

with practices in the name of a theory, for example, Foucault's or Bourdieu's analyses. But to move in that direction is to open a not very Kantian question concerning a discourse which would be the art of talking about or constructing theory as well as the theory of that art—that is, a discourse that would be the memory and the practice, or in short, *the life-story of tact itself*.

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Chapter VI Story Time

AS ONE EXPLORES the terrain of these practices, something is constantly slipping away, something that can be neither said nor "taught" but must be "practiced." That is what Kant thought about judgment or tact. If he places the question at a "transcendental" level in relation to practice and theory (and not in the position of a differential remainder in relation to the powers [*lumières*] of reason), he does not explain what its language might be. On this subject, he resorts to quotation: a common saw, something said by the "ordinary" man. This still juridical (and already ethnological) procedure makes *someone* utter the fragment to be glossed. The popular oracle (*Spruch*) must speak about this art; the commentary will then *explain* this "saying." To be sure, in proceeding in this way the discourse takes this saying seriously (and does not consider it merely a deceptive blanket thrown over practices), but it places itself outside, at the distance of an evaluating observation. It speaks about what someone else says about his art, not about the art itself. If one maintains that this "art" can only be practiced, and that outside of this practice it has no statement, language must also be involved in this practice. It is an art of speaking, then, which exercises precisely that art of operating in which Kant discerned an art of thinking. In other words, it is a narration. If the art of speaking is itself an art of operating and an art of thinking, practice and theory can be present in it.

An art of speaking

The preceding investigations point in this direction. I shall distinguish between what is established and what remains hypothetical.

1) First, one *fact* is indicative. The ways of operating do not merely designate activities that a theory might take as its objects. They also organize its construction. Far from remaining external to theoretical

creation or at its threshold, Foucault's "procedures," Bourdieu's "strategies," and tactics in general form *a field of operations within which the production of theory also takes place*. We thus return, though on a different terrain, to Wittgenstein's position regarding "ordinary language."¹

2) A *possibility* offers itself for making explicit the relation of theory to the procedures from which it results and to those which are its objects: a discourse composed of stories. The narrativizing of practices is a textual "way of operating" having its own procedures and tactics. Marx and Freud (not to go any further back) provide authoritative examples. Foucault moreover claims to write only "stories" (*récits*). For his part, Bourdieu makes stories the vanguard and reference of his system. In many works, narrativity insinuates itself into scientific discourse as its general denomination (its title), as one of its parts ("case" studies, "life stories," or stories of groups, etc.) or as its counterpoint (quoted fragments, interviews, "sayings," etc.). Narrativity haunts such discourse. Shouldn't we recognize its *scientific* legitimacy by assuming that instead of being a remainder that cannot be, or has not yet been, eliminated from discourse, narrativity has a necessary function in it, and that *a theory of narration is indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition as well as its production?*

To do that would be to recognize the theoretical value of the novel, which has become the zoo of everyday practices since the establishment of modern science. It would also be to return "scientific" significance to the traditional act which has always *recounted* practices (this act, *ce geste*, is also *une geste*, a tale of high deeds). In this way, the folktale provides scientific discourse with a model, and not merely with textual objects to be dealt with. It no longer has the status of a document that does not know what it says, cited (summoned and quoted) before and by the analysis that knows it. On the contrary, it is a know-how-to-say (*savoir-dire*) exactly adjusted to its object, and, as such, no longer the Other of knowledge; rather it is a variant of the discourse that knows and an authority in what concerns theory. One can then understand the alternations and complicities, the procedural homologies and social imbrications that link the "arts of speaking" to the "arts of operating": the same practices appear now in a verbal field, now in a field of non-linguistic actions; they move from one field to the other, being equally tactical and subtle in both; they keep the ball moving between them—from the workday to evening, from cooking to legends and gossip, from the devices of lived history to those of history retold.

Can this narrativity be reduced to the "Description" we know from the classical age? One fundamental difference distinguishes them: in narration, it is no longer a question of approaching a "reality" (a technical operation, etc.) as closely as possible and making the text acceptable through the "real" that it exhibits. On the contrary, narrated history creates a fictional space. It moves away from the "real"—or rather it pretends to escape present circumstances: "once upon a time there was. . . ." In precisely that way, it *makes* a hit (*"coup"*) far more than it describes one. To adopt the words cited by Kant, it is itself an *act* of tightrope-walking, a balancing act in which the circumstances (place, time) and the speaker himself participate, a way of knowing how to manipulate, dispose, and "place" a saying by altering a set—in short, "a matter of tact."

Narration does indeed have a content, but it also belongs to the art of making a *coup*: it is a detour by way of a past ("the other day," "in olden days") or by way of a quotation (a "saying," a proverb) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium by taking it by surprise. Its discourse is characterized more by a way of *exercising itself* than by the thing it indicates. And one must grasp a *sense* other than what is said. It produces effects, not objects. It is *narration*, not *description*. It is an *art* of saying. The audience makes no mistake on this account. It is quite capable of distinguishing art from a mere "trick" (what one has only *to know* in order to perform it)—and also from revelation/popularization (that which one *must know* indefinitely)—just as the ordinary people Kant refers to (as for him, where is *he*, then?) are capable of easily distinguishing the charlatan from the tightrope walker. Something in narration escapes the order of what it is sufficient or necessary to know, and, in its characteristics, concerns the *style* of tactics.

It is easy to recognize this art in Foucault's work: an art of suspense, of quotations, of ellipsis, of metonymy; an art of conjuncture (current events, the audience) and occasions (epistemological, political); in short, an art of making "*coups*" with the fictions of stories. Foucault does not owe his effectiveness primarily to his erudition (prodigious though it is), but rather to this art of speaking which is an art of thinking and of operating. With the most subtle procedures of rhetoric, by clever alternation of descriptive tableaux (exemplary "stories") and analytical tableaux (theoretical distinctions), he makes what he says appear evident to the public he has in view, he disturbs the fields into which he moves one after the other, creating a new disposition of the whole. But with its

historiographical "description" this art tricks its other and modifies its law without replacing it by a different one. It does not have its own discourse. It does not say itself. It is the practice of nowhere (*non-lieu*: fort? da? There and not there. It pretends to be eclipsed by the erudition or the taxonomies that in fact it manipulates. A dancer disguised as an archivist. Nietzsche's laughter rings through the historian's text.

In order to grasp the relation between narration and tactics, we must locate a more explicit scientific model for it, in which the theory of practices takes precisely the form of a way of narrating them.

Telling "coups": D  tienne

Marcel D  tienne, who is a historian and an anthropologist, has deliberately chosen to tell stories. He does not examine Greek stories in order to treat them in the name of something other than themselves. He rejects the break that would make of them objects of knowledge and also objects to be known, dark caverns in which hidden "mysteries" are supposed to await the scientific investigation to receive a meaning. He does not assume that behind all these stories, secrets exist whose gradual unveiling would give him, in the background, his own place, that of interpretation. For him, these tales, stories, poems, and treatises are already practices. They say exactly what they do. They constitute an act which they intend to mean. There is no need to add a gloss that knows what they express without knowing it, nor to wonder *what* they are the metaphor of. They form a network of operations whose formal rules and clever "coups" are outlined by an enormous cast of characters.

In this space of textual practices, as in a chessgame in which the pieces, rules and players have been multiplied out to the scale of a whole literature, D  tienne has an artist's sense for the innumerable moves that have already been executed (the memory of earlier moves is essential in every game of chess), but he plays the game himself; he makes other moves with this repertory: he *narrates* in his turn. He re-cites these tactical moves. To say what they say, there is no discourse outside of them. You ask what they "mean" ("*veulent*" *dire*)? I'll tell them to you again. When someone asked him about the meaning of a sonata, it is said, Beethoven merely played it over. It is the same with the recitation of the oral tradition as analyzed by J. Goody: it is a way of re-telling the consequences and combinations of formal operations, along with an art of "harmonizing" them with the circumstances and with the audience.²

The story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It *makes* it. One understands it, then, if one enters into this movement oneself, as D  tienne does. He expresses Greek practices by reciting Greek stories: "Once upon a time. . . ." *The Gardens of Adonis*, *La panth  re parfum  e*, *Dionysos Slain*, *La cuisine du sacrifice*—these are so many fables from a practicing raconteur.³ He outlines Greek turns and tricks by playing out their stories in his own way on the contemporary scene. He protects them against museographical alteration by means of an art that historiography is losing after having long held it to be essential, and whose importance among other peoples is being rediscovered by anthropology, from L  vi-Strauss' *Mythologiques* to the essays in Bauman and Scherzer's *Ethnography of Speaking*:⁴ the art of telling stories. He thus operates between what historiography itself practiced in the past and what anthropology is restoring today as a foreign object. In this interval we find the pleasure of storytelling taking on scientific importance. The storyteller falls in step with the lively pace of his fables. He follows them in all their turns and detours, thus exercising an art of thinking. Like the knight in chess, he crosses the immense chessboard of literature with the "curved" movement of these stories, like Ariadne's threads, formal games of practices. In that very action he "interprets" these fables as a pianist "interprets" a musical composition. He executes them, privileging two "figures" in which the Greek art of thinking is particularly active: the dance and combat, that is, the very figures that the writing of the story makes use of.

With Jean-Pierre Vernant, D  tienne has written a book on the Greeks' *m  tis*, called *Les ruses de l'intelligence*.⁵ This book is a sequence of stories. It deals with a form of intelligence that is always "immersed in practice" and which combines "flair, sagacity, foresight, intellectual flexibility, deception, resourcefulness, vigilant watchfulness, a sense for opportunities, diverse sorts of cleverness, and a great deal of acquired experience."⁶ Even though it is absent from the image that Greek thought constructed of itself, *m  tis* is extraordinarily stable throughout Hellenism. It is close to everyday tactics through its "sleights of hand, its cleverness and its stratagems," and through the spectrum of behaviors that it includes, from know-how to trickiness.

Three elements in this analysis merit particular attention here, because they differentiate *m  tis* more clearly from other sorts of behavior, but also because they are equally characteristic of the stories that tell about it. They are constituted by three relations of *m  tis*, to the "situation," to

disguise, and to a paradoxical invisibility. In the first place, *mētis* counts and plays on the right point in time (*kairos*): it is a temporal practice. Second, it takes on many different masks and metaphors: it is an undoing of the proper place (*le lieu propre*). Third, it disappears into its own action, as though lost in what it does, without any mirror that re-presents it: it has no image of itself. These characteristics of *mētis* can also be attributed to the story (*récit*). They thus suggest a "supplement" to Dérienne and Vernant: the form of practical intelligence that they analyze and the manner in which they do it must also be connected by a theoretical link if storytelling narrativity is also something like *mētis*.

The art of memory and circumstances

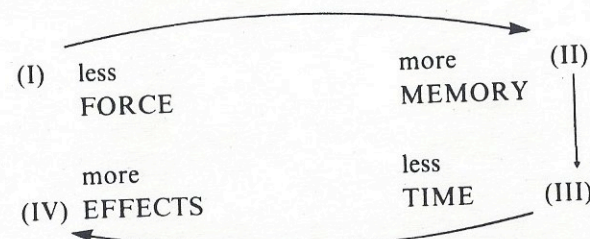
In the relationship of forces in which it intervenes, *mētis* is the "ultimate weapon," the one that gives Zeus supremacy over the other gods. It is a principle of economy: obtain the maximum number of effects from the minimum force. It thus also defines an esthetics, as is well known. The multiplication of effects through the rarefaction of means is, for different reasons, the rule that organizes both an art of operating and the poetic art of speaking, painting or singing.

This economic relationship delimits *mētis* more than it indicates its dynamic. The "turn" or inversion that leads the operation from its point of departure (*less* force) to its destination (*more* effects) implies first of all the mediation of a body of *knowledge*, but a peculiar one whose characteristics are the duration of its acquisition and its composition as an unending summation of particular fragments. It is a matter of "age," say the texts: they oppose the "experience of the old man" to the "thoughtlessness of youth." This knowledge is composed of many moments and many heterogeneous elements. It has no general and abstract formulation, no proper place. It is a *memory*,⁷ whose attainments are indissociable from the time of their acquisition and bear the marks of its particularities. Drawing its knowledge from a multitude of events among which it moves without possessing them (they are all *past*, each a loss of place but a fragment of time), it also computes and predicts "the multiple paths of the future" by combining antecedent or possible particularities.⁸ A certain duration is thus introduced into the relationship of forces and changes it. *Mētis* in fact counts on an accumulated time, which is in its favor, to overcome a hostile composition of place. But its memory remains hidden (it has no determinable place) up to the instant in which

it reveals itself, at the "right point in time" in a way that is still connected with time even though it contradicts its usual concealment in a temporal duration. The flashes of this memory illuminate the *occasion*.

The occasion is encyclopedic because of *mētis*'s ability to use through its treasure of past experiences and to inventory multiple possibilities in it: it contains all this knowledge within the smallest volume. It concentrates the *most* knowledge in the *least* time. Reduced to its smallest format, in an act transforming the situation, this concrete encyclopedia is a virtual philosopher's stone! It recalls still more the mathematical theme of an identity correspondence between a circle and its center. But here extension means duration, and concentration means an instant. By means of this substitution of time for space, the correspondence of the unending series of experiences (the circle) with the punctual moment of their recapitulation (the center) could be regarded as the theoretical model of the occasion.

Limiting ourselves to these first elements, we can offer a schematic representation of the "turn," from its initial point (I)—less force—to its terminal point (IV)—more effects. We would then have something like this:



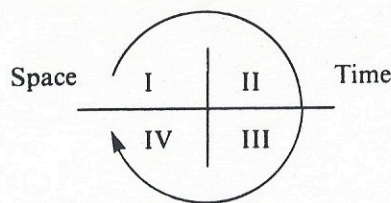
In (I), the force diminishes; in (II), memory-knowledge increases; in (III), time diminishes; in (IV), effects increase. These increases and diminutions are related inversely, yielding the following relationships: between (I) and (II), the less force there is, the more memory-knowledge is required; between (II) and (III), the more memory-knowledge there is, the less time is required; between (III) and (IV), the less time there is, the greater the effects.

The occasion is a nexus so important in all everyday practices, as well as in the related "popular" stories, that we must try here to clarify this preliminary outline. The occasion nevertheless constantly eludes attempts to define it, because it can be isolated neither from a conjuncture nor from an operation. It is a fact that cannot be detached from the "turn" or "trick" that produces it, because each time it is inserted in a sequence

of elements, it distorts their relationships. Its presence causes *distortions* generated in the situation considered by the bringing together of *qualitatively heterogeneous dimensions* which are not merely contraries or contradictories. The index of this guileful process is the set of inversely proportional relationships noted above: they are comparable to the proportions and distortions that, through mirror effects (inversions, incurvations, reductions or enlargements) or perspectives (the farther it is, the smaller it is, etc.), permit the juxtaposition of *different* spaces in a single picture. But in the sequence into which the occasion is inserted, the juxtaposition of heteronomous dimensions concerns time and space, or state and action, etc. It is marked by inversely proportional ratios analogous to those which, in Pascal's work, articulate different "orders" and are of the type: *all the more* present because *less* visible; *all the fewer* because *more* favored by grace; etc.⁹ Qualitatively, there are *passages into something else* through "twisted" relations, through successive reversals.

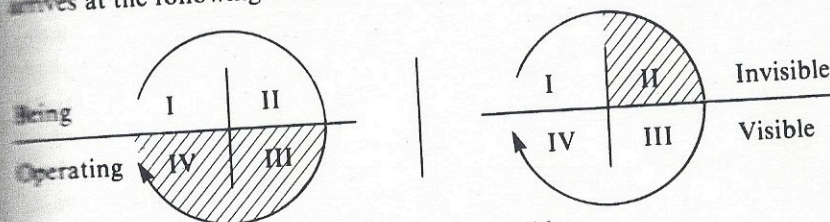
Among the qualitative differences linked by these inverse relationships, I shall point out at least two kinds whose insertion into a series requires two distinct sorts of reading:

1) A difference between *space and time* yields the paradigmatic sequence: in the composition of the initial place (I), the world of the memory (II) intervenes at the "right moment" (III) and produces modifications of the space (IV). According to this kind of difference, the series has a spatial organization as its beginning and its end; time is the intermediary, an oddity proceeding from the outside and producing the transition from one state of the places to the next. In short, between two "equilibria" comes a temporal irruption:



2) A second difference between *being* established (a state) and *operating* (a production and a transformation) is combined with the first. It plays moreover on an opposition between the visible and the invisible, without exactly corresponding to it. Along this axis, one finds the following paradigmatic sequence: given a visible establishment of forces (I)

and an invisible fund of memories (II), a punctual act of memory (III) produces visible effects in the established order (IV). The first part of the series is composed of two factual situations, in which invisible knowledge escapes visible power; then comes an operational part. By distinguishing between the being/operating cycle and the visible/invisible cycle one arrives at the following schema:



A summary tabulation of these elements yields:

	(I) Place	(II) Memory	(III) Kairos	(IV) Effects
Time		+	+	
Operation			+	+
Appearance	+		+	+

Memory mediates spatial transformations. In the mode of the "right point in time" (*kairos*), it produces a founding rupture or break. Its foreignness makes possible a transgression of the law of the place. Coming out of its bottomless and mobile secrets, a "*coup*" modifies the local order. The goal of the series is thus an operation that transforms the visible organization. But this change requires the invisible resources of a time which obeys other laws and which, taking it by surprise, steals something from the distribution owning the space.

This schema can be found in any number of stories. It is, as it were, their *minimal unit*. It can take a comic form in the memory that, at just the right moment, reverses a situation. In the exchange, "But . . . you must be my father!" "Good God, my daughter!," we see a pirouette due to the return of a time that the spatial distribution of the characters did not know about. There is a whodunit form in which the past, by coming back, overturns an established hierarchical order: "*He* must be the murderer, then!" The structure of the miracle has a similar form: out of

another time, from a time that is alien, arises a "god" who has the characteristics of memory, that silent encyclopedia of singular acts, and who, in religious stories, represents with such fidelity the "popular" memory of those who have no place but who have time—"Patience!" With variations, each repeats the recourse to a different world from which can, *must*, come the blow that will change the established order. But all these variants could very well be no more than the shadows—enlarged into symbolic and narrative projections—thrown by the journalistic practice that consists in seizing the opportunity and making memory the means of transforming places.

A final point remains to be determined, the most important one: how does time articulate itself on an organized space? How does it effect its "breakthrough" in the occasional mode? In short, what constitutes the *implantation of memory in a place* that already forms an ensemble? That implantation is the moment which calls for a tightrope-walker's talent and a sense of tactics; it is the instant of art. Now it is clear that this implantation is neither localized nor determined by memory-knowledge. The occasion is taken advantage of, not created. It is furnished by the conjuncture, that is, by *external* circumstances in which a sharp eye can see the new and favorable ensemble they will constitute, given *one more detail*. A supplementary stroke, and it will be "right." In order for there to be a practical "harmony," there is lacking only a little something, a scrap which becomes precious in these particular circumstances and which the invisible treasury of the memory will provide. But the fragment to be drawn from this fund can be inserted only into a disposition imposed from the outside, in order to transform it into an unstable, makeshift harmony. In its practical form, memory has no ready-made organization that it could settle there. It is mobilized relative to what happens—something unexpected that it is clever enough to transform into an opportunity. It inserts itself into something encountered by chance, on the other's ground.

Like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species' nests, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it. It receives its form and its implantation from external circumstances, even if it furnishes the content (the missing detail). Its mobilization is inseparable from an *alteration*. More than that, memory derives its interventionary force from its very capacity to be altered—unmoored, mobile, lacking any fixed position. Its permanent mark is that it is formed (and forms its "capital") by *arising from the other* (a circumstance) and by *losing it* (it is no more

than a memory). There is a double alteration, both of memory, which *works* when something affects it, and of its object, which is remembered *only* when it has disappeared. Memory is in decay when it is no longer *capable* of this alteration. It constructs itself from events that are independent of it, and it is linked to the expectation that something alien to the present will or must occur. Far from being the reliquary or trash can of the past, it sustains itself by *believing* in the existence of possibilities and by vigilantly awaiting them, constantly on the watch for their appearance.

Standing in the same relation to time that an "art" of war has to manipulations of space, an "art" of memory develops an aptitude for always being in the other's place without possessing it, and for profiting from this alteration without destroying itself through it. This ability is not a power (even if its narration may be). It has rather been given the name of *authority*: what has been "drawn" from the collective or individual memory and "authorizes" (makes possible) a reversal, a change in order or place, a transition into something different, a "metaphor" of practice or of discourse. Thus we find a subtle manipulation of "authorities" in every popular tradition. Memory comes from somewhere else, it is outside of itself, it moves things about. The tactics of its art are related to what it is, and to its disquieting familiarity. I would like to underline a few of its procedures, those which are particularly responsible for organizing the occasion in everyday modes of behavior: the play of alteration, the metonymic practice of singularity and (but this is ultimately only a general effect) a confusing and guileful (*retorse*) mobility.

1) Practical memory is regulated by the manifold activity of *alteration*, not merely because it is constituted only by being marked by external occurrences and by accumulating these successive blazons and tattoos inscribed by the other, but also because these invisible inscriptions are "recalled" to the light of day only through new circumstances. The manner in which they are recalled corresponds to that in which they were inscribed. Perhaps memory is no more than this "recall" or call on the part of the other, leaving its mark like a kind of overlay on a body that has always already been altered without knowing it. This originary and secret writing "emerges" little by little, in the very spots where memory is touched: memory is played by circumstances, just as a piano is played by a musician and music emerges from it when its keys are touched by the hands. Memory is a sense of the other. Hence it develops along with relationships—in "traditional" societies as in love—whereas it atrophies

when proper places become autonomous. It responds more than it records, up to the moment when, losing its mobile fragility and becoming incapable of new alterations, it can only repeat its initial responses.

This system of responsive alteration organizes, from moment to moment, the tact accompanying insertion into a circumstantial ensemble. The occasion, seized on the ground, is the very transformation of touch into response, a "reversion" of this surprise which is expected without being foreseen: what the event inscribes, no matter how fleeting and rapid it may be, is reversed, reverts back to it in the form of a word or an act: a flash repartee. The vivacity and appropriateness of this repartee are inseparable from their dependence on the instants which occur and from the vigilance that they mark all the more because there is less of a proper place to protect oneself and oneself's memory against their occurrence.

2) This response is *singular*. Within the ensemble in which it occurs, it is merely *one more detail*—an action, a word—so well-placed as to reverse the situation. But what else could memory provide? It is composed of individual bits and fragments. One detail, many details, are memories. Each of them, when it emerges in a shadowy setting, is relative to an ensemble which lacks it. Each memory shines like a metonymy in relation to this whole. From a picture, there remains only the delicious wound of this deep blue. From a body, the luminosity of its eyes, or the texture of a bit of white glimpsed through a gap in a hairdo. These particulars have the force of demonstratives: *that* fellow who was going by all bent over . . . , *that* odor, which came from some undetermined source. . . . Sharp details, intense particulars already function in the memory as they intervene in the occasion. The same tact is exercised in both cases, the same art of connecting a concrete detail and a conjuncture in a relation which, in the memory, is suggested as the trace of an event, and in the occasion, operates through the production of an accord or "harmony."

3) The oddest thing is no doubt the *mobility* of this memory in which details are never *what* they are: they are not objects, for they are elusive as such; not fragments, for they yield the ensemble they forget; not totalities, since they are not self-sufficient; not stable, since each recall alters them. This "space" of a moving nowhere has the subtlety of a cybernetic world. It probably constitutes (but this reference is more indicative than explanatory, referring to what we do not know) the model of the art of operating or of that *mētis* which, in seizing occasions,

constantly restores the unexpected pertinence of time in places where powers are distributed.

Stories

Everything seems the same in the structure into which the detail inserts itself, and yet both its functioning and its equilibrium are changed. Both contemporary scientific analyses that reduce memory to its "social frameworks"¹⁰ and the clerical techniques that in the Middle Ages so cleverly transformed it into a composition of places and thus prepared the modern mutation of time into a quantifiable and regulatable space,¹¹ forget or reject its detours, even when the latter offer the major advantage of explaining by what procedures and for what legitimate strategic reasons the occasion—that indiscreet instant, that poison—has been controlled by the spatialization of scientific discourse. As the constitution of a proper place, scientific writing ceaselessly reduces time, that fugitive element, to the normality of an observable and readable system. In this way, surprises are averted. Proper maintenance of the place eliminates these criminal tricks.

But they return, not only surreptitiously and silently in this scientific activity itself¹² and not only in daily practices which, though they no longer have a discourse, are nonetheless extant, but also in rambling, wily, everyday stories. To recognize them in these stories all we have to do is not limit ourselves to examining their forms or repetitive structures (though this is also a necessary task). A certain know-how is at work here, in which all the characteristics of the art of memory can be discerned. I offer just one example. The significance of a story that is well known, and therefore classifiable, can be reversed by a single "circumstantial" detail. To "recite" it is to play on this *extra* element hidden in the felicitous stereotypes of the commonplace. The "insignificant detail" inserted into the framework that supports it makes the commonplace produce other effects. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The finely tuned ear can discern in the *saying* the difference introduced by the *act of saying (it)* here and now, and remains attentive to these guileful tricks on the part of the storyteller.

It would be interesting to examine more closely the turns that transform into occasions and opportunities the stories of the collective treasury of legends or everyday conversation and which concern in large measure, once again, rhetoric.¹³ But one can already take as a preliminary hypothesis that in the art of telling about ways of operating, the

latter is already at work. Thus it is exemplary that D  tienne and Vernant should have made themselves the storytellers of this "labyrinthine intelligence" ("*intelligence en d  dales*"), as Fran  oise Frontisi so well terms it.¹⁴ This discursive practice of the story (*l'histoire*) is both its art and its discourse.

At bottom, this is all a very old story. When he grew old, Aristotle, who is not generally considered exactly a tightrope dancer, liked to lose himself in the most labyrinthine and subtle of discourses. He had then arrived at the age of *m  tis*: "The more solitary and isolated I become, the more I come to like stories."¹⁵ He had explained the reason admirably: as in the older Freud, it was a connoisseur's admiration for the tact that composed harmonies and for its art of doing it by surprise: "The lover of myth is in a sense a lover of Wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders."¹⁶

Part III

Spatial Practices

Chapter VII Walking in the City

SEEING Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street, sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of Midtown, quietly passes over Central Park and finally undulates off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its agitation is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology in which extremes coincide—extremes of ambition and degradation, brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space. Unlike Rome, New York has never learned the art of growing old by playing on all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future. A city composed of paroxysmal places in monumental reliefs. The spectator can read in it a universe that is constantly exploding. In it are inscribed the architectural figures of the *coincidentia oppositorum* formerly drawn in miniatures and mystical textures. On this stage of concrete, steel and glass, cut out between two oceans (the Atlantic and the American) by a frigid body of water, the tallest letters in the world compose a gigantic rhetoric of excess in both expenditure and production.¹

millennia. In earlier times, the reader interiorized the text; he made his voice the body of the other; he was its actor. Today, the text no longer imposes its own rhythm on the subject, it no longer manifests itself through the reader's voice. This withdrawal of the body, which is the condition of its autonomy, is a distancing of the text. It is the reader's *habeas corpus*.

Because the body withdraws itself from the text in order henceforth to come into contact with it only through the mobility of the eye,²⁸ the geographical configuration of the text organizes the activity of the reader less and less. Reading frees itself from the soil that determined it. It detaches itself from that soil. The autonomy of the eye suspends the body's complicities with the text; it unmoors it from the scriptural place: it makes the written text an ob-ject and it increases the reader's possibilities of moving about. One index of this: the methods of speed reading.²⁹ Just as the airplane makes possible a growing independence with respect to the constraints imposed by geographical organization, the techniques of speed reading obtain, through the rarefaction of the eye's stopping points, an acceleration of its movements across the page, an autonomy in relation to the determinations of the text and a multiplication of the spaces covered. Emancipated from places, the reading body is freer in its movements. It thus transcribes in its attitudes every subject's ability to convert the text through reading and to "run it" the way one runs traffic lights.

In justifying the reader's impertinence, I have neglected many aspects. Barthes distinguished three types of reading: the one that stops at the pleasure afforded by words, the one that rushes on to the end and "faints with expectation," and the one that cultivates the desire to write:³⁰ erotic, hunting, and initiatory modes of reading. There are others, in dreams, battle, autodidacticism, etc., that we cannot consider here. In any event, the reader's increased autonomy does not project him, for the media extend their power over his imagination, that is, over everything he lets emerge from himself into the nets of the text—his fears, his dreams, his fantasized and lacking authorities. This is what the powers work on that make out of "facts" and "figures" a rhetoric whose target is precisely this surrendered intimacy.

But whereas the scientific apparatus (ours) is led to share the illusion of the powers it necessarily supports, that is, to assume that the masses are transformed by the conquests and victories of expansionist production, it is always good to remind ourselves that we mustn't take people for fools.

Part V

Ways of Believing

Chapter XIII Believing and Making People Believe

I like the word *believe*. In general, when one says "I know," one doesn't know, one believes.
Marcel Duchamp, *Duchamp du signe*
(Paris, Flammarion, 1975, p. 185)

Jews, Léon Poliakov once said, are French people who, instead of no longer going to church, no longer go to synagogue. In the comic tradition of the *Hagadah*, this joke referred to past beliefs that no longer organize practices. Political convictions seem today to be following the same path. One is a socialist because one *used to be* one, no longer going to demonstrations, attending meetings, sending in one's dues, in short, without paying. More reverential than identifying, membership is marked only by what is called a *voice*, (*voix*: a voice, a vote) this vestige of speech, one vote per year. Living off a semblance of "belief," the party carefully collects the relics of former convictions and, given this fiction of legitimacy, succeeds quite well in managing its affairs. It has only to multiply the citation of these phantom witnesses by surveys and statistics, to re-cite their litany.

A rather simple technique keeps the pretense of this belief going. All that is required is that the surveys ask not about what directly attaches its "members" to the party, but about what does not attract them elsewhere—not about the energy of convictions, but their inertia: "If it is false that you believe in something else, then it must be true that you are still on our side." The results of the operation thus count (on) vestiges of