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THEOREMS ON LANGUAGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY
The Embedding of Thought in the Material World
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1. Language consists of more than words and structures of words (although there is certainly a sense in which Ferdinand de Saussure's insistence that language is structure is valid and essential to understanding both language and human beings).

Beneath all the discussion of Wittgensteinian, structuralist, deconstructionist, and many other explanations of language there lies a state of affairs which is not being addressed: human analytic thinking of the sort one finds in such scientific and other scientific discourse is impossible for the human mind without its interiorization of a technology, writing, which establishes new relations between the human being and the exterior and interior worlds.

2. Language is always encounter, either between two or more living persons or between a living person, a reader, and a text earlier produced by a living person or persons, who, however in the reader's time may have been dead for up to 8000 years (before around 6000 BCE, when writing first appears, there were no texts).

As encounter, language always involves more than words. There is no speech act (including writing) that stands on its own, related only to its utterer and to words.

Thought, insofar as it involves words (it also of course involves innumerable other things, for how can we describe comprehensively what we do when we just "think"), is also an encounter (with a very really imagined someone, if only another version of oneself).

Hermeneutics arises from encounter, which all use of language entails, but which is never merely linguistic. The concept of hermeneutics or interpretation is based on person-to-person negotiation. Etymologies: hermeneutics, interpretation. There are no texts outside such negotiation. (2-16-91)

3. Its power for communication between persons is intimately connected with its existence in the world of sound, primarily.

4. Writing transforms thought by providing a technology that human beings can interiorize for their use of language.

5. Communication between persons is not mere shifting of "information" from point A to point B, not simply coding and decoding.

6. Language is deeply embedded in Christian belief because of the identification of the Second Person of the Godhead as the Word of God. This identification is permanently mysterious, but it has

not been beyond all interpretation.

7. Deconstructive hermeneutics expects texts to interpret texts. Since words can never be explained entirely in other words, texts so treated will of course deconstruct themselves. Moreover, since all texts are language at one remove from sound (coded from sound into sight), deconstructive hermeneutics is therefore in certain senses unreal. (Writing is psychologically associated with death.) Still, the immobilizing of writing in texts opens vast new horizons for language and thought and for understanding of both. Derrida et al. end always with absence and death, because they look at texts in depth.

8. Metaphysics and writing (Havelock).

9. Writing is the most human and humanistic of all technologies. Moreso even than the technology of musical instruments.

10. Recognition of the fact that writing is a technology calls for rethinking the relationship of the human person with the material world and to God.

11. Visualist bias in thinking of language. "A name is a label."--"Name," Enc. Brit. (1987), 8:493.

12. All utterance is at root discourse, which is radically and paradigmatically dialogic. As M. M. Bakhtin has insisted-- "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination, ed. Michael Holquist, (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981)- - "The text as such never appears as a dead thing; beginning with any text--and sometimes passing through a lengthy series of mediating links--we always arrive, in a final analysis, at the human voice, which is the way we come up against the human being" (quoted in Jeffrey Kittay, "Literacy and the Dialogic" (draft), MLA Convention, New Orleans LA 12-19-88). There is no way to formulate an utterance than would not have at least one or another kind of imagined hearer and context. In face-to-face utterance, the other or others are present before me. In writing, or in a radio or television studio, I have to imagine an audience for myself--that is to say, I have to fictionalize an audience. If there is a studio audience, the problem is not eliminated but complicated, for in one way or another the studio audience is the real audience but in another way it is not the real audience at all.