidegger, The Way to Language, in: idem., Basic Writings [orig. Transl. by Peter D. Hertz, revised by David Farrell Krell] Harper Perennial, 2008, p. 397-426, here p. 398, 399 passim.
[38] ibid, p. 408ff.
[39] [Translator's Note: *Be-Wegungen* also carries with it a sense of creating paths.]

'knowledge' and 'science' as well as *techniké*, technology in the actual sense, *tektonia*, *archi-tektonia* and *teknosis*, the basis of architecture just as procreation. Aristotle refers to it as the virtue of *poiesis*, the true creation to which the created work or *ergon* also belongs.[40] Which is why Heidegger generally understood technology as a thought, while at the same time making clear that technological culture had launched the 19th century into a 'frenzy' that radically changed the 'sense of being' and its obscurity. What Nietzsche diagnosed as the "devaluation of what is most valuable", whose 'malaise' spread in the form of European nihilism,[41] turns into its actual recognisability for Heidegger through the reign of technology and plunges mankind into the 'homelessness' of the abandonment of being.[42] Kittler removed the critique of technology and moved the technological itself into a truth-occurrence, which, in the meaning of the Heideggerian *Aletheia,* shows the 'unconcealment' of the world and with that superimposes the technological. It is based on operations rooted in formal algorithms, which in turn take on the positions of language, thought and the symbolic.[43] From there Kittler is able to delve into the entire history of Western culture, once more based on mathematics as well as the cultural and media technology derived from it: It is neither content nor symbolic orders that play a role, but rather, according to the provocative response in *Grammophone, Film, Typewriter* nothing but letters, signals and data processing. "(N)ichts ist, was nicht schaltbar ist",[44] as Kittler writes in his essay *Vom Take Off der Operatoren* in *Draculas Vermächtnis* : The sceptical attack is aimed at traditional metaphysics, so that Kittler finally formulates a media technological critique of rationality, on whose back an "informationstheoretischer Materialismus"[45] can be erected, dissolving the traditional "Geschichte der Seelen und ihrer Nosologien" in the arsenal of news technologies, which "das Innere nach außen gekehrt oder eben implementiert hat".[46] Not only do perceptions, thoughts or memories therefore prove to be mediations in the most general sense, but even their theoretizations form the effects of technologies, which are thus at the start of it all and dictate their conditions, instead of pursuing human directives: "Was Mensch heißt, bestimmen keine Attribute (…), sondern technische Standards."[47]

The radicalism of the tone feeds on the conviction of belonging to an "axial age" and being at the threshold of a new age, in which all of the former medial formats begin to amalgamate into a single universal medial machinery. Kittler now holds the abbreviation UDM – the 'Universal Discrete Machine' – ready for them: "Mit der

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[40] see Aristotles, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 6, Ch.4, 1140a f.

[41] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, [Transl. Josefine Nauckhoff] Cambridge University Press 2005, Book 4, No. 292: *To the preachers of morals* p.165ff as well as Book 3, 125 The madman, p.119. See also Martin Heidegger, *The Word of Nietzsche: 'God Is Dead'* [Transl. William Lovitt], in: idem., The Question Concerning Technology, and other Essays, Harper Perennial 1982, pp. 53-112.

[42] Heidegger "Letter on Humanism" [Transl. Frank A. Capuzzi and J. Glenn Gray, revised by David Farrell Krell] in: Basic Writings, loc. cit, pp. 217-265, here, p. 241-243.

[43] esp. Friedrich Kittler, Draculas Vermächtnis. Technische Schriften, Leipzig 1993, pp. 58-80.

[44] "[…] there is nothing that is not switchable." Kittler, Vom Take Off der Operatoren, in: idem, Draculas Vermächtnis, loc. cit .pp.149-160, here p.152.

[45] "[…] information theoretical materialism […]."Kittler, Real Time Analysis, Time Axis Manipulation, in: idem, Draculas Vermächtnis, loc. cit. pp. 182-207, here p.182.

[46] "[…] history of souls and their nosologies […] "turned or just implemented the inner outside," idem., Aufschreibesysteme, Munich 3rd Ed. 1995, p. 10.

[47] "What it means to be human is not defined by attributes (…) but rather by technical standards." Kittler, Die Welt des Symbolischen – eine Welt der Maschine, in: idem, Draculas Vermächtnis, loc. cit. pp.58-80, here p. 61.

Universalen Diskreten Maschine ist das Mediensystem geschlossen. Speicher- und Übertragungsmedien gehen beide in einer Prinzipienschaltung auf (…). Eine menschenleere Bürokratie übernimmt alle Funktionen, die zur formalen Definition von Intelligenz hinreichend und notwendig sind."[48] This polemic finding is nevertheless due to a hypothesis whose supposed plausibility stems from the reductive conclusion that information theory like structuralism and post-structuralism further the same developments. This assessment was particularly virulent in the 1960s and early 70s, because both blocks of theory seem to refrain from meanings and interpretations on their surface, in order to instead pay attention to the "how" of the processes or structures. Already on the first page of his essay *A Mathemtical Theory of Communication*, Claude Shannon writes the highly consequential statement that "these semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem".[49] They are however not irrelevant because of engineering, but rather with regards to the task in question. Correspondingly, the link to structuralism was forged by Benoit Mandelbrot[50] and Abraham Moles[51] as well as Max Bense[52] in Germany and earlier Helmut Heißenbüttel in his analysis of Marshall McLuhan's media theory. The latter stated in his essay *Das Medium ist die Botschaft. Anmerkungen zu Marshall McLuhan* (1968), that *Understanding media* replaces, on the basis of the Shannon-Weaver-model (which McLuhan in fact refused) the "traditional difference between content and form […] in favour of an absolute and permanent in itself declining formalization" in order to pass on a general structuralism, "for which every single meaning and content can dissolve in a function of the structure."[53] The initial reception thus created a series of misunderstandings intensified by both an insufficient image of the mathematical as well as the mistaken hope of a global understanding, similar to the one that seemed to be promised by the digital media technology revolution.[54]

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[48] "With the Universal Discrete Machine the media system is closed. Storage and transmitting media are absorbed in a circuit of principles (…). A bureaucracy devoid of humans takes over all the functions sufficient and necessary for the formal definition of intelligence." idem., Die künstliche Intelligenz des Weltkrieges: Alan Turing, in: idem., Georg Christoph Tholen (Ed.): Arsenale der Seele, Munich 1989, p. 196. The same findings are found in Wolfgang Coy: The computer as a programmable machine becomes the "integrator of all previous media", see Coy, Aus der Vorgeschichte des Mediums Computer, in: idem, p. 30, as well as Tholen, insofar that cultural scientists and media theorists unanimously found that in "the age of electronic media and computers (…) their binary principle circuits" could be emulated "according to all previous machines and media" [translation here Rett Rossi]; Die Zäsur der Medien, loc. cit. p. 191.

[49] Claude Shannon, A Mathematical Theory of Communication, in: The Bell System Technical Journal, Vol. 27, pp. 379–423, 623–656, July, October, 1948. Here, from a corrected reprint posted by Bell Labs http://cm.bell-labs.com/cm/ms/what/shannonday/shannon1948.pdf P.1.

[50] Benoit Mandelbrot, Léo Apostel, Albert Morf: Logique, Language et Théorie de L'information, Paris 1957.

[51] Abraham Moles, Kunst und Computer, Cologne 1973, p. 12.

[52] Max Bense: Einführung in die informationstheoretische Ästhetik, in: idem., Ausgewählte Schriften, Stuttgart Weimar 1998, Vol.3, pp. 251-417, here: p. 404f.

[53] Helmut Heißenbüttel: Das Medium ist die Botschaft, Anmerkungen zu Marshall McLuhan, in: MERKUR Vol. XII, No. 11 1968, reprinted in and cited here according to *McLuhan. Für und Wider*, edited by. G.E. Stern, Düsseldorf/Vienna 1969, pp. 293-314, here: p. 294 and 302. See also Erich Hörl, Die heiligen Kanäle, Berlin 2005, although with Hörl it is more in reference to the contemporaries of structural anthropology, linguistics, information theory and cybernetics.

[54] Hans Magnus Enzensbergers *Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien* in the end follows the same assessment: The text triggered a debate that is reprinted in C. Pias, J. Vogl, L. Engell et. al (Eds.): Kursbuch Medienkultur, Stuttgart 4th Ed. 2002, pp. 264-299. Art projects such as Nam June Paiks *Global Groove* a.o. point in the same direction. In fact, the history of this reception and its fallacies is not yet written.

In various respects Jacques Lacan also succumbed to the same fascination, when, in his seminar *Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics*, he sets the logic of binary numbers in relation to the fundamental oppositions of the symbolic register and in doing so allocates cybernetics to that "indefinite" area which includes heterogeneous theories such as probability theory, game theory, combinatorics, and information theory as well as in the actual sense of Norbert Wiener's control theory[55] – an operation, which since the collaboration between Claude Lévi-Strauss and Henry Weil regarding a mathematical theory of the "elementary structures of kinship" seemed to speak for itself. Lacan, however, used it on the one hand to refer to a difference, and on the other hand to lower the conceptual foundation of psychoanalysis, especially the concept of the unconscious as an "order of signs". This is why he prefers to speak of a correlation between "chance" and "determinism" between conjecture and combinatorics and their relation to the "real" as well as the "correlation of absence and presence" in the " world of the symbol" and their related "erection" through binary structures. All the same, the "convergence", as he at the same time perceptively admits, finds its limits when confronted with "sense", the "imaginary" and in particular "the extreme difficulty (…) in translating cybernetically the functions of *Gestalt* (…)"; for Lacan, these point to the "image", the "body" and "desire", as primary psychological functions.[56] Kittler willingly takes up the convergence notion in particular, in order to align the "world of the symbolic" with the "world of the machine" and to foist onto Lacan a media-"materialism",[57] whose essential point is the homology between digital units and the structures of nothing but signifiers – the circuit pattern 0/1 or on/off is nothing more than the hinge between 'absence' and 'presence', allowing Lacan's psychoanalytical structuralism to be reduced "to information technology": "Das Symbolische (…) ist einfach eine Verzifferung des Reellen in Kardinalzahlen. Es ist, *expressis verbis*, die Welt der Informationsmaschinen."[58]

That is why media technology *constitutes* language, thought, perception as well as the experience of the real, and why, inversely, the illusion of sense and the 'so-called' human as *zoon logikon* or *animal symbolicum* can be reduced to technologies and a piece of information theory.[59] The fallacy here follows the outer appearance of an analogy that mistakes the structural linkage with the syntax of digital codes and the fundamental difference between absence and presence with the digital 0-1 sequence.[60] Already on the information theory level, a transmission would have to be differentiated

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[55] Jacques Lacan, Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics, or on the Nature of Language, in: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II, XXIII [Transl. Sylvana Tomaselli] W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 294-308, here p. 295f, 300, 302ff, also ., 380, 385ff.

[56] ibid., p. 302f. and esp. p. 306f.

[57] see Kittler, Die Welt des Symbolischen – eine Welt der Maschine, in: idem, Draculas Vermächtnis, loc. cit. pp.58-80,, loc. cit., p. 59f.

[58] "The symbolic (…) is simply a digitization of the real into cardinal numbers. It is *expressis verbis*, the world of information machines." ibid., here p. 69, 73.

[59] Kittler, Es Gibt Keine Software, in: idem, Draculas Vermächtnis, loc. cit., pp. 225-242, here p. 232.

[60] For his part Tholen had pointed out a related problem, even when he tends towards the same mistake. Thus he writes: "(F)ür die Bestimmung der Medialität der Medien ist die Nähe von Signifikant und Information keine nur vordergründige: Die ‚kleinste' Einheit – ein Bit – *ist* nach Gregory Bateson der Unterschied, der einen Unterschied macht." [In determining the mediality of the media, the proximity of signifiers and information are not just superficial: According to Gregory Bateson, the 'smallest' unit – a bit – *is* the difference that makes a difference".] See idem., Die Zäsur der Medien, loc. cit., p. 187. In the same sense he maintains there is a correlation between digitalness and arbitrariness in structural linguistics – nevertheless he grants language the unlimited priority.

between 'news' as a coded message and 'information' as a statistical measure, all the more so however, between the structuralist idea of 'structure' and the order matrix of a Turing machine. Although they both seem to be algebraic in nature, the former only lives off of the metaphor of algebra, whereas the latter stems from algebraic models. There is of course proximity – in the case of structuralism – between the mathematics of Nicolas Bourbaki and the linguistics of Émile Benveniste or the structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss, respectively, to give another example, between the symbolic language of Georges-Théodule Guilbaud and Lacan.[61] Nevertheless, there are more differences between them than similarities. Every random series of numbers or functions can be traced back to a digital schema – the difference between absence and presence, however, leads to questions about the threshold and transition, i.e., the 'not unambiguous', to which nothing corresponds in the digital: Lacan complied with this in his reflections on the door schema, the "symbol par excellence" as far as the door simultaneously includes and excludes, in particular though in the final passage of his remarks about *Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics*, where he establishes that "the fundamental relation of man to this symbolic order" consists in the "relation of non-being to being". Thus, in the end he gives absolute priority to nothingness, the "non-being", i.e. the occurrence (*Ereignis*) as opposed to the pure formal game of cybernetics.[62]

Without *différance*

At this point one can go a step further since mathematics and mathematic codes or symbolic languages such as 'semi-Thue systems' based only on alphabetic and production rules, exclusively generate that which Oswald Wiener referred to as "*flache Formalismen*" (flat formalisms).[63] They follow the principles of logic, first and foremost the "law of identity", whose absoluteness is in turn necessary for the validity of the *principium contradictionis*, the avoidance of contradiction. Hence, the role that negation takes as formal operator: it obeys the equations *non (non) 1 = 1* as well as *non 1 = 0* and *non 0 = 1*, in order to cancel out all intermediate shades, especially the inclusion of a non-identical or *tertium*. Iteration means *identical* repetition; every repetition in information theory produces the same and is a matter of redundancy, whereas in the symbolic, repetition means difference, and according to Derrida always includes an alteration.[64] Signs in their chronological sequence refer to other signs and thus include the actualization of a memory, which, despite their iterability, makes something else out of it. Each repetition is – and here Derrida's Grammatology joins up with psychoanalysis – a *Wieder-Holung* (re-petition), a *Zurückholung* (retrieval) or a shift to another register, which marks the primacy of the difference in it, since, according to Derrida in *Writing and Difference*, a sign is "divided by repetition" from its first use[65] and bears the mark of a primordial division: A sign is not one, but rather one that already contains a folded two. It is, as Derrida puts it, "*two* with no *one*.

[61] With regards to the relation between mathematics and structuralism see François Dosse, Geschichte des Strukturalismus, Hamburg 1996, Vol.1, esp. p. 132ff.; as well as Amir D. Aczel, The Artist and the Mathematician, New York 2006.

[62] Jacques Lacan, Psychoanalysis and Cybernetics, or on the Nature of Language, loc. cit., p. 302ff., 308.

[63] Oswald Wiener, Probleme der künstlichen Intelligenz, edited by Peter Weibel, Berlin 1990, esp. p.43ff., 61ff., 73ff.

[64] see Jacques Derrida, Signature Event Context loc. cit., p. 313.

[65] idem., Writing and Difference [Transl. Alan Bass], University of Chicago Press 1978, p. 246.

Always one extra or one too few."[66] Hence: "Three is the first figure of repetition."[67] There is no equivalent for the priority of the third in the mechanical, just as there is no *différance* principle in information theory that covers such processing, because, there can be no 'between' in the digital. Instead, every informational transmission and every algorithm has already excluded the productive differentiation. In comparison, the symbolic unfolds by virtue of a continuous figuration that is always shifting from metaphor to metonymy and from metonymy to metaphor, without ever being able to return to its initial state or to find closure. With that the motion of the differentiality of the symbolic – the *différance* as generativity – is neither present nor absent: "The hyphen of the symbolic comes, so to speak, in-between", as Tholen puts it.[68] Between symbolic language and Turing machine on the one hand and the structural linguistic or post-structuralist theory of difference on the other hand lies an unbridgeable gap, because neither the iteration of the sign nor the process of figuration follows rules in a strict mathematical sense. Instead of 'iterability' it would thus be better to speak of 'recursivity' in mathematics, which not only presupposes identity but also the strict application of rules, which Wittgenstein links in the same way to commands as to machines and whose fulfillment presupposes a specific type of "training".[69] This is why Tholen resolutely put language *before* the machine: "(T)he structure of exchangeability and replaceability which is *inherent* to language, is the non-technical, unassailable requirement of technological media itself." [70] This is not just a claim, but rather can be derived from the perspective of basic mathematical research, insofar as symbolic language, Turing machines and recursive functions can all be mutually converted into one another. The 'grammatical' basis of symbolic language as well as the language of types referred to as 'Chomsky's grammars' forms a set of transformation rules, which in turn correspond to the instruction sets of the Turing machines, so that in the end, it is not digitalization that forms its core – this applies only to the notations of its elements – but rather the algorithm of its syntactic linkages. In the repertoire of language it is provided by a figurality that is not totally absorbed in functions and their predictability. The mistake in comparing information theory and structuralism lies primarily in focusing on the similarity between bits and signifiers, rather than on the difference between rules and figures. In other words: The paradigm of the analogy is based on the consideration of the units – on the 'ontology' of the systems, just as if languages were based on configurations of their piece or rules – and not on the *practitioners and their performances.*

Here, Tholen's 'metaphorology of the medial' comes into effect, because it is linguistic right from the start. In particular, it tries to link three different operations with one another: *firstly* the historically received metaphor of the 'medium' or of the 'in between', which stretch through the history of philosophy since Aristotle and are continually "recast" (Blumenberg) or dislocated; *secondly* the deconstruction of the metaphysical key difference between 'notion' and 'metaphor', 'proper' and 'improper' speech, as can be found in Heidegger and Derrida, as well as *thirdly* the

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[66] idem., Dissemination, [Transl. Barbara Johnson], University of Chicago Press, 1981 p. 274.

[67] idem., Writing and Difference, loc. cit., p. 299.

[68] Georg Christoph Tholen, Die Zäsur der Medien, loc. cit., p. 188.

[69] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, loc. cit., §6, 195ff.

[70] "(D)ie Struktur der Austauschbarkeit und Ersetzbarkeit, die der Sprache *zukommt*, ist die nicht-technische, uneinholbare Voraussetzung der technischen Medien selbst." Georg Christoph Tholen, Die Zäsur der Medien, loc. cit., p. 187.

'metaphorisation' of the medial itself with recourse to the literal meaning *meta-pherein*, the 'carrying over' or 'transferring' from one domain to another. With that Tholen spells out the metaphorics of "transmission", of transgression, transport or of transfer, just as they had become key for Harold Innis, McLuhan and more recently again for Sybille Krämer.[71] The focus remains on language, whose own 'metaphor' offers the concept of mediation, but also the method for analyzing it, just as it simultaneously works on its own 'transfer'. Namely, the translation and mediation processes between languages and the digital transmission process of technological media. The *transfer-transmission-transformation relationship* itself then changes into a universal media model that – beyond all intentionality and technological teleology – provides nothing but transitions, in the sense od an equally placeless and continuous movement of the *meta-pherein*. In this way, Tholen tries to establish a non-technological and non-metaphysical concept of media, which attaches the problem of constitution to a space of a permanent transitionality, whose basic principle is mobility or continuous processuality itself. At the same time, he radicalizes what Benjamin and Adorno already suggested: the consolidation of the medial in the *Über-Tragung* (trans-mission) or *Über-Setzung* (trans-lation) which lives less from concrete or technological transmission and transference processes than it emphasizes the *Hinüber-Tragen* (carrying over) and *Hinüber-Setzen* (transferring over) as an equally differential and mediating practice. Nevertheless, the 'meta' of *meta-pherein* remains unaddressed in this conception – and consequently so does the meaning of the 'over' in its actual sense. If the core structure of mediation is decisively due to a series of prepositions or prefixes, which always come into effect where a relation is to be identified, whose relata implies a change of level – *meta* in Greek, *trans* in Latin, also *trans* or *over* in English and *über* in German – their own structure would still need to be investigated. Prepositions refer to relationships; they posit the nouns in play in a topological relation to one another. In this sense, a theory of prepositions can be understood as a general topology of relations: 'after', 'over', 'under', 'through', etc. designating specific spatial or temporal orders. If one questions the nature of these orders, one ends up with relational modalities, which can be linked to a general theory of media.[72] The medial, as discussed above, cannot be allocated a precise position – according to Samuel Weber, it appears to be nothing but virtual; there is thus nothing real about it, but rather only a scattering of possibilities[73] –, however, they 'un-fold' in the form of relational *modi* in order to literally generate 'folds' between the relata. In turn, it cannot be said of these modalities that they already constitute thoughts or experiences. In the same way, the expression 'ex-perience' (and the related term 'experiment') corresponds to the Latin terms *experiens*, *experientia* or *experior* that all convey the same connotation: Suddenly the eyes are opened up, new relationships are visible or conceivable, not unlike the performative which is much less about the generation of meaning in a speech act than it is about the generation of variations of its practical modi. The performative then does not form 'conditions of the possible' nor a transcendental, but rather forms a co-determination or *Mitarbeit*

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[71] See Harald Innis, The Bias of Communication, University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division; Second Edition, 2008 and Marshal McLuhan, Media as Translators, in: idem. Understanding Media, loc. cit. p. 62ff as well as Sybille Krämer: Medium, Bote, Übertragung. Kleine Metaphysik der Medialität, Frankfurt/M 2008, esp. p. 9ff.

[72] see esp. Christoph Hubig: Die Kunst des Möglichen I. Technikphilosophie als Reflexion der Medialität, Bielefeld 2006.

[73] see Samuel Weber: Virtualität der Medien, in: Sigird Schade, Georg Christoph Tholen (Ed.): Konfigurationen. Zwischen Kunst und Medien, Munich 1999, pp. 35-49:

(collaboration) just as Nietzsche's writing tools and their collaboration in thinking can be understood as a modelling of a practice, whose differences are each delivered differently in the symbolic. However, with that, we have already anticipated too much.

'Dia' versus 'Meta'

If we now turn to the meaning of 'meta' in a narrower sense, its various adverbial and prepositional applications have to be differentiated. Depending on how the expression is used it connotes 'after', 'over (there)', 'from…up', 'in the middle', 'below', etc.; however, every time it implies that a boundary has to be crossed. In particular the prefix– like the *meta-pherein* itself – implies a transition, thus bridging the disparate, as it were, such that the medial serves as a leap, an irrational place of its non-causal mediation. This applies to the metaphor of the actual 'transfer' to another place, which in turn contains the image of the ferryman, who carries passengers over to the Isle of the Dead. Something similar can be said about expressions such as *metaballon*, meaning displacement, permutation or inversion, *metamelos*, a change of heart or a transition between notes, or *metastasis*, a rapid transition to proliferation or migration to a foreign place. There is always the difficulty that the succeeding metaphor has to re-connect the separated without it being clear what the re-connection actually accomplishes. The concept of media seems to step in in precisely at this point. If, according to Tholen and following McLuhan, mediation is determined from the process of *metapherein*, then it itself takes on the act of a leap and with that the 'unmediated middle'. At the same time, we are left in the dark as to where the leap or the mediation occurs, because the leap of mediation cannot itself be mediated: "o leap", as Heidegger accurately states in *Identity and Difference*, means to let oneself go "into an abyss."[74] It is thus striking that we are once again dealing with a metaphorization, which itself has already 'leapt over' the possibility of the leap. As a result the medial as 'meta' is due to a difference, whose difference itself remains open. It performs, so to speak, a *metabasis eis allo genos* (a shift or leap to a foreign domain or type), whose transition closes off all further analysis. Tholen, as well as McLuhan, seems to want to assign this difference to the *conditio humana*: we cannot perceive, experience or identify without difference, without differences that "make the difference". It is thinking itself that is the productive constitutive difference, because thinking already means making distinctions, so that a difference is already given, even before thinking, understanding or identifying comes to be. In other words: Difference is – and here Tholen follows Derrida – the first script before the script; it is so to say the *prescript* or 'primordial' script of the medial, which already precedes every single medium and already divides the space of the symbolic in order to continually further divide itself.

Nonetheless, the way of 'leaping over', the unrepresentability of the break, which literally 'happened' is not yet the answer, but rather the question. This is especially clear with the Latin translation of "meta" into "trans" since every *Über-Setzung* (*transferre*) – the embodiment of the medial as translation since Benjamin – performs a leap between the translated languages which impacts the two, both the one transferred to and the one transferred from. 'Meta' thus literally implies a risk, because there is no criterion, no *tertium comparationis* (common point for comparison) that can guarantee its success. In the same sense, every *trans*mission *trans*ports not only something from one place to another, but also 'displaces' and converts the 'mission', inscribes into it an

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[74] Martin Heidegger, Identity and Difference, Transl. Joan Stambaugh, University Of Chicago Press 2002, p. 32.

alteration – similar to the way that a *trans*formation does not just mean reshaping the form, but also the creation of something completely new in the sense of a *meta-morphosis*. This may explain the many analogue expressions available to invoke the central function of the medial in addition to *transmissio* and *transferre*, *transgression* or *transposition* as well as *transsubstantiation* (as Jochen Hörich suggested in view of the Catholic ritual of converting bread and wine[75]). *Meta* or *trans*, depending on the language, then expresses more a *transcendence* than a 'transcendentality' in a philosophical sense, which at the same time inherently contains the seductive idea that 'meta' or 'trans' concerns a site of a 'prim-ordial' transformation, be it from matter into an immaterial form, from things into symbols or from markings on vinyl into sounds.[76] One could say that there is a theological moment in the theory of the medial, which, in the middle of the figure of the leap and the *meta*, touches upon an enigma in order to defer the mediality of the medium to an unknown, almost 'uncanny' place. In this sense the concept of media – the way media are constituted – carries the entire burden of all the unsolved riddles of metaphysics, of the chasm between nature and culture, between body and soul, up to the difference between matter and form, meaning and structure or the line that separates signified and signifier. With one stroke these seem to disappear, as soon as these are related to a 'third' – an 'in-between'– which provides mediation in order to simultaneously fail to do so. Thus the differentiality of the medial seems to conjure away the mystery of the difference, just as at other moments differences return like the undead, because the medium itself, like a black box, is taking on the aura of spectrality.

The problem of the medium's constitution cannot be solved in this way. Rather it seems to be necessary to replace the problematic prefix with another preposition, whose direction proceeds less vertically and is less *sprunghaft*, i.e., is less prone to 'leaping', and thus flatter and more decisive. This leads to a consideration of the materiality of transitions as well as methods of transforming *one thing into another 'through' (or by means of) something else*. With 'through' (or 'by means of') here, I am referring to that which corresponds to the Latin *per*, indicated in related expressions like cost per person, miles per hour – *per* also in the sense of *performare* or 'perlocutionary' – the latter referring to the speech act's impact on language. The Greek expression 'dia' would be allocated to it, which also means 'through' or 'by means of' and which differs only at times from 'meta' in nuance – for example *diapraxis* for mediation itself (in addition to *hermeneuein*) or *diallattein* for the equalization, the reconciliation of two persons. Moreover *dihairesis* for separating or differing, *diáthesis* for arranging and classifying, or splitting and removing, *diabasis* for a bridge's passageway and also *dioryx* for the canal, the literal process of burrowing. All of these examples are related to the '*Be-Dingungen*' (conditions), as they are literally conditioned by some-*thing* real, which actualizes them, thus making possible an inner connection, a space.[77]

The prefixes and prepositions that I have listed here take on a far greater role as it initially appears when applied to the medial: *per*-sona thus refers to the mediality of the mask, by which the voice articulates itself, 'through' (or by means of) (*per*) sounds

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[75] Jochen Hörich, Brot und Wein. Die Poesie des Abendmahls, Frankfurt/M 1991; idem., Gott, Geld und Medien, Frankfurt/M 2004.

[76] see Friedrich Kittler, Film, Grammophon, Typewriter, loc. cit., p. 27ff.

[77] see translator's note - Footnote 18.

(*sono*). Similarly, the *per*-spective means "to see through" (Dürer)[78] by means of a mathematical structure, rather than a transparency. The same holds true for the Platonian *dialogoi*, the 'speaking through' (*dialogizomai*), which actualizes a discussion by means of *logos*, in order to see a way through the divided truth of a thought or conviction. *Dialegerein* also means interpreting a text or remark 'through' its being read in a specific way. One can say the same for thinking, *dianoia,* in the sense of an understanding by virtue of the *nous* and its analytical abilities, as well as for *diáphora*, the dispersion or spreading that is reminiscent of the seed and semen i.e. the primal scene of dissemination.[79] A difference or a separation thus underlies all of these forms; however, in such a way that this difference is never elided but rather is worked 'through' by means of a *poiesis* and its material conditions.[80]

Performativity of the Medial

In playing two Greek prefixes – *meta* und *dia* – off of one another, the purpose is not to value one more than the other but rather to ground the transcendence of the „leap" methodologically in practices as well as in materiality. On another level, this play of prefixes returns us to the notion of poeisis and its connections to ‚dia' and ‚per.' As already mentioned, Aristotle considers *techné* to be the virtue or highest fulfilment of *poiesis*. Nevertheless, it is not so much its instrumental character, as much as its creative or artistic side that is emphasized – just as art and aesthetics in general are fundamental to the concept of media presented here. Whereas *meta*, *trans* or *über* (over) refer to a transfer or transmission whose basis remains questionable, various ways or modalities of ensuring transition are indicated by *dia* or *per*. All of them are rooted in the real. Situated in the world, they continuously provide new and different linkages, passages and detours. Connected to a network of things and actions, the medial is consequently based on *performative practices* rather than in the occurrence of *différance*. Therefore the emphasis here on practices in the arts: instead of a *metabasis*, the transition from one to another order undertakes a *diabasis*. *Diabasis* also names a transition, but it is one that *is to be actualized in the material*, to the extent that it requires a passage based on concrete 'architectures'.[81] The material is then allowed into the medial, so to speak, just as inversely the medial is allowed into the material. We are thus dealing with a mutual *osmosis*. The same applies to the difference between *transformare* and *performare*: the first completely transforms its objects, so that we are dealing with

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[78] see Erwin Panofsky, Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form', in: idem., Aufsätze zu Grundfragen der Kunstwissenschaft, Berlin 1998, p. 99. Hans Belting, Florenz und Bagdad. Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks, Munich 2nd Ed. 2008, p. 23 seems similar. Whereas, the word 'perspectiva' is already attested to by Boethius, it first finds its dominant interpretation in view of the mediality of figurativeness as *Durchsicht* (looking through) a transparent world in Dürer. In turn Alberti associated it with the metaphor of a window: A window, its frame, releases a view, makes us through that sighted, opens up for us our own image space. To this extend, one can say: the 'perspectives" form performative *picture acts*; the space that they erect is not created by any arrangement of places and signs, but rather something that can be scanned, controlled and captured through the movement of the eye.

[79] see Jacques Derrrida, *Dissemination*, loc.cit, in particular, Derrida refers to Plato's motif of the sower, as well as to the older myth of Demeter and the figure of Triptolemos as the cultivators proper. John Peters in turn recognizes the actual productivity of the medial in the dissemination; see John Durham Peters, Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication, Chicago 2000.

[80] For initial considerations about these differences see my essay in: Irrfahrten. Labyrinthe, Netze und die Unentscheidbarkeit der Welt, in: Georg Mein, Stefan Börnchen (Eds.): Weltliche Wallfahrten, Munich 2010, pp. 41-56.

[81] The reader is reminded here that *architektonia* literally means the 'basic' technique or art.

entirely new forms, whereas the latter strives to perform or embody something by using services of the material world. This results not in transformation but in representation, which includes presence as well as the work of presentation, the exposition of a presence. The 'transfer' or the *metapherein* is therefore no longer paradigmatic for the process of mediation; rather, those forms of *experiens* or experimentation, *through* which something appears, are 'posed' or 'exposed' in order to manifest *themselves* in reality just as much as to 'transpose' it.[82]

These can be explained further based on two other compounds formed with the prefixes 'dia' and 'per': Aristotle's *diaphane* and the concept of the performative as introduced to philosophy by John Austin and John Searle. Instead of drawing on Plato's critique of writing and the ambiguous notion of *chora* in the *Timaeus* as well as the subsequent question of the *pharmakon*, to return finally to the 'meta' in the name of a media theory of difference,[83] we turn to Aristotle's teachings on *aesthesis*, from whose Latin translation the term media is historically derived.[84] These teachings, moreover, are related to theories of performativity, which are capable of integrating the dimension of the practical with the medial. In Aristotle, the *diaphane* initially functions as a guiding thread for another understanding of media, which downplays the idea of their constitution without completely abandoning it. In particular, Aristotle's treatment of perception and seeing, on the central position of his argumentation, inserts the notion of *metaxu*, a 'laying between' that maintains the 'contact' between the eye and thing, in order, almost without warning, to proceed to the concept derived from older theories of perception: *diaphane*, the 'shining through' (*diaphaino*), is almost analogous to the 'seeing through' of *per-spectiva*. If the hypothetically introduced concept of *metaxu*, which again emphasizes the 'meta' and marks 'betweeness', follows the idea that the perceived has to communicate with the perceiver in order to be perceived, then the *metapherein* is less able to represent it than the process of a 'thoroughfare' or passage *through* a space, in whose empty place the *diaphane* steps. Once again we are confronted with the contrast between 'meta' and 'dia', whereby the *diaphane* names *that which causes appearance in the first place* – *diaphaino* names the 'appearance' (*phaino*) *through* something. Aristotle does not leave any doubt regarding the materiality of this *diaphane*, and it is no coincidence that the idea of 'ether' subsequently developed from it. In other words, something, a materiality, enables an appearance, just as inversely appearance is only possible by virtue of a foil that makes it possible in the first place. Once again an ambiguity between a foil as an obstruction and as facilitation of appearance results – however, the notion of a 'material shining through' may ultimately lead us astray. Appearance itself instead proves to be transparent or 'see-through,' provided that something is indeed *made* visible *through* it.

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[82] With regards to the concept of positing in relation to the performative, see my comments in: Das Ereignis der Setzung, in: Erika Fischer-Lichte, Christian Horn, Matthias Warstat (Eds.): Performativität und Ereignis, Tübingen Basel 2002, pp. 41-56. In particular, the occurence of a *Setzung* (positing) is understood to be from the three-fold moment of *Einsetzung* (instantation), *Aussetzung* (exposition) and *Entsetzung* (transposition).

[83] The return to Plato forms the background for a media theory following Derrida; see esp. his Dissemination, loc. cit., Part 1 as well as idem., Chora, Vienna 2005 whereby, both the *pharmakon* as well as the *Chora* call forth figures of the ambivalent, which ultimately try to legitimate the 'leap' of the 'meta'.

[84] see Wolfgang Hagen: Metaxy. Eine historiosemantische Fußnote zu einem Medienbegriff, in: Was ist ein Medium, ed. by Stephan Münker, Alexander Roesler, loc. cit., pp. 13-29, as well as my remarks in Medientheorien zur Einführung, Hamburg 2006, p. 18ff.

'Appearance' and 'shining through' thus mean the same thing: unlike the superficial Latin translation of *diaphane* as 'transparency', suggesting that something opaque reveals itself through a veil or screen, *diaphane* refers to the place of visualization itself. It is not something 'not-visible' that makes itself visible through something else, but rather the visualization itself remains invisible, which is why Aristotle connects the *diaphane* with the dialectic: something is both revealed and veiled in it. As he says in *De Anima* "that which, though visible, is not properly speaking visible but by reason of extrinsic colour".[85]

In this way, the analysis of the *diaphane* can be seen as a touchstone for the further explanation of the notion of media. In continually referring to a materiality and the practices of visualization, *diaphane* first and foremost clarifies the 'modal' aspect of 'dia'. This emerges also through the 'per' of Austin's performative linguistics, particularly in view of the aspect of perlocution that has been ignored after Searle. As we know, based on performative actions, Austin differentiates between illocutionary and perlocutionary statements: the first do something "in saying something" (e.g. assert, direct, express), the latter do something "*by* saying" – *through* something being said (e.g. the effect of impressing, following, persuading).[86] Accordingly, illocutions inaugurate speech acts, which themselves have consequences for social relationships, whereas perlocutions cause effects that are not actually in the acts themselves – the two move in opposite directions. The first therefore contains a figure of identity, the latter a process of difference;[87] in both cases though, the 'per' in performativity changes the modus of either statement as well as the act itself.[88] It is obvious that perlocution is of greater interest than illocution for the concept of media being discussed here. Accordingly, the mediality of speech acts would have to be connected to the structure of performative modalities. In other words, the medial practice of speech fails to fulfill itself both in its production of sense as well as the order of signification or the occurrence of figurality, as far as these are both constitutively attached to difference. This means, furthermore, the *Unter-Schied* (dif-ference)[89] *between* signified and signifier, its unfathomable 'in-between' signalled by the hyphen, which – literally – 'comes between' to identify the actual position of the medial and thus, sign and medium are ultimately confused with one another. Instead, mediality *appears* with the aid of different performative practices and the modi induced by them, which *qua* practice so to speak, include a difference. What we have here first concerns a vertical difference, which corresponds to the 'meta' and which directs a figurative plumb line between language and world, or medium and reality. Second, there is an uninterrupted chain of horizontal shifts that should be assumed, which do not take on any constitutive function, but rather whose constitutive effects need to be verified in every single case. Correspondingly, rules and conventions which locate the verbal in the real are less interesting than the effects that these have 'on the communicative scene' and, in fact, what the *expressis verbis* want to say is not *directly* available. Neither the question of the symbolic nor of the semiotic is therefore particularly relevant to the medial; instead, what is important are the practices that are tied to actors and contexts just as to

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[85] Aristotle, De Anima, [Transl. R.D. Hicks] Prometheus Books, 1991, 418b.

[86] John L Austin, How to do things with Words, Harvard University Press; September 1975, p. 99ff.

[87] see esp. my examination of Austin and Searle in Posthermeneutik, loc. cit., pp. 220-245, esp. p. 240ff.

[88] Regarding modal interpretations of the performative see Donald Davidson: Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001 pp.109 ff.

[89] see translator's note - Footnote 2.

discourses, materialities and 'dispositifs' (Foucault). Ultimately it is the question of *scene* or milieu that unveils the ways of mediation, rather than the 'auctorial' practices of the speaker. Moreover, it is not the media that constitute situations, but rather mediality appears as a result of the totality of conditions that enable it while at the same time constraining it. An example would be the 'example' itself, which, depending on the context, reveals some facets while foreclosing others. It is neither the act nor an *apparatus* that mediatizes in order to 'leap over' the site of differences, but rather their *Ver-Wendung* (use), in which they 'change' (*wenden*), contort (*ver-wenden*) and turns into something completely different. [90]

Nietzsche's Typewriter – *Once again*

The step from 'meta' to 'dia' thus leads to a *performative understanding of the medial* – though in itself the medial remains chronically opaque. This step implies a 'crossing-over' from the transcendental and the problem of constitution to the question of production as a poietic practice and its occurrence. These are now to be understood as separate from teleology as well as from intentionality. If we are then talking about 'occurrences', we need to do this in order to resist the seduction of the subject and its intentionality as well as its technological means-ends reductions. For example, a person can hurt someone else by offering help because the offer itself is already an act of superiority. In that case, the assistance *mediatizes* superiority through the – perhaps habitualized – resort to innocent politeness. The 'medium of the mediatisation' here is not to be found; rather it proves to be inherently entangled in the scene and only to be found in the way it is set within the entire field of practicalities. This includes the complete 'arrangement', the order of things as well as the 'opportunities' it presents, the occasionality of structures and conditions and the accompanying discourses and the orders of power, as they have deposited themselves in the social. It is not the offer of support itself, but rather *how* it transforms into disdain *through* its *Ver-Wendung* and becomes degradation. Turns (*Wendungen*) such as this 'happen' so to speak *as* 'perlocutionary' shifts, whose *mediality* constitutes the intended courtesy as a gesture of violence. However, their mediality does not already mean that the act is constituted *as* act or that its symbolic dimension is constituted *through* its mediation, as that would imply a symbolization beyond the aforementioned *scene* and to already sanction it as such without drawing upon its situatedness.

The medial is thus not fulfilled in the extension of our body or our perceptions, as McLuhan suggests. It is also not fulfilled in technological apparatuses, and in the materiality of their *hard-ware* and the software it would support, as Kittler formulates. Instead, mediation occurs ultimately in ineluctable practice, its endless possibility, in which the 'means' or instruments are as intertwined just as much as they can be changed into continually new and different *Ver-Wendungen* along each of the performative modi. In leading to this conclusion, my reading does not negate the possibility of the constitution of the medial per se. However, it seems to run contrary to the connection of the medial with 'apriority' – the view that there is only perception or significance because there is media and that, for example, Nietzsche's typewriter thinks itself, or the technological-medial complex of a transmission determines the possibility of communication. *Instead, the question of constitution transforms itself into a procedural issue*: methods produce effects, which allow something to appear *as*

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[90] Translator's Note: While *Ver-Wendung* can be translated here as 'use', in German it also carries the sense of a change or a turn (*Wendung*) which through the prefix '*ver*' takes on the sense of a contortion.

something, and in which the question has less to do with the 'appearing' of the appearance, as it does with the *occurrence of the 'as'*, which, depending on the *scene of the performative*, first transcribes itself into a *medial 'as'*. The medial therefore does not function as a prime-ordinal hypothesis, but rather always only as a function of those methods and materialities whose *Ver-Wendung* of the medial invariably applies it in new ways i.e., 'changes' (*wendet*) it into something new. At the same time the orthographic chasm that divides the *Ver-Wendung* points to the withdrawal of control – the withdrawal of sovereignty. We cannot say *what* the medial *is* – there is no ontology of mediation, other than to say it persistently refuses its determination.[91] However, it is possible to partially reconstruct the 'movements' of the medial since they reveal themselves *through* its changes (*Wendungen*). The medial then proves to be a function, so to speak, of a scattering or distribution of folds, within which these, literally, 'un-fold'. They tolerate a synopsis just as little as they do a universal theory; instead, they produce at best 'regional' studies from case to case similar to Wittgenstein's investigations of language-games. Media situate themselves, beyond preset operative structures, in an indeterminate field of potentialities, which is why Samuel Weber looks to them to emphasize the perspective of virtuality and delocalization: they *are* not in the sense of a *being – rather they are a becoming.*

At the same time, this measures the 'extent' of their reflexivity. Unlike the discursive notion of reflection and its anchoring in transcendental arguments, we must deal with a performative concept of reflection. This has the advantage that we avoid falling into a fundamental separation between medial processes and their reflection in other media – the apparently enlightening dictum of systems theory that media can only be thematized in other media or can only be analyzed in predetermined discourses. Instead, performative reflexivities refer to disruptions or subversions, to the notion of counter-programs and contrary *Ver-Wendungen* that exploit contradictions and paradoxes, in order to continually reveal new and surprising elements.[92] The 'negativity of the medial' means nothing more than this. It reveals itself alone on the basis of interventions going against the grain, which intervene in medial practices, 'breaking them down', perforating them and thus making identifiable that which obstructs conventional detection. Heidegger forged the apt expression "*Aufriss*" (a breaching incision) – instead of its totalization through a kind of 'blueprint', offering a structural synopsis, and without exposing its 'realness', its continual '*Ver-Wendungen*' lead to nothing but disparate views which reveal a series of recorded moments just as their 'sights' are 'cut' *through* by their different uses.[93] The paradox of reflection – in the sense of a simple 'birds eye view' – would not be solved, but rather at best be by-passed and 'annulled' through various facets and fragments. Its focal point is art. Accordingly, the forms of medial reflexivity as well as the possibilities of their '*Ver-Wendung*' prove to be as unpredictable as artistic practice. The reflexive discovery of the medial finds its model in its incompleteness and its experimental character.

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[91] Regarding the withdrawal of the medial, see my comments in Posthermeneutik, loc. cit., pp. 148-169.
[92] In his essay on *Bilderstatus*, Flusser argues quite similarly: This requires the "list" of counter-changes, to outwit the apparatus and by means of "agility" of art or *Ars* to bring the status of images in the old and new media to light. "*Ars* is usually translated as 'art' but one should not forget the importance of the 'manoeuvrability'". Vilém Flusser, Medienkultur, Frankfurt/M 1997, p. 77.
[93] Martin Heidegger: The Way to Language, loc. cit., p. 408 and elsewhere. See also my considerations in: Posthermeneutik, loc. cit., p. 164ff.

What then does Nietzsche's and von Köselitz' insight that writing tools or the quality of the feather and paper collaborates (*mitarbeitet*) in our thoughts mean? It is not the discrete tableau of the typewriter, the keys as a mechanical alphabet, which already anticipate digitalization, that changes our thoughts, but rather the different modalities of the typewriter's use and counter-use which the technological invites, just as the 'notion' of a non-technological creativity also belongs to it. Both technological use and non-technological creativity work – on the basis of performative practices – go hand in hand. The 'pressing' of the typewriter keys '*be-dingt*' (is conditional on) the effort of the unpractised, not only for the aggregation and concentration of thinking, as is reminiscent of the early Pre-Socratics, but it also releases a completely new potential for our dexterity, for example, in the generation of endless textual interlinkages, their ironic misappropriation (*Ent-Wendung*) through random processes, their becoming images as with earlier image transmissions e.g., via telex machines etc.[94]

In summary, the collaboration of writing tools in thinking has less to do with the apriority of the medial, than with the inexhaustible potential of their '*Ver-Wendung*' which at the same time collaborates in the unveiling and veiling of the medium itself. However, what does this ultimately mean for the '*mit*' (with/co-) of the *Mitarbeit* (collaboration)? It does not signify any kind of 'between', or 'meta', just as it does not refer to a transcendence or transcendental, but rather, it designates a way of practice that is integrated into our processes of perception and recognition. We are not thinking in the loneliness of our soul, just as inversely we are not 'thought' 'through' the medial. Rather we experience the world by means of those practices with which we process it, and whose alienness and materiality strikes back at us in reverse, thus registering an equally uncontrollable and obdurate element in it.

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[94] Don Ihde also points this out: "Technologies, by providing a framework for action, do form intentionalities and inclinations within which use-patterns take dominant shape." Don Ihde, Technology in the Lifeworld. From Garden to Earth, Indiana Univ. Press 1990, p. 141. The writing process did indeed become faster first with the typewriter but then all the more so with the computer, so that one's writing style also changed and became more like spoken language. In the end with the computer – even when we use it as a writing tool – the forming of thoughts and writing go hand in hand, just as at the same time the text becomes something that is permanently re-worked, re-written and corrected, so that it retains, so to speak, the status of a provisional nature or crudity.