

Foreword, volume 8: The Nature of the Unthought

[**Editorial note: this manuscript file will be replaced by a definitive pdf in early 2013**]

[3] How to transform an objectively given collection of statements into a homogenous and complete body, if not by recomposing the set of rules that produce them, in such a way as to verify their compatibility, establish their order, and effectuate their power, that is to say: to extend, through the exercise of syntax, the actuality of their sequence [suite], in view of increasing their quantity to the point where the virtual dissipates?

Once it has been followed through to the end, this operation of *maximum effectuation* is the absolute determination of the field. To call it positive is to deny that the inactual reforms itself as one draws on it [l'épuise], and to deny that new statements are forever yet to come from an unthought forever to be reached, like the self-renewing half [la moitié renaissante] of the Eleatic paradoxes¹ – because a discourse is a sequence, one that is essentially discrete and incommensurable with the continuum of consciousness.

If there is thus no unthought to be thought, [a discourse] is now an integral chain that sets itself apart from its environment so as to subsist as a body of arguments arranged in a *process of validation*.² Each argument implies the preceding one that governs it, except the one that, as principle of the validation, governs itself. In this respect, the latter is [4] *the autonomous statement*, the one that asserts its own position, implied by all the others, validated by itself alone, that is to say *the self-evident*, the unperceived point of the decision.

Since its deduction is missing from every discourse, it is destined to be *the unthought of that which goes without saying*. This is not to deny that it may be said – on the contrary: whether occasional or repeated, making it explicit has no consequences [son explicite ne tire pas à conséquence]. But this is to maintain that, present in each thought, it cannot itself be thought, and that it opens, outside of possible consciousness, onto that which determines the thesis of the discourse.

Unthought determination – whose quasi-transparency authorizes the illusion of the autonomy of the process – is here *unthought*, since incompatible with actual statements, such that its validation would immediately invalidate them. As we know, the cause (practical conjuncture, or epoch of the concept) only takes effect by lending itself to misunderstanding.

What I think is only the effect of what I un-think [im-pense].

Jacques-Alain Miller and Jean-Claude Milner.

¹ The undetermined environment stretches out, moreover, to infinity. This vague horizon, forever incapable of a total determination, is necessarily there (Husserl, *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie*, trad. Paul Ricoeur [Paris: Gallimard, 1950], §27, p. 89).

² Martial Gueroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1953), vol. 1, 11.