

Trace and Forgetting: Between the Threat of Erasure and the Persistence of the Unerasable

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I need my memories, they are my documents . . . Memory is no good if you call on it, you have to wait for it to jump on you.

Louise Bourgeois, New York artist

In search of a preliminary understanding of the 'trace': three anecdotes

Ancient philosophers believed that three anecdotes are enough to characterize a philosophical temperament. As soon as I accepted the invitation to participate in a research devoted to the triple topic: 'Trace, print, remains', three anecdotes at once came to mind. I shall use them to establish a preliminary understanding of the concept of trace, which we shall subsequently approach from a more philosophical perspective.

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The first anecdote, which will take up the most space, is connected with memories from my life as a student at the boys' *lycée* in Luxembourg. When I was in the top class my classmates and I were invited to attend the national funeral of one of our teachers, a quite rare event and perhaps even a one-off in a small country that does not have a Pantheon to fix it in my memory. This was the funeral of Lucien Koenig (1888–1961), whom we used to call 'Siggy de Luxembourg' because he had devoted his considerable energies and passion to the memory of one of our sovereigns, Jean l'Aveugle (John the Blind).¹

As the chronicler Jean Froissart tells us, at the battle of Crécy Jean l'Aveugle (1296–1346), King of Bohemia and Duke of Luxembourg, fought alongside the French cavalry, which was both heroic and ill-equipped. That is where he perished

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on 26 August 1346, under the treacherous arrows of the English. If we are to believe certain chroniclers and poets like Jean Froissart and Guillaume Machaut, he died in a supreme act of bravery; however, there are others, Petrarch among them, who suspect his death of being a disguised suicide because when he got into his 50s his blindness had become unbearable.²

The man the chroniclers like to call 'the son of the emperor Henry VII' or 'the father of the emperor Charles IV' twice failed to become emperor himself and finally lost his sight in 1340 after unsuccessful operations performed by several surgeons, whom he condemned to be drowned sewn into a sack to punish them for their incompetence. On 9 September 1340 he made his will in which he expressed the wish to be buried in the dukedom of his birth, preferably at the Abbey of Clairefontaine beside the Countess Ermesinde, but failing that, in the city of Luxembourg.

The story on which my later thoughts will be based takes place between two identifications of a body. In accordance with the custom of the time, the king's body was identified by the heralds after the battle and divided into three parts, each being buried in a different place. The entrails were taken to the Abbey of Valloires, the heart to the Dominican convent in Montargis and the bones went on a protracted journey back to the land of the sovereign's birth.

What caught my attention, for reasons that will soon become evident, is the story of this long voyage, extending over six centuries, of the bones of the king, who even in his lifetime was compared to a knight errant, notably by his clerk Guillaume de Machaut from Champagne, who made him a central character in his poetic work long before his disciple Jean Froissart became the chronicler of the battle of Crécy, of which, incidentally, he has left us several different versions.

When Jean l'Aveugle's bones reached Luxembourg, his son Emperor Charles IV ordered a sumptuous funeral monument showing his father surrounded by the 50 knights who had perished with him at Crécy. In Froissart's narrative there are only 48 of them because the chronicler needed two survivors to act as witnesses.

In 1544 the monument was destroyed in the fire at the Abbey of Altmünster. The king's remains were moved to the Franciscan monastery before returning to the original abbey, which Louis XIV ordered the Prince de Chimay to burn and sack during the siege of the fortress of Luxembourg. The bones were retrieved by a baker and concealed in a cave in the lower part of the town. On his deathbed the baker confided his secret to the city's mayor, who had the bones transferred to his father-in-law, Jean-Baptiste Boch, the proprietor of a china works just outside the fortress ramparts. In 1809 his son took them to Mettlach in the Saar, where he set up another china business, still in existence. The king's skeleton was exhibited in the cabinet of natural curiosities at the castle adjoining the works, which specialized in sanitary-ware.

It was there that in 1833 King Frédéric-Guillaume IV of Prussia, nicknamed 'the romantic king', discovered it and had it installed in the chapel of the castle at Kastel, overlooking the Saar river. Built by the great Berlin architect Karl-Friedrich Schinkel, the chapel was consecrated on 26 August 1838, anniversary of the battle of Crécy.

As soon as Luxembourg's independence was declared the government took steps to recover the remains of one of the most illustrious of the nation's sons, one of the most popular too, because he had introduced the *foire au trône*, which takes place in

September. Bismarck's government, suspecting a French trap aimed at extricating the Grand Duchy from the *Zollverein* (customs union), turned a deaf ear, claiming that the sovereign's body could not be returned until a mausoleum worthy to receive it had been built.

In 1918, following the end of the First World War, that was still the position when Lucien Koenig, who had chosen to devote himself to the sacred cause of Jean l'Aveugle's repatriation, came on the scene. Thinking he might be able to take advantage of the German defeat, he bribed several American soldiers to attempt a commando-type action aboard an army jeep, with the objective of retrieving the coveted remains from under the nose of the German authorities. When the army top brass got to hear of the plan they put a stop to it.

Another world war later, after the collapse of the Third Reich, the hour finally struck for the great return. On 7 November 1945 the free press was vociferous in its demands for Jean l'Aveugle to be brought back to the country of his birth. This was one of the first missions given to the young Luxembourg army, which had been given Kastel castle as part of its occupation zone. On 13 November 1945 General Koenig in person received a Luxembourg army detachment at the castle to mount a guard of honour beside the sovereign's sarcophagus.

In the official delegation sent to organize the festivities for the return (which, to judge by the reports in the national press, became a veritable triumphal procession) there was an army doctor whose job it was to identify the body (or what was left of it) as well as Mr Koenig. Hardly had the sarcophagus been opened than, glancing at the contents, the latter cried enthusiastically: 'It's him!'

All that remained then was to organize the return procession (which took place on 26 August 1946, 600 years to the day after the battle of Crécy) to Luxembourg Cathedral, where the king now rests in the crypt. Oral tradition has it that when the sarcophagus crossed the bridge over the Moselle, the national anthem was played to the dead king. Another rumour relates that the British ambassador, impressed by my teacher's emotion when the sarcophagus entered Luxembourg Cathedral, shook his hand to express his condolences, thinking he was one of the dead man's relatives.

We should also note that an evaluation carried out in 1980 by Professor Emanuel Vlcek, a forensic surgeon from Prague University, retrospectively confirmed my teacher's enthusiastic exclamation. This was indeed the man whose death had been caused by two serious wounds: a perforated skull by the left eye due to the impact of an arrow, and a perforation of the left side of the chest cavity resulting from a fatal lance blow.

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Let us now move scene and scenery in order to refer much more briefly to a second, rather acerbic anecdote. About 20 years ago I was accompanying a group of students round the church in Septfontaines in the Eisch valley, the valley where I was born, which is also called 'the valley of the seven castles'. There are a few visual traces of it in sketches drawn by the great writer Victor Hugo. The romanesque and gothic church had very recently been restored. At the instigation of an energetic priest who

had to face the almost unanimous antagonism of the villagers, it was stripped of its baroque additions and returned to its original purity.

Our guide was the village sexton who was that day in a fairly advanced state of intoxication and he gave us a colourful account of the restoration of the building. The climax of this account was the discovery, in the presence of members of the National Commission for Historic Sites and Monuments, of three skeletons of previous owners of the castle whose majestic silhouette today still towers over the roofs of the little village huddled at its foot. Begging forgiveness in advance for their vulgarity but vouching for their truth, I now report the sexton's words as he recounted the conversation he had with the experts, whom he called 'the blokes from the Commission'. When one of them wondered aloud what ought to become of the three skeletons, the verger claimed to have replied: 'We're going to kick off by giving those exploiters of poor folk a good smack in the face with a spade! That's what they've been waiting six centuries for!'

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Then the third anecdote, which I shall tell with some hesitation and circumspection since it is not at all amusing, as the two previous anecdotes were. Among my close family, on the afternoon of a certain 14 August, a person suffering from an advanced stage of Alzheimer's disease disappeared without trace and the body was never found. It is also to that person's memory that I should like to dedicate the thoughts that follow.

The depressingly multiple meanings of the notion of trace

Looking back at those three stories, I note with some concern that over each of them there hovers the shadow of death with its many facets. But I also think that, as between one scene and the others, the trace appears differently.

In his great book on 'the art of forgetting' Harald Weinrich³ has St Augustine as one of the first witnesses to the 'depressing polysemy of the word'⁴ 'forgetting'. I find the polysemy of the term 'trace' equally depressing. As Ricœur emphasizes in *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, it covers at least three distinct realities that it is important not to get confused: the 'mnestic trace' in the brain or cortex; the 'mnemonic' trace in the consciousness or the unconscious; and finally the 'written trace', which plays a central part in the historiographic process but also defines writing in its most general sense, what Derrida calls '*archi-écriture*' or '*archi-trace*'.⁵

The phenomenon of forgetting has the 'same importance as the two great classes of phenomena relating to the past: it is the past in its dual dimension, mnemonic and historical, that is lost in forgetting; the destruction of an archive, a museum, a town is equivalent to forgetting. Where there was a trace there is oblivion.' All the more reason for not forgetting that 'forgetting is not only the enemy of memory and history', since 'there is also a reserve oblivion that makes it a resource for memory and history'.⁶

The multiple meanings of the notion of trace not only present us with semantic

problems, as a brief look back at the three anecdotes recounted above demonstrates; I shall examine them in reverse order of their appearance.

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My third story refers us to the concept of 'mnestic trace' as it is commonly used in the neurosciences. This is an area of research that is currently expanding fast and setting formidable problems for philosophers, both for the 'philosophy of mind' dear to the English-speaking world and for the phenomenology inspired by Husserl. At the very moment I am writing these lines a team of CNRS researchers in Marseille has succeeded in locating and reconstituting, using an instrument that records images by functional magnetic resonance (IRMf), the sequence of the areas of the brain that allow us to measure time. Thus it seems as though the 'present of the present' mentioned by St Augustine, or the intimate consciousness of time, as Husserl analyses it in his *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, was no longer the preserve of phenomenologists.

The problems raised by interdisciplinary dialogue between the neurosciences and phenomenology are well illustrated by the recent debate between Jean-Pierre Changeux, author of the popular book *L'Homme neuronal*, and Paul Ricœur.⁷ They have to do with the fact that we are dealing with two incommensurable discourses. If we accept the canonical definition of intentional consciousness inherited from Franz Brentano and Husserl ('Every consciousness is consciousness of something'), it allows us to describe the complete range of cognitive, volitive, affective, etc., acts of consciousness, including the consciousness we have of others and of our own body. On the other hand, according to the phenomenological approach, the brain is the phenomenological non-entity *par excellence*. I may be conscious of having a headache but I will never be conscious of my brain as such!

And vice versa, the neurosciences will always be tempted to reduce the phenomena of consciousness to their cortical substrate. In Changeux's view there is no doubt that the 'positron camera' now makes possible an objective analysis of subjective mood states that is more accurate and profound than what 'old-hat' psychology or psychoanalysis can do. He also claims to be able to understand St Teresa of Avila's mystical ecstasies better than mysticism has understood itself, on the basis of traces of neuronal activity recorded by the same magic camera.⁸ Whatever we think of these claims, the neurosciences bring us face to face with the idea of the 'cortical' trace and the metaphor of inscription in a cortical substrate that by definition is inaccessible to any phenomenology.

But what the phenomenologist can apprehend is the terrible anguish that takes hold of people deprived by a brain trauma of the ability to access their short-term memories, or the upsetting signs of senile amnesia suffered by people with Alzheimer's disease, showing just how much certain forms of forgetting are synonymous with the destruction of the self. The phenomenologist (who identifies immediately with the words of the surrealist poet Paul Nogué: 'The inside of your head is not a grey and white mass as you have been told; it is a landscape of springs and branches, a house on fire, better still the marvellous city you delight in inventing') cannot help wondering what is still left of that 'house on fire' and that

'marvellous city' once they are no longer inhabited by the identifiable ghost of a 'self'. As Ricœur stresses, 'we do not know, in phenomenological knowledge, whether forgetting is just something that stops us evoking and retrieving "past time", or whether it is a result of the inevitable wearing away "by" time of the traces that past events have left in us in the form of primal feelings'.⁹

From the perspective of the neurosciences, which are concerned only with 'mnestic traces', forgetting seems above all to be a memory malfunction. Understood in this way, it is synonymous with the erasure of a print associated with the deterioration or degeneration of the cortical substrate involved. Behind this definition distinctions have developed between 'short-term' and 'long-term' memory, or between 'explicit' and 'implicit' memory, which have an important role in diagnosis and treatment of different forms of amnesia. However subtle the academic terminology, it does not take us beyond the metaphor of the print.

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But can all the forms of forgetting be subsumed in the erasure of cortical traces? What Ricœur says about the 'happy memory', and the 'small miracle of recognition' that accompanies all the acts of daily life, is equally true for the many forms of 'ordinary forgetting'; they are silent about their neuronal basis and 'experienced amid the organs' silence'.¹⁰

So what we are dealing with are 'psychic traces' that are available (in the form of all sorts of 'memories') or unavailable (from simple absentmindedness or 'memory block' in day-to-day psychopathology right up to amnesias of psychic origin). Whether they are available or unavailable, they cannot be erased. If there is a threat here, it is not that all-devouring time might swallow up our dearest memories, a threat that is underlined by St Augustine's image of time's rapaciousness,¹¹ it is in fact that the unerased that we would prefer to bury in the past might come back to haunt us.

Even if 'the terror of past, present, future forgetting is the flipside of the light of happy memory, of the shadow cast on it by an unhappy memory',¹² I can trust 'the primal ability to endure and remain inscriptions-feelings',¹³ which prevent me having to face a totally alien world each morning (this is the 'small miracle of recognition'). I know with an inner knowledge that what I would like to forget will not entirely disappear, that it can re-emerge at any moment like a spectre.

Recognition of traces and survival of traces are the two faces of the same coin: 'To recognize a memory is to retrieve it.'¹⁴ Echoing the Augustinian analysis of the parable of the lost mite, we might say with Ricœur that here perhaps is 'the profound truth of the Greek *anamnēsis*: to seek is to hope to find again'.¹⁵

What figure of forgetting corresponds to this survival of mnemonic traces? From Plato's metaphor of the wax tablet, the surface on which hieroglyphs are etched, we move to the metaphor, also of Platonic origin, of the dovecote full of birds that I own but whose flight I do not control. Here we are dealing with a 'reserve or resource forgetting' which is connected with the 'unrecognized character of the memory's persistence, its avoidance of the vigilance of consciousness'.¹⁶ This form of forgetting is in tune with the idea of the 'happy memory' to the extent that 'the small joys of the

sometimes unexpected return of memories we thought were lost forever' assure us that, for better or worse, we forget less than we fear or wish to forget: 'it is in the nature of feelings to survive, persist, remain, endure, while retaining the mark of absence and distance'.¹⁷

Those 'small joys' of the happy memory may turn into 'great misfortunes' if repressed memories rise up to the surface again. Reserve forgetting can also work like a delayed-action bomb. Is it not this 'return of the repressed', taking the form of death wishes that no longer have any reason to be objective, that is betrayed in its vulgar ferocity by the words of the tipsy sexton of Septfontaines? We can read in it, as in an open book, an illustration of Freud's theory of the immortality of desire, in this case a thirst for vengeance. The sexton becomes the spokesman and agent for an ancestral hatred, thus illustrating the impossibility of forgetting, for which the traces are never as 'past' as they might be. Even when we are dealing with just three anonymous skeletons that cannot do a thing, the traces of what has affected us, in actual fact or in our imagination, not only cannot be erased but continue to have an effect.

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The first anecdote, whose climax is 'It's him!', gives us a glimpse of the complexity of what Ricœur calls 'the historiographic process' and Michel de Certeau 'the writing of history'. In both his phenomenology of memory and his epistemology of historical knowledge and hermeneutics of the historical condition, Ricœur defends the 'true nature of the relationship between history and memory, a relationship of critical repetition, both internal and external'.¹⁸ What he offers us is a vast, complex 'plea on behalf of memory as the matrix of history'.¹⁹ Claiming no philosophy of history to be critical can evade the question of the status of history in relation to memory, because the continuity from one to the other is ensured by the notions of trace and witness.²⁰

As far as our problem of the trace is concerned, it is worthwhile noting that Ricœur's research into the place of memory in the construction of historical knowledge opens with a meditation on Plato's *Phaedrus*, and his indictment of writing in that work. What has to be defined is the precise nature of 'history's transformation of the time of memory',²¹ 'the art of arranging the few leftovers', a secret known to all great historians. And a very subtle art in that historians who wish to understand history cannot be satisfied with accumulating documents; instead they have to 'lay claim to their descriptive and explanatory space against a speculative backdrop as rich as that provided by the problems of evil, love and death'.²² At least sometimes 'historians do not speak for the people of the past, but let them speak. Then the document refers back to the trace and the trace to the document'.²³

This idea predominates in the long central section of *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* where Ricœur develops a detailed analysis of all the operations that make up historiography, that is, 'the threefold adventure of archiving, explaining and representing'.²⁴

Is 'ordinary' memory, like historical memory, purely retrospective, as is suggested by Schlegel's expression which makes the historian 'the prophet of the past', or does it include a paradoxical reference to the future? Whether or not this is so, can

historians endorse in their own practice the idea of a 'present in the past', which Augustine identifies with memory? Or do they see only 'the past in the past'?

It is for an 'informed consciousness'²⁵ to decide whether the *pharmakon* of the invention of history is poisonous or curative for memory, while asking in what sense Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy's image can be accepted that makes the historian into memory's physician. 'His honour lies in attending to wounds, genuine wounds. Just as the doctor must act, regardless of medical theories, because his patient is ill, in the same way the historian must act, spurred on by morality, to restore the memory of a nation, or humanity.'²⁶

The 'dialectic of presence and absence inherent in any mnemonic representation of the past'²⁷ applies not only to the particular work of historians; it also defines our historical condition. This is what Ricœur demonstrates in the example of death in history, which leads him to compare with Heidegger's ontology of being-for-death 'an ontology of being-faced-with-death, against-death, in which the work of mourning would be taken into account',²⁸ including its historiographic expressions. The demarcation Heidegger sets up between the notions of remains and trace becomes less hermetic if we give a 'more carnal touch'²⁹ to historicity's existential aspect. This is what happens when being-in-debt is related to the idea of genealogy or transmission in Pierre Legendre's sense.³⁰

Thinking about the Greek *Lethe*, which is inseparable from the Greek idea of *Aletheia*, as Heidegger constantly reminds us, suggests that every memory has its source in a primal immemorial, an originating origin (*Ursprung*), distinct from the beginning pure and simple. It is in this sense that we might speak of a 'founding forgetting'³¹ that makes possible historical memory itself. Far from being synonymous with destruction, forgetting thus assumes a positive meaning. By drinking in good measure from the waters of the 'river Lethe'³² mentioned in the concluding myth of the *Republic*, we discover that 'the has-been makes forgetting the immemorial resource provided for the work of memory'.³³

Even though these thoughts have apparently taken us quite a way from the character of Jean l'Aveugle, they throw light on some implications of the anecdote that was our starting-point.

(a) My late teacher's exclamation: 'It's him!' is just overstated shorthand for the work of recognition and identification that plays a central role in the historiographic process. The historian's raw material comprises traces that present themselves, as Ricœur says, as 'sign-effects'. He introduces this definition in the context of his attempt to determine the status of historical time in the third volume of the trilogy *Temps et Récit I-III*,³⁴ where he defines historical time as a 'third-time' that forms a bridge between the objective time of events in the world and the subjective time of the human soul, analysed in masterly style by St Augustine in his theory of the three-fold present: memory's 'present in the past', anticipation's 'present in the future', attention's 'present in the present'.

Ricœur shows that we have several instruments of thought that allow us to connect experienced time to universal time. Thus calendar time and the introduction of calendars made it possible for intrapsychic time to be supported by social time and astronomical time. The notion of generation, as it is theorized by Dilthey and Alfred Schütz, offers us the opportunity to support biologically historical third-time: history

is the history of the living, who are preceded by their forerunners, who establish connections with their contemporaries and disappear to give way to their successors.

Analysis of historical time concludes the triple topic: 'Archives, document, trace'. In Ricœur's view the latter notion is not only a 'new connector' in historical thinking but 'perhaps the ultimate connector'.³⁵ Indeed, unlike the notions of 'archive' and 'document', which have a clearly defined place in historiographic methodology and epistemology, the notion of trace is everywhere assumed in the historian's discourse, but we cannot call it a methodological concept *stricto sensu*. It is in a way a 'meta-category' governing historical discourse as a whole.

The trace only becomes thinkable in the course of a 'second-order investigation' concerning historical consciousness and the ultimate epistemological presuppositions of historians' practice itself. It is a 'requisite of all the products of the historian's practice that respond to the aporia of time for speculation'.³⁶ Does this not come down to admitting that the notion of trace cannot be corralled into the area of simple epistemology?

(b) The fate of Jean l'Aveugle, and the considerable traces he left in the chroniclers' discourse, brings us up against the enigmas and paradoxes of historical consciousness, which are also those of historical memory. It is these enigmas that a hermeneutics of historical consciousness – such as Gadamer's, which gravitates around the notion of *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*, or a 'hermeneutics of the historical condition' such as the one recently developed by Ricœur – will have to take on board.

The basic difficulty is in understanding the specifically temporalizing function of memory, which is reflected in Aristotle's statement: 'memory is of time'.³⁷ This formulation, which Ricœur takes as the guiding star of the whole of his investigation, reminds us that mnemonic traces refer us immediately to a temporal horizon. So we avoid the temptation of making memory a mere province in the vast empire of the imagination and, we might add, of making the trace a mere province in the vast empire of signs.

Among the various polarities that Ricœur foregrounds in the course of his investigation into memory phenomena I shall highlight in particular evocation and search, where we find, in the first, spontaneous memories and, in the second, the more or less laborious 'effort to remember', extending from the Freudian perlaboration, which has to overcome many resistances, and in particular the compulsion to repeat, to the athletic but pointless achievements of the ancient *ars memoriae* brilliantly analysed by Frances Yates.³⁸

The limits on all artificial memories are related to a decisive point: 'For the artificial memory everything is action, nothing is passion'.³⁹ How can we avoid applying the same judgement to our modern memory machines and innumerable databases? Though the *memoria artificiosa* has limits, these have nothing to do with limits on storage capacity, which in fact may potentially be infinite (in the sense of the 'bad infinite' mentioned by Hegel). There are always more items of information worth filing than there are spaces available in our modern palaces of virtual memory. Comparing ancient mnemotechnical magic with the contemporary fascination with the magic of computers could turn out to be an extremely instructive exercise that would help us to understand why the palaces of *memoria artificiosa* are all empty fortresses.

Responding to the story *Funes el memorioso* by Jorge Luis Borges, I wonder if what threatens us nowadays is not a 'merciless memory', that is in a sense insomniac, unable to forget anything whatsoever. Far from being the most splendid palace, a memory like that, which is reluctant to let go of anything at all, is just a waste-bin as vast as the world.

The real challenge is to overcome the complementary denials, forgetting and being-affected (by the past where memory phenomena are concerned, but also, more generally, by being-affected pure and simple!). This too seems to me to be one of the big issues for philosophical reflection on the concept of trace: to show its essential link with being-affected.

If, in contrast to Michel Foucault's *L'Archéologie du savoir*, we think historians, whatever their specificity of historical understanding, remain servants of memory, we are forced to ask ourselves a certain number of questions directly related to the problem of the trace. The first and most fundamental (and for this very reason the one we most easily evade) is as follows: out of what 'present in the past' do we make memory? Is it the past of a 'present in the present' that is involved in the act of attention, if we must believe St Augustine? This reply raises more problems than it solves.

In my view a hermeneutic phenomenology must question the theory of the primacy of perception in determining the living present. In order to develop the concept of trace it is essential to recognize that 'the present is also savouring and suffering' and the 'present of initiative'.⁴⁰ Our most intimate memories are made up of pleasures and sufferings, that is, traces of everything that has affected us in one way or another.

Historians spontaneously give preference to the initiatives of historical actors, and less easily to the sufferings of victims. Thus the many chroniclers who have recounted the great deeds or misdeeds of Jean l'Aveugle, be they Czech (Pierre de Zittau, Benes de Weitmühl), Belgian (Jean le Bel, Jean Hocsem), French (Jean Froissart, Jaique Dex, to whom we owe the story of the unsuccessful siege of the town of Metz by Jean l'Aveugle's troops, a colourful story almost worthy of Rabelais's Picrocholine war), Italian (Giovanni Villani, the *Chronicon Parmense*) all concentrate almost exclusively on the actions of the king.

Historians are as interested in initiatives that ended in failure as those that were crowned with success. The failures leave traces in history too, which are sometimes as important if not more important than the successes, if only because what they leave are most often blood-soaked traces. This led Hegel to formulate his famous theory of 'reason's cunning' (*Der List der Vernunft*), which produces meaning by using the passions of *welthistorische Individuen* at their expense. Thus we see Jean l'Aveugle, who had twice failed to secure the imperial crown, passing on his hopes to his son, Emperor Charles IV, who became the great builder of Gothic Prague and whose patronage has left considerable traces in late medieval architecture from Prague to Metz, thanks to the famous Parler dynasty of architects.

(c) The third lesson from the story of Jean l'Aveugle that I shall highlight is how closely intertwined are the concern to reinstate the past as it was and literary fiction, which alerts us to problems of historical imagination. The chroniclers (who are often poets as well, as is the case with Jean Froissart, who makes Jean l'Aveugle a charac-

ter in *Méliador* his novel of chivalry) are also interested in the actual events of the battle of Crécy⁴¹ because, even in his lifetime, Jean l'Aveugle entered the pantheon of chivalry due to the combined efforts of the heralds and the court poets, and at the same time left considerable traces in 14th-century courtly poetry, where we occasionally find him in the role of a supreme judge who has to decide the question of whether courtly love is preferable to life in society or vice versa.

During the long captivity of his protector Charles II of Navarre, Guillaume de Machaut set him the example of the chivalric virtues of the King of Bohemia:

Pren garde au bon roy de Behaigne
Qui en France et en Alemaigne,
En Savoie et en Lombardie,
En Dannemarche et en Hongrie,
En Pouleinne, en Russe, en Cracoe,
En Masouvve, en Prusse, en Letoe,
Ala pris et honneur conquerre.
Il donnait fiez, joiaus et terre,
Or, argent; rien ne retenait
Fors l'onneur; ad ce se tenait
Et il en avoit plus que nuls.
De bons fu li miendres tenus.⁴²

Thanks to Werner Palavicini's research we are better informed about the functions of the heralds, those distant heirs of the Greek *aidos*, who were experts able to identify knights in full armour from their coats of arms, official masters of ceremonies at tournaments and bards who praised the knightly virtues at a time when that social class was going into an irreversible decline. Thus in the *Dit des VIII blasons* Jean de Biétri gives us an extremely heraldic evocation of the battle of Crécy, in which, in 330 lines, we can read the personification of the eight basic virtues of the eight chief knights who died in the battle.

Why am I mentioning all these literary documents in the context of a consideration of the notion of trace?

First of all in order to alert us to the complexity of the links between history, fiction and myth in historiographic discourse. It would be a mistake to think the advent of modern historiography put an end to that tangled network of relations. Is it not disturbing to note that in 1940, on the eve of the invasion of Poland by Hitler's troops, a thesis defended at Leipzig University presented Jean l'Aveugle as one of the great forerunners of the *Ostpolitik* of the Holy Empire?

Furthermore it could very well be that literary imagination might fly to the assistance of historical imagination, if only to make us aware of the intrinsic limits of historiographic writing. The things that are 'absent from history', to paraphrase Michel de Certeau, are the subjects' intimate experiences and the traces they leave behind in their story.⁴³

What 'critical' historian will still dare recount, in the absence of documents and witnesses, the traces of the Oedipal scene that put the future Emperor Charles IV face to face with his father when the latter repudiated his wife, accusing her of having hatched a plot against him in league with certain nobles? All that historians can tell

us, 'from a reliable source', is that Charles, who was still called Wenceslas at the time, was imprisoned for two months in a grim cell to punish him for his crime of *lèse-majesté*. They can also bring us some eye-witness accounts of the rather difficult relations between father and son. But they remain silent on the connections between all these facts.

(d) Finally the 'It's him!' invites us to reflect on the historian's desire, which may take several forms, none of them neutral. I think that is the great lesson we need to take from Nietzsche's *Second Untimely Meditation*, on the question of the usefulness, or not, of history for life. Traces, prints and remains of the past may retain (or lose) our commitment in several possible ways, as Nietzsche demonstrates in the triplet of *monumental*, *antiquarian* and *critical* history. I feel this triplet invites us to see the notion of trace from three viewpoints. What is uppermost in the monumental viewpoint is the commemorative function. Memory, invested in a 'monument to the fallen', such as Jean l'Aveugle's mausoleum, is put at the service of a quest for a precise identity.

Ricoeur emphasizes that 'this small miracle is also a great trap for phenomenological analysis',⁴⁴ which is always in danger of confusing the recognized past with the perceived past. Instead of neutralizing the past-ness of the thing or event, phenomenological analysis of acts of recognition deals with the 'complex alterity'⁴⁵ of traces, and may go from absolute familiarity ('It is him!') up to the disturbing strangeness of the indeterminate *déjà vu* (It's a 'ghost').

The 'him' of 'It's him!' not only indicates a historical figure, it is the guarantee of a national identity restored, a problem that was certainly not Jean l'Aveugle's, but exists only from the advent of a national consciousness in the second half of the 19th century.⁴⁶ My late teacher's expedition places us on the border between monumental history and antiquarian history. It is the result of the antiquarian veneration of a past assumed to be the guarantee of a specific identity, and the 'monumental' concern to magnify a historical moment or figure. 'Critical history', as Nietzsche defines it, the history of 'revolutionary breaks' that separate us from the traces of a past we judge to be unacceptable, has no place here, and for good reason!

Antiquarian history and *critical* history bear witness to other possibilities for managing the traces of the past. Antiquarian history is primarily interested in prints that can be interpreted as roots. What is important here is the need to be rooted that is exemplified by the family tree. Every bird, to quote from Cocteau, likes to sing on a branch of its family tree. As Nietzsche stresses, the tree that feels only its own roots is unable to recognize the forest of which it is part. Is it a coincidence that it was only in the 1960s, when the ideal of the European Community was starting to take shape, that historiographic research rediscovered the European dimension of Jean l'Aveugle's policies?

The third possibility for managing traces corresponds to 'critical' history as Nietzsche defines it. What is important here is the need for uprooting and break with a past we judge to be unacceptable. The 'trace' seems to manifest itself here as an unbearable wound. Everything would be simple if the problem could be reduced to the refusal to inhabit the ruins and remains of the past. Far more formidable is the desire to erase from our memory the traces of the past: the heads of the executed on the gates of many French cathedrals, or the statues of the Buddhas blown up by

the Taliban in Afghanistan, are there to show us what destructive violence 'critical' history can be capable of.

Collective traumas, just like wounds in the individual memory, also require a costly work of grieving. All the more so because the founding events of a historical community nearly always bear the mark of an original violence. It is by keeping in mind the disturbing kinship between mourning and melancholy that the full impact can be measured of the theory with which Ricœur summarizes the contribution made by a celebrated essay by Freud: 'The work of grieving is the cost of the work of remembering; but the work of remembering is the profit from the work of grieving.'⁴⁷ 'What some cultivate with a morose delectation, and what others flee with a bad conscience, is the same memory-repetition. Some love to lose themselves in it, others are afraid of being swallowed up by it. But both groups suffer from the same *criticism deficit*. They do not achieve what Freud called the work of memorization.'⁴⁸ Only a 'critical memory' (in the sense of the word that we shall need to define) can be called 'happy'!

Trace, print, remains: outline of a phenomenological approach

In all the preceding considerations the notion of trace connected us, directly or indirectly, with death. It seems crucial to me that we should ask ourselves whether the trace cannot be approached from a totally different angle, from the side of life rather than the side of death. Does our life not begin with an event that happens to us, but which it would be hard to say we witness: our birth? The meaning of this founding event is accessible to us only through traces, in the twofold form of the prints it has left in our body and the discourse of others who recount it to us and associate it with a story of desire or non-desire that precedes us.

It is then that we start to glimpse other aspects of the triplet guiding our thinking, which invites us to combine the notions of trace, print and remains. By saying we are invited to combine them I am perhaps jumping ahead rather fast. Let us start by asking ourselves about the relations that may be set up between these three terms and first of all about the order of their appearance. Is 'trace' a generic term of which 'print' and 'remains' are subspecies? Must every trace be thought of as remains, residue, leftover? Each of these words presupposes a different relationship with the past. But what relationship?

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The case of 'remains' is the simplest. We can call 'remains' everything that is left to us from a past time: castle ruins, an archaeological site, family jewellery, etc. The German term *Überrest* tells us clearly what it means: the historian's work is the art of arranging the little leftovers, and above all the art of conserving them. The task of historical understanding is to integrate these 'remains' into the present, sometimes by giving them a new meaning. The ruins of a medieval abbey speak to us of the violence that caused its destruction, but they can also be perceived as a 'haunted place' or they can inspire a Caspar David Friedrich to make a sublime painting over

which there hovers the shadow of melancholy. Certain 'remains' may even surround themselves with the aura of the sacred, which endows them with a more potent presence. This is true of certain souvenir photos, family jewellery, not forgetting relics of saints venerated in churches, such as those of St Willibrord to which I paid my respects on Whit Tuesday by taking part in the Echternach dance procession.

*

According to phenomenologists, who are interested in the many modes of presentation of phenomena, the print appears no less complex. The simplest example is the footprints of a walker in the sand on the seashore, or a deer's hooves in the snow. Traces of this sort indicate to us that some creature, man or animal, 'was here'. They have a value we might call 'indicative' and belong to that very general category of signs that Husserl, in the first *Logical Investigation*, calls '*Anzeichen*' (indicators). Maybe we could add, with reference to the well-known distinction between *icon*, *index* and *symbol* in Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, that, unlike the *icon* (which refers back to the object indicated by virtue of its own nature, regardless of whether or not the object really exists), and unlike the *symbol* (which refers back similarly by virtue of a law or rule), 'the index is a sign that refers back to the object because it is genuinely affected by the object'. This is clearly the case with the prints I have just mentioned. However, we should not forget that the term 'affection' arises in this context. The print, seen from a purely semiotic viewpoint, is the effect of a thing that leaves its mark on another. But that is equally so for intrapsychic space: the print is what has 'impressed' us somehow or other.

*

There remains the 'trace'. It can make phenomenologists break out in a cold sweat. First because it pops up everywhere: there are 'traces' all over the place and of every kind: 'traces' of wounds in the form of blows inflicted, traces of an operation in the form of scars, traces of an extraordinary event in the individual or collective memory, traces of particles colliding on the screen in a physics lab, etc. Is it possible to find a common denominator between all these meanings? One idea would be to say there is a special bond between the notions of event and trace, a link that will naturally need to be defined.

The second reason for perplexity is more centrally phenomenological. It seems to me to be related to two problems: the first is whether everything we call 'trace' belongs to the category of indicators or, in other words, whether all traces should be thought of as signs. By defining the trace as a 'sign-effect' Ricœur brings us directly up against this problem.

Another difficulty stems from the fact that the notion of trace is a veritable *crux* of any phenomenology, be it transcendental (Husserl) or hermeneutic (Heidegger). Why is this? Because the very idea of 'phenomenon' seems to foreground the relationship between being and appearing that is contained in the Greek word *apophainesthai*. What presents itself in the *Erscheinen* mode always contains the risk of seeming. From *Erscheinen* to mere *Scheinen*, from the manifestation to the simula-

crum, the road is often not very long. Nevertheless the principle: 'There is as much seeming as being' retains its full value in phenomenology. The 'phenomenon' is what appears in the field of consciousness. But the 'trace' refers us to what does not appear. That does not stop it producing effects, which are scarcely perceptible in some cases and quite spectacular in others.

The difficulties thrown up by this kind of non-manifestation affect the debate, as we have seen, between phenomenology, which is a philosophy of consciousness, and the neuronal sciences, which are interested in neuronal traces in the cortex of the brain. But they also affect the no less contentious relations between phenomenology and Freudian psychoanalysis. We have only to mention these two disciplines to realize that the notion of trace is fundamentally ambiguous.

The beginning of the 20th century may be marked by two books, which were both published in 1900: Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and Freud's *Traumdeutung*. I will leave to others more qualified than me the question as to how *The Interpretation of Dreams* affects the problematic of the trace. At all events what is certain is that it is not absent from the founding text of phenomenology, as is demonstrated in particular by the first of the *Logical Investigations*, entitled *Ausdruck und Bedeutung* (Expression and Meaning). While avoiding defining the sign in general, Husserl here develops his thinking on the two basic categories of sign we are concerned with: simple indicators (*Anzeichen*) and expressions that have meaning. The question I would like to raise in the context of this article, though I know I cannot deal with it, is whether it would be possible to work out a 'logical' piece of research, following Husserl's phenomenology but engaging with the neurosciences and psychoanalysis, whose title would not be *Ausdruck und Bedeutung*, but *Spur und Deutung*.

Thinking about the trace: a philosophical task

Thus we have embarked on a long adventure whose perilous nature is easy to guess at. Let us start with a purely formal statement of fact. With few exceptions we do not find the concept of 'trace' in dictionaries of philosophy. We may have the impression we are dealing with a sort of Proteus that changes shape according to the contexts in which it is used. Philosophers, who inherited from Plato the aspiration to have clearly defined forms that allow us to delineate a distinct identity, are not at all fond of such chameleons. Their suspicion when they encounter them stems from the very idea of the *logos*, which underlies the great tradition of western rationalism.

But even if a chameleon changes its appearance according to the contexts in which it appears (or rather disappears), it remains a chameleon, that is, an animal whose behaviour and environment we can describe. This strategy of epistemological location, which consists of asking ourselves in what context we find the notion of trace, and associated with what kind of problematic, is excellently illustrated by Ricœur's recent work.⁴⁹

Added to this is the fact, strongly emphasized by Heidegger and Derrida, that the 'logocentrism' dominating western metaphysical thought makes 'constant presence', signified by the Greek word *ousia* and the German one *Anwesen*, the fundamental meaning of being. However, the trace seems to draw us instead more towards

apousia and *Abwesen*. For a certain metaphysical thought, which identifies with old Parmenides' instruction: 'But what is both absent and present, make sure you can see it in your thought with a gaze that nothing deters; for never will being cut itself off from belonging to being no more, as is right, what is dispersed in all directions than what comes together to form a whole',⁵⁰ the trace appears as a dangerous fly in the ointment.

Who are the thinkers of 'the trace', assuming they exist? Of course the question cannot be reduced to drawing up a list of the occurrences of the words *ichnos*, *vestigium*, *empreinte*, *trace*, etc. The fact that in the *Gorgias* Plato mentions traces of blows on the corpse of a murder victim tells us very little about his interest in the notion of trace. The same could be said of the problematic of the print in the *Theaetetus*, where Plato wonders whether the soul can preserve prints of perceptions, like a mould that allows us to identify or re-identify an object.

The position is not the same with the problematic of the trace that underlies the *Phaedrus*, in which Plato comments at length on the myth of the invention of writing. As Jacques Derrida showed in his famous article 'La pharmacie de Platon', writing – that is, the operation that consists of preserving and disseminating the traces of speech that is no longer controlled by the speaker, who is assumed to be the sole arbiter of his 'meaning' – here appears already as a 'dangerous supplement', a *pharmakon*, both remedy and poison, which was to be its status all through western metaphysics.⁵¹

Is it a coincidence that the first philosophers to make more extensive use of the idea were the Neoplatonists? In Neoplatonist thought being as being or *ousia* is just the first trace of the ineffable One, which is the true Absolute. Plotinus supported this idea, which originated in Plato's theory that the Good is 'beyond being' and essence (*epekeina tês ousias*),⁵² with an etymological pun that is also found in the *Cratylus*. The word *ousia* ('essence') derives from Hestia, the goddess who presides over the domestic hearth. Is all ontology, all thinking about being, motivated by the obscure desire to gather around a warming presence, a fire of meaning that ensures our protection and shelter?

Strangely Heidegger, who continually criticizes the assimilation of being to *Anwesenheit*, the 'constant presence', appears literally obsessed with the symbol of the domestic hearth and the figure of the goddess Hestia. This leads him, among other things, in his commentary on Hölderlin's *Ister*, to formulate the astonishing theory that follows: '*Der Herd ist das Sein*',⁵³ which I translate as: '*L'âtre est l'être*' (The hearth is being). The universe of traces is not the same as that of signs, even if they have in common the fact of being related to absence, *apousia*, *Abwesenheit*, in that they are distinguished from *parousia*, coming into presence. If we accept Heidegger's hypothesis that the Greek understanding of being foregrounds constant presence, *Anwesen*, understood as dwelling, we appreciate the difficulties in developing a problematic of the trace. The whole question is in fact what ontological status we can give to the trace 'which is not nothing'. The 'dwellings' might fall into ruins but not disappear. Presence is never erased without leaving traces. When the fire goes out there are always some ashes left behind.

It is perhaps this security of the hearth that Neoplatonist 'henology' comes to tear us away from by postulating that being is just the first trace of the One and inviting

us to carry on to the end the work of unification.⁵⁴ We only have to look at the Neoplatonists' Christian legacy, both among thinkers like Scotus Eriugena and among the Rhine mystics, to realize that this notion of trace has left a great many traces in their philosophical and theological speculations, among which we shall mention above all St Augustine's theory that temporal being preserves the trace of the One (*vestigium unitatis*) and his vast attempt to find everywhere in reality the prints of the threefold God. The fact that these *vestigia Trinitatis* are anything but 'vestigial', in the sense of 'remains' or 'ruins', is obvious to any reader of *De trinitate*.

Here we see the outlines of a philosophical investigation relating to the status of the trace, which enters into a debate with western metaphysics and, in the arena of contemporary philosophy, is at the heart of the dispute between Heidegger, Lévinas and Derrida, who were interested, each from his own viewpoint, in the notion of trace. Since I cannot proceed any further with it, I must be satisfied with stressing how important this debate is in my view.

The order of the sign and the disorder of the trace: the hermeneutic problem

My conclusion, which is not really a conclusion, will be very brief.

Looking back at the road we have travelled I realize that the idea of trace has more than once come together in my mind with the notion of 'wound'. To repeat a phrase of Ricœur's I would say that my main concern is to give 'a more carnal touch' to thinking about the trace. At least more carnal than that provided by the semiotic approach.

At the start of his book *Le Signe* Umberto Eco describes the adventures of a 'conceptual character' he calls 'Monsieur Sigma'.⁵⁵ He is an Italian tourist visiting Paris who finds himself suffering from a sudden stomach-ache. Eco takes up several pages describing in detail the semiotic operations he has to carry out in order to contact a doctor who can make a diagnosis and prescribe a remedy. The philosophical lesson Eco draws from his amusing little story is contained in a few words:

A normal individual, when faced with a problem as spontaneous and natural as an ordinary 'stomach-ache', is immediately forced to enter a network of sign systems: some are directly connected with the possibility of carrying out practical operations, others are related more directly to attitudes that we will define as 'ideological'. In any event all of them are fundamental as far as social interaction is concerned, so much so that we may wonder whether it is signs that allow Sigma to live in society or whether the society in which Sigma lives and sees himself as a human being is nothing but a vast and complex system of sign systems.⁵⁶

Except for a small detail I would be prepared to subscribe to this 'pansemiotc' thesis. That detail relates to my refusal to endorse the '*nothing but*'. To illustrate the difference I have invented, as a reply to the aforementioned thoughts, a different 'conceptual character' (G. Deleuze) from Eco's 'Signor Sigma'. I shall call him: *Herr Spur* or 'Mr Trace'. Even though both of them in everyday life use the same signs, the mental universe of 'Mr Trace' is not quite the same as 'Signor Sigma's'.

Herr Spur, who is of German origin but lives and works in France, does not suffer from stomach-aches, but he is periodically afflicted with violent attacks of headache which have led him to consult several specialists in neurology. Neither examination of his reflexes, nor electroencephalograms, nor positron emission tomograms have yet resulted in a diagnosis of the cause of his affliction. One of the specialists reassured him when he said he was not suffering from a brain tumour. Another asked him whether there was a predisposition to migraine-like states in his family. The third suggested in veiled terms that it might be a psychosomatic symptom, which had the immediate effect of increasing his anxiety.

Herr Spur, who was 'born under X', is a rather taciturn man. Those around him find him somewhat introverted and not easy to get along with. Some of them, among them Signor Sigma, who met him at an international conference on the topic 'Semiotics and Palaeontology', even find him frankly miserable. In fact *Herr Spur* is a palaeontologist by profession. He is a humble technician and member of a CNRS research team specializing in the study of prehistoric caves. His work consists of studying the eating habits of our most distant ancestors. In practice this means he has to spend his days searching in the ashes of fires that went out many millennia ago to find toothprints on broken bones, identify the provenance of animals and examine bone fractures. This tedious work has taught him to be very patient, so patient that he is often teased in his family for having his 'head in the clouds' and being absolutely incapable of making the smallest decision.

Like every researcher *Herr Spur* also dreams of one day making a sensational discovery that would revolutionize the science and make his name go down in history. He is one of the few privileged people who were able to visit the famous, recently discovered Chauvet cave, a cavern decorated with more than 447 rock paintings of 14 different animal species. He was a member of the team that found a child's footprint in the cave, a discovery to which the newspaper *Le Monde* of 11 June 1999 devoted a complete page. 'A child of eight or nine walked around in the depths of the Chauvet cave twenty or thirty thousand years ago. They are the oldest traces ever left by an individual of our species (*Homo sapiens sapiens*): it was with these lines that Emmanuel Roux began the article recounting the discovery, explaining that Michel Garcia, a specialist in prehistoric cave prints (whose assistant *Herr Spur* is, which *Le Monde* did not explain), found that the child trod on the older traces of a bear and that, parallel to the human footprints, he discovered the prints of a wolf.

No one can have any idea of the tricky questions *Herr Spur* had to face in order to interpret accurately the prints of that child, whom the journalist immediately christened: 'the prehistoric Mowgli'. Who had walked beside whom? Who had gone in front of whom? Are the prints contemporary or separated by hundreds of years? For the moment *Herr Spur* is still searching frenziedly for the indicators that would allow him to provide an irrefutable scientific answer to all these questions.

There is another question that *Herr Spur*, who likes difficult thoughts but hates complicated people, asks himself in private but dare not broach with his colleagues for fear of being ridiculed: what might that child have felt who was perhaps the ancestor of future metaphysicians, what was he thinking about when the splendours of this 'prehistoric Sistine Chapel' unfolded before his astonished eyes?

You will have understood that *Herr Spur* is a dreamer too. In fact he dreams a lot,

of battlefields, expeditions to distant lands, invaders he has to defend himself against at the risk of his life. In one of his recurring dreams he sees himself walking in a dark forest, going up a river towards a mysterious and fascinating place he knows but does not really know.

Herr Spur, who would like to be a writer but thinks he has neither the time, nor the money, nor the gift, is a great reader. He devours in no particular order the great novelists of world literature (he has read some of their books as often as ten times) but also detective novels and science fiction. He is vaguely interested in philosophy and theology, his favourite authors being Pascal and Kierkegaard rather than Hegel and Kant. His reading is quite eclectic and often consists of simple extracts written down in a notebook he carries with him everywhere. The latest pieces, scribbled in a scarcely legible hand and annotated with large question marks, are taken from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* and Book X of St Augustine's *Confessions*:

Die Wunden des Geistes heilen, ohne daß Narben bleiben.
(The wounds of the spirit heal without leaving scars)

et aliquando intromittit me in affectum multum inusitatum introrsus ad nescio quam dulcedinem, quae si perficiatur in me, nescio quid erit, quod vita ista non erit.
(and sometimes you send me into a most extraordinary feeling inside, to I know not what sweetness that, if it becomes perfect in me, will be I know not what, but this life will not be.)

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Notes

1. On Jean l'Aveugle and the traces he has left in historiography from the late Middle Ages to the late 20th century, I refer readers to the studies assembled in the book: *Jean l'Aveugle. Comte de Luxembourg, roi de Bohême (1296–1346)*, Luxembourg, Publications du Cludem, 1996.
2. This allegation, which seems to have been spread around by Heinrich von Diessenhofen from the Papal Curia in Avignon, has had a long life, since we still find it in H. H. Kortüm's book, *Menschen und Mentalitäten. Einführung in die Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters*, 1996, pp. 75 et seq.
3. Harald Weinrich, *Lethé. Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 1997; French translation by Diane Meur, *Léthé. Art et critique de l'oubli*, Paris, Fayard, 1999.
4. Paul Ricœur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris, Seuil, 2000, p. 538 (referred to subsequently as MHO).
5. MHO 539.
6. MHO 374.
7. Jean-Pierre Changeux and Paul Ricœur, *Ce qui nous fait penser. La nature et la règle*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1998.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
9. MHO 37.
10. MHO 553.
11. *Confessions* X, 6, 8.
12. MHO 37.

13. MHO 555.
14. MHO 561.
15. MHO 563.
16. MHO 570.
17. MHO 554.
18. MHO 337.
10. MHO 106.
20. MHO 229–30.
21. MHO 192.
22. MHO 194.
23. MHO 230.
24. MHO 171.
25. MHO 512.
26. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution*, New York, 1964, p. 696. The background to this idea is a general conception of language, as is shown by Rosenstock's articles, which I have translated under the title: *Au risque du langage*, translated by Jean Greisch, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1997.
27. MHO 474.
28. MHO 480.
29. MHO 494.
30. Pierre Legendre, *L'Inestimable Objet de la transmission. Essai sur le principe généalogique en Occident*, Paris, Fayard, 1985.
31. MHO 573.
32. Plato, *Republic*, 621. On this theme interesting ideas from Heidegger can be found in his lecture *Parmenides*, Ga 54, pp. 173–80. I would especially quote this sentence, which sounds like an aphorism: 'Der Denker im besonderen muß nach dem rechten Maß vom Wasser des Flusses "Ohnesorge" getrunken haben' (p. 180).
33. MHO 574.
34. Paul Ricœur, *Temps et Récit III. Le temps raconté*, Paris, Seuil, 1983, pp. 153–84. For a more thorough analysis I refer readers to the study: 'Die Andersheit der Spur und die Spuren der Anderen', Jean Greisch in Burkhard Liebsch (ed.), *Hermeneutik des Selbst – im Zeichen des Anderen. Zur Philosophie Paul Ricoeurs*, Freiburg, K. Alber, 1999, pp. 180–201; and Jean Greisch, *L'Arbre de vie et l'arbre du savoir. Les racines phénoménologiques de l'herméneutique heideggérienne*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 2000, pp. 168–84.
35. Ricœur, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Aristotle, *On memory and reminiscence*, 449a, 15.
38. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London/Chicago, Routledge & Kegan Paul and University of Chicago Press, 1966.
39. MHO 80.
40. MHO 40.
41. On Jean Froissart, see: Peter F. Ainsworth, *Jean Froissart and the Fabric of History: Truth, Myth and Fiction in the Chroniques*, Oxford, OUP, 1990.
42. Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Confort d'ami*, Ernest Hoepfner (ed.), Paris, 1921, p. 103, ll. 2923–34.
43. 'Historians' writing leaves a space for the absence and hides it; it creates these narratives of the past that are equivalent to cemeteries in towns; it exorcizes and admits a presence of death among the living' (Michel de Certeau, *L'Absent de l'histoire*, Paris, Mame, 1973, p. 103).
44. MHO 47.
45. *Ibid.*
46. See Jacques Maas, 'Johann der Blinde, emblematische Heldengestalt des Luxemburger Nationalbewußtseins im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in *Jean L'Aveugle. Comte de Luxembourg, roi de Bohême (1296–1346)*, Luxembourg, Publications du Cludem, pp. 597–622.
47. MHO 88.
48. MHO 96.

49. For a more detailed analysis I refer readers to chapter 9 of: Jean Greisch, *Paul Ricoeur: l'itinérance du sens*, Grenoble, Jérôme Milton, 2001.
50. Parmenides, *The Poem*, French translation by Jean Beaufret (1962), Paris, Éditions Michel Chandeigne, 1986, p. 13.
51. This is the main thesis driving Derrida's historical analyses in his book: *De la grammatologie*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1967. See also: 'La pharmacie de Platon', in *La Dissémination*, Paris, Seuil, 1972, pp. 69–179. This text is reprinted in the Garnier-Flammarion edition of the *Phaedrus*.
52. *Republic* 509b.
53. Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's 'Der Ister'*, Ga 53, pp. 134–43.
54. On the relationship between ontology and henology, now see: Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Ontologie, hénologie, Ereignis*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2001.
55. Umberto Eco, *Le Signe*, adapted from the Italian by Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, Brussels, Éditions Labor, 1988, pp.11–17.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.