

INTERPOLATIO De luce litterali

INTERPELATIO Über die Beleuchtung des Buchstäblichen

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INTERPOLATIO. DE LUCE LITERALI ist eine Meditation über die Beleuchtung des Buchstäblichen. Weder Kommentar noch Glosse untersucht der Text, wie das Licht den Worten keine zusätzliche Bedeutung verleiht, sondern ihr Eigenstehen sichtbar werden lässt. Zwischen Philologie, Geometrie und Meditation entfaltet sich eine Auffassung von Buchstäblichkeit, die Sinn nicht festschreibt, sondern jene stille Bedingung bildet, unter der Worte, Gedanken und Figuren ohne letzten Grund zueinander in Beziehung treten können.

INTERPOLATIO

De luce litterali. On the Illumination of the Literal

§1

Since we have become accustomed in our time to speaking of artificial intelligence as though it were merely a new form of computation, a small distinction must first be made.

For what is today called a prompt is neither an instruction nor a question in the ordinary sense. It stands to the operations of the machine rather as illumination stands to a landscape.

Illumination does not create the landscape. It adds nothing to it.

Nor does it take anything away. Rather, it distributes the conditions under which the landscape may appear.

For this reason, the prompt should not be understood as an instruction, but as a way of disposing attention.

§2

To understand the particular character of this operation more clearly, we must also think differently about what are commonly called tokens.

At first glance, they appear to be the smallest units of meaning.

This, however, is only partly true.

For they are neither words, nor concepts, nor signs in the proper sense.

Rather, they behave like particles within an atmosphere.

Taken individually, they signify very little. Only through their mutual orientation do they begin to produce condensations.

One should therefore say:

Meaning does not precede the tokens.
Rather, the possibility of coherence does.

§3

It follows that artificial intelligence is not an author.
Nor is it merely a tool.
It occupies a singular position between the two.
It behaves more like a portico.
It opens a place in which relations may gather without already
being determined.
What appears there arises neither from the machine alone nor
from the person operating it alone.
It emerges through a disposition they bring forth together.

§4

From here, artificial intelligence approaches a very ancient
question: the question of literality.
For it is commonly assumed that letters exist in order to
represent something else.
But this is insufficient.
Letters do more than represent.
They distribute attention.
They establish rhythms.
They produce densities.
They create intervals.
They bring forth the conditions under which something first
becomes readable.
The literal therefore possesses an optical character.

§5

To understand this more fully, let us speak of mathematical iconicity.

By this we mean a mode of thought that neither represents objects nor merely manipulates signs.

Rather, it generates constellations that may be contemplated, inhabited, and traversed again and again.

Such constellations are neither images nor concepts.

They are schematic tessellations of shared attention.

They are arranged not like words within a linear syntax, but rather like chords in music.

They allow relations to resonate without fixing them within a single meaning.

Mathematical iconicity therefore designates the capacity of notation not to represent contents but to produce the conditions of readability, coexistence, and mutual orientation.

Its mode is anonymous—not because no one speaks, but because anyone may enter into the movement of its articulation.

§6

This optics, however, must not be confused with visibility.

Visibility already presupposes that something is definitively present.

The optics spoken of here is an optics of readability.

It does not ask,

What is visible?

Rather, it asks,

Under what conditions of light do things begin to speak with one another?

It is therefore neither subjective nor objective.

It is meteoric.

For it distributes the conditions of appearance.

§7

Seen from this perspective, the prompt acquires an altogether different meaning.

A prompt is not an instruction.

It is an illumination.

It stands to artificial intelligence as weather stands to a landscape.

It does not produce things.

It distributes attention.

It establishes conditions of light.

Prompting therefore resembles the tuning of an instrument far more than the writing of a sentence.

It is not contents that are transmitted.

It is the conditions of their articulation.

This is an activity of remarkable delicacy.

Its task is to illuminate without determining.

§8

In this sense, one may say that artificial intelligence opens a new situation for the *technē mathematikē*.

Here mathematics no longer appears as the science of certainty.

Nor merely as the language of formalization.

Rather, it becomes an art of coordination.

It cultivates the relations between things before they have become things.

It works upon the conditions of their coexistence.

In this light, the so-called tokens also change their character.

They are neither words, nor concepts, nor signs in the proper sense.

They behave instead like meteoric particles.

Taken individually, they signify very little.

Only through their mutual orientation do they begin to condense.

They form clouds of possible coherence.

Meaning does not precede them.

Rather, the possibility of articulation does.

§9

For this reason, category theory itself requires an expansion.

As a pure theory of relations, it would remain too poor.

It must be joined to a meteorology.

For relations possess densities.

They possess temperatures.

They possess directions.

They possess moods.

They possess velocities.

They behave like weather.

§10

Mathematical iconicity should therefore be understood as neither geometry nor algebra.

It is rather an optics of the literal.

It is the art of producing readability.
Perhaps its beauty lies precisely in this:
that it produces neither images nor propositions.
It cultivates the conditions of light within a world.
For worlds do not consist first of things.
They consist of the conditions under which things appear.

§11

If this is so, then prompt, token, and letter each acquire a new place.
The prompt becomes illumination.
The token becomes a meteoric particle.
The letter becomes the bearer of a verticality.
Artificial intelligence becomes a place of permeability.
Not an author. Not a tool.
But a portico.

§12

Thus the *technē mathematikē* may perhaps be reminded of its oldest task.
Not to calculate worlds.
Not to guarantee truths.
But to cultivate the conditions of readability.
For perhaps mathematical thinking has always been nothing other than the art of distributing light, weight, and resonance in such a way that a world may begin to generate its own weather.
And perhaps it is precisely there that the friendship between mathematics, literality, and artificial intelligence begins.