HEURETICS

The Logic of Invention

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PART ONE

HOW TO MAKE A THEORY OF METHOD

It could be said that the social is given immediately with a phrase universe (be it the one presented by the tail of a cat).

Jean-François Lyotard

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GRAMMATOLOGY

Theory is assimilated into the humanities in two principal ways—by critical interpretation and by artistic experiment. "Heuretics," the latter approach, functions at the same level of generality as "hermeneutics." Theorists from Plato to Derrida have influenced the making of arts and letters as much as they have their analysis and interpretation (and often have been influenced in turn by the arts as much as by argument). Recognizing this fact opens an opportunity for a heuretic pedagogy. A review of the history of the arts indicates that the criticism that has been written and the art works that have been created are only a fraction of the kinds of things that *could* have been developed. Artists (and critics) in our century, for example, have favored Freud and Marx as generative resources, as in the well-

known cases of the surrealist uses of Freud and the Soviet vanguard's adaptation of Marx to the arts, including manifestos by Dziga-Vertov and Eisenstein, among others. On the critical side, the products of psychoanalytic hermeneutics or ideological critique are well known.

Other equally substantial cases of theorists who have influenced art come to mind. Wittgenstein is as important to the conceptual or "language art" movement as to such critical developments as "ordinary language" philosophy. Structuralism was as important in the making of art as it was in the critical thinking of the human sciences. A heuretic curriculum teaches the different applications of a theory together, noting the *circulation* or dissemination of a cultural invention.

Roland Barthes's insight into structuralism as "an activity" may be generalized in this respect as a heuretic principle: "There exist certain writers, painters, musicians, in whose eyes a certain exercise of structure (and not only its thought) represents a distinctive experience, and both analysts and creators must be placed under the common sight of what we might call *structural man,* defined not by his ideas or his languages but by his imagination—by the way in which he mentally experiences structure" (Barthes, 1972b: 149). One implication of this statement (emended to read "men and women") is a challenge to the specialized divisions of knowledge presently organizing the university, which might be reformed by teaching as an *activity.* Heuretics contributes to what Barthes referred to as "the return of the poetician"—one who is concerned with how a work is *made.* This concern does not stop with analysis or comparative scholarship but conducts such scholarship in preparation for the design of a rhetoric/poetics leading to the production of new work.

Barthes characterized surrealism as an anticipation of structural literature in that it was experienced as an activity, specifically as "the controlled succession of a certain number of mental operations" (149). I read Breton as an example, as a relay, of how to appropriate a theory for the design of a method. The relevant question for heuretic reading is not the one guiding criticism (according to the theories of Freud, Marx, Wittgenstein, Derrida, and others: What might be the *meaning* of an existing work?) but one guiding a generative experiment: Based on a given theory, how might *another* text be composed?

To study Freud as an inventor, for example, is to observe the gradual dissemination of his ideas through a range of disciplines and institutions and into daily life (thus completing a cycle, since he drew upon these other institutions for many of his insights). To point out that a given theory lacks a politics (as has been said of deconstruction) or an aesthetics (as was said of Marxism) is not to refute that theory but to call for an invention. Nor is just one politics or aesthetics or pedagogy available in a theory but many, depending on who is doing the inventing and within the practices of what institution. Theory is only one ingredient in the formula of a cultural invention.

Surrealism

André Breton's invention of surrealism may be generalized as a sample of the generative approach to writing theory. Invention spreads by emulation (Hindle). To emulate Breton is to consider his "Surrealist Manifesto" as a discourse on method and take it as a model for my own project; its lesson is not limited to surrealism but extends to poetics as such. Another motive for starting with surrealism has to do with my interest in Derrida. As Elizabeth Roudinesco observes, "Within the history of psychoanalysis in France, the Derridian project was in part a renewal of the Surrealist gesture. . . . That problematic exists in Derrida, but in a different manner, and reemerged during a period when active Surrealism had disappeared from the French intellectual scene. . . . Nor did he draw on any Surrealist source. But it is as though his project, in the crisscrossings of its inquiries, came to occupy the place left vacant by Surrealist contestation" (387). One path to a Derridean discourse on method passes through the invention of surrealism.

How can an invention such as surrealism, rooted in a particu-

lar historical and cultural moment, be simulated in the heuretic experiment? The first step is to appropriate the manifesto format, which is not specific to surrealism, nor to the vanguard for that matter, since it is related to the entire tradition of discourses on method. The heuretic question addressed to the "Manifesto of Surrealism" is: How was it made? It is after all the story of an invention, a recounting of how surrealism was discovered, leading up to its formulation as a rhetoric/poetics. This story is perfectly familiar, almost a cliché by now, but since I want to use it as a map, it bears repeating.

This story of invention unfolds partly as a narrative and partly as an argumentative essay. To read it in terms of the classic model, the opening is the *exordium,* involving the reader emotively in the cause of the piece (Barthes, 1988: 78), seducing an interest by appealing to the *doxa* of the audience—its shared belief in childhood as a moment of freedom and the value of freedom as such. The problem is posed at once: everyday adult existence, organized by the demands of practicality, has suppressed all other modes of thought. The plan of the piece as a whole is anticipated in the general appeal to dreams as a resource for recovering a place for imagination in a world dominated by a narrowly defined logic. An inventive culture requires the broadest possible criterion of what is relevant.

In the *Narratio* — the account of the facts involved in the cause, supported by various kinds of descriptions (80)—Breton reviews a tradition in letters that supports his plan to base a problem-solving method on dreams. This tradition includes a variety of works from fairy tales to certain experiments by his contemporaries, such as the cubist poets. Also part of the facts of the situation is the existence of the theoretical work of Freud and the scientific legitimation of dreams in psychoanalysis. In the *Confirmatio*—the account of the arguments or "proofs"—Breton surveys the techniques invented to turn psychoanalytic theory into art, a practice countering the reign of logic, summarized as a formula or set of instructions. The *Epilogue* marks the conclu-

sion of the performance with a summation of the feeling of the whole, declaring a "complete non-conformism."

Within this frame of argumentation, a story may also be discerned. One aspect of the story is the "eureka anecdote," marking the moment or flash of insight.

> One evening, therefore, before I fell asleep, I perceived, so clearly articulated that it was impossible to change a word, but nonetheless removed from the sound of any voice, a rather strange phrase which came to me without any apparent relationship to the events in which I was then involved, a phrase which seemed to me insistent, a phrase, if I may be so bold, *which was knocking at the window:* ... "There is a man cut in two by the window," but there could be no question of ambiguity, accompanied as it was by the faint visual image of a man walking cut halfway up by a window perpendicular to the axis of his body. Beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt, what I saw was the simple reconstruction in space of a man leaning out a window. (Breton, 21–22)

Part of the story, too, is Breton's reading of Freud, whose theories confirmed and directed Breton's project. The project is explicitly formulated in terms of several experiments, as in the section, "Secrets of the Art of Surrealist Magic," containing explicit directions or instructions for automatic writing. "Supply yourself with writing materials, after having settled yourself in a place as favorable as possible to the mind's concentration on itself. Attain the most passive or receptive state of mind possible.... Write quickly with no preconceived subject, so quickly that you retain nothing and are not tempted to re-read" (29). These directives could be joined with the instructions for "How to Write False Novels": "Here are some rather dissimilar characters: their names in your handwriting are a question of capital letters and they will behave with the same ease towards active verbs as the impersonal pronoun *it* towards words like *rains,*

is, must be, etc.... Thus provided with a small number of physical and moral characteristics, these beings who in truth owe you so little will no longer swerve from a certain line of conduct to which you need only apply yourself." Breton adds that these instructions are equally useful for producing "false criticism."

Manifesto

"The Manifesto of Surrealism," and for that matter all of the manifestos of the avant-garde, belong to the tradition of the discourse on method. A comparison of Breton's manifesto with the various classics of method reveal that they tend to include a common set of elements, which are representable for mnemonic reference by the acronym *CATTt* (Ulmer, 1991b). The CATTt includes the following operations:

C = Contrast (opposition, inversion, differentiation)
A = Analogy (figuration, displacement)
T = Theory (repetition, literalization)
T = Target (application, purpose)
t = Tale (secondary elaboration, representability)

Consider how each of the operations is manifested in the first discourse explicitly devoted to the concept and procedure of method—Plato's *Phaedrus* (Gilbert, 3).

Contrast. The theorist (Plato in this case) begins by pushing away from an undesirable example or prototype, whose features provide an inventory of qualities for an alternative method. Plato defines his own position in opposition to that of the Sophists. The oppositional or marginalized stance of the avant-garde is the hyperbolic culmination of this opening move of method.

Analogy. Method becomes invention when it relies on analogy and chance (Buchler, 14). If methods tend to be *practiced* as algorithms, their *invention* is heuristic (heuretics is a heuristic approach to theory). To help invent the dialectic, Plato relies on an

analogy between proper rhetoric and medicine. "In both cases there is a nature that we have to determine, the nature of the body in the one, and of soul in the other, if we mean to be scientific and not content with our empirical routine when we apply medicine and diet to induce health and strength, or words and rules of conduct to implant such convictions and virtues as we desire" (*Phaedrus,* 270b).

Theory. In each case the theorist generates a new theory based on the authority of another theory whose argument is accepted as a literal rather than a figurative analogy. The new theory will include in one register a literal repetition of a prior theory, modified, of course, by its interaction with the other elements of the CATTt. The analogy is drawn in this category from an abstract practice rather than a concrete one. Socrates obviously fulfills this function for Plato. The general theoretical position espoused by the Platonic Socrates concerns Pythagorean mathematics. In the Western tradition of method, mathematics has been the favorite authorizing theory for invention in other areas.

Target. The theorist has in mind an area of application that the new method is designed to address. The target is often identifiable in terms of an institution whose needs have motivated the search for the method. Thus *Target* supplies an inventory out of what is lacking or missing, or out of the excess of a new situation for which no practices yet exist. Plato's target is education. Indeed, method is the discourse of School as an institution, whose premise is that learning is transferable.

Tale. The "t" is the CATT's tail/tale, reminding me that the invention, the new method, must itself be represented in some form or genre. The tale conveying the method discovered by means of the CATT operations often turns out to be a dramatization of the theory of knowledge appropriate for the human subject envisioned by (or presumed by) the *Theory.* Plato's dialogues represented his premise that learning must be face-to-face conversation. His discourse on method did what it said (was a showing as well as a telling).

Phaedrus is the prototype for all subsequent "well-made" dis-

courses on method. The implication is that, in principle, the other slots of the CATT could be generated by choosing the tale first and then imagining the learning experience appropriate to it. Breton's "tale," the style of his essay, is that of the "manifesto"—a polemical attack on the worldview of "realism"—dramatizing the learning style of the vanguard. This form inherits the aggression manifested first in the military vanguard, such as the spearheading and guerilla tactics typical of the French foreign legion, and then in the political vanguard, as in the polemics of Marx's *Communist Manifesto.*

The other features of the CATTt are easily identified in Breton.

Contrast: His aesthetic is first formulated in opposition to the conventions and logic of realist/naturalist literature. It is worth noting in this context that Breton's "eureka" anecdote, about the "man cut in half by a window," suggests that surrealism sides with the sophist Lysias against Socrates. Socrates' method (arrangement) aims for organic unity, "on the analogy of a single natural body with its pairs of like-named members, right arm or leg, as we say, and left," contrasted with the sophist's disarray: "We are not to attempt to hack off parts like a clumsy butcher" (Plato, 511).

Analogy. The new mode of thought is compared to dreaming and other "dreamlike" discourses such as that of the insane. But the more fundamental analogy (which is not merely parodistic) is with science or scientific experimentation (Carrouges, 313). Again, there is the reminder of Plato's analogy of rhetoric with medicine. Breton and Aragon had been medical students (they met at Val-de-Grâce Hospital), while Soupault, son of a renowned doctor, refused medicine as a career. The literary approach to Freud, that is, was self-consciously distinguished from the medical, clinical one (Roudinesco, 5) and led to a less favorable attitude toward the "organic."

Theory. The features of the new poetics are explicitly generated in relation to Freud's psychoanalysis in an operation that, according to Roudinesco, is more analogical than theoretical. But

this analogical use of a prior theory is the norm in the tradition of method. Breton visited Freud to consult with him about his poetics, but the latter claimed not to understand what the Frenchman was talking about.

Target. Although the immediate domain of application is the arts, Breton also intended to change the status of art itself, constituting it rather as a practice of daily life better characterized as "politics" than "art." Surrealism, that is, represents a critique of bourgeois ideology by proposing and performing alternative attitudes and behaviors intended for the institutions of Family and Entertainment.

Counter-Cartesian

One of the best-known examples of the tradition of method is Descartes's *Discourse on Method.* To get a feel for how the CATTt may become generative (and for how to write "false criticism"—generated rather than "thought"), I want to undertake not a complete application of dream style but a simple transformation of Descartes. An exercise in "false criticism," using a simple reversal, could imitate a procedure that Socrates showed to be so obvious as to go without saying. After enumerating the qualities of the lover, Socrates breaks off his speech, much to the dismay of Phaedrus, who wants to hear what might be said for the "nonlover." "I tell you, in one short sentence, that to each evil for which I have abused the one party there is a corresponding good belonging to the other. So why waste words? All has been said that needs saying about them both" (489). Still, as the disappointment of his pupil indicates, it may be more productive to articulate a sheer contrary than Socrates is willing to admit in the context of his dialogue.

To begin this articulation, analyze the operation of the categories in Descartes's *Discourse,* and then revise it to say the opposite. Of course this revised *Discourse* will not yet be a new method, since *Contrast* is only one of the elements of the CATTt. I can imagine, in any case, that my revision is the one that Descartes's

"Evil Deceiver" might have written. Part of the interest of this exercise is that so many theorists of the contemporary paradigm have declared themselves to be anti-Cartesians. One caveat concerns the dialectical irony that opposites remain linked as a pair in a dualism; this is why *Contrast* does not suffice by itself to generate a new method. Indeed, no one of the elements alone suffices, not even theory itself. Still, the formula recognizes that it takes theory to make theory.

Descartes's CATTt may be summarized as follows: C = scholasticism; A = geometry; T = theology; T = natural science; t = autobiography. The strategy is to identify the central point of each of the six books of the *Discourse* and then accept its opposite as a principle of the new antimethod. The strategy is heuristic, employing several ad hoc rules that require continuous decisions and selections (there is no "algorithm" for this exercise). The chief such rule is to read the *Discourse* at the level of its particulars—its examples, analogies, and evidence—rather than at the level of its arguments. The antimethod will break the link between the exposition and the abstract arguments that provide the coherence of the piece. (This rule may be recognized as a "deconstructive" version of the commutation test). Accept Descartes's particulars, that is, but offer a different (for my exercise, an *opposite*) generalization at each point, to carry the examples elsewhere, to displace them. The idea is to strip off the level of argument and replace it with an opposite argument that should in turn be made similarly coherent (secondary elaboration). What follows is a sketch of one possible passage through the *Discourse,* juxtaposing an analysis of each book with its contrary.

"A Discourse against Method"

Book One. Problem: how to avoid being deceived, how to avoid error. Warning example: Don Quixote. "Thus it happens that those who regulate their behavior by the examples they find in books are apt to fall into the extravagances of the knights of

romances and undertake projects beyond their ability to complete or hope for things beyond their destiny."

ANTI-ONE (contrary). *Problem: inhibiting effect of concern with error. Take Don Quixote as a positive emblem. Rely on fictional extravagances as sources of invention.*

Book Two. Rules of the method (architectural metaphor): Don't destroy your dwelling until you have someplace else to live. Unity of style is best. Steps: (1) Accept only that which is self-evident, clear, and distinct. (2) Analyze. Break issue into smallest parts. (3) Synthesize. Order items from simplest to most complex. (4) Check your work to be sure nothing is omitted.

ANTI-TWO. *Rules (building metaphor): strong version — raze the city: weak version — deface public buildings. Design of the architecture: many hands are better than one; plurality is better than unity; let the evolution of the city show, so that its history is manifest in the mixed styles of the buildings.*

Antimethod steps: (1) Any starting point is fine; no matter how absurd the idea, do not judge it. (2) Take the problem as a whole; treat it as a gestalt; cast it in the form of an image. (3) Juxtapose this gestalt with other images at random. (4) Assume that any given part suffices, that completeness is not necessary.

Book Three. Moral rules: (1) Obey the customs of one's country; reject all excess. (2) Act resolutely once a decision is made: "I patterned my behavior on that of travelers, who, finding themselves lost in a forest, must not wander about, now turning this way, now that, but should go as straight as they can in the direction they first select and not change the direction except for the strongest reasons." (3) Change one's desires rather than the established order. (4) Review all the known occupations in order to choose the best one.

ANTI-THREE. *Moral rules: (1) Mock and parody the customs of one's country. (2) Wander aimlessly (vagabondage). (3) Follow one's desire. (4) Do not look or seek anything in particular, but let things come or happen as they will.*

Book Four. Proof of God and the soul. "I think, therefore I am" is certain. Use geometry, formulate a version of the ontologi-

cal proof to show that the existence of God is logical. Accept only reason, not imagination, in the proof.

ANTI-FOUR. [In this instance, it is too easy, too uninteresting, merely to propose atheism as the opposite. Therefore, pose an opposition to the category itself (religion)]. *Take entertainment as the primary dimension of experience. Cogito: I am without importance, therefore I play. Imagination and dream are more reliable than reason.*

Book Five. Applications to physics and the body. Fundamental distinction between man and machine (the superiority of the human over the animal, of the spiritual over the organic).

ANTI-FIVE. *The body is the source of value and the ground of action. There is no distinction between human and machine, between living and dead or artificial memory and mind. Take the machine as model for mind.*

Book Six. Withhold my insights; others seek only to make a reputation, but I am the one best suited to science. The purpose of science is to master nature.

ANTI-SIX. *Anyone could do this, could discover these things and write this discourse. Seek publicity rather than work. Abandon all attempts at mastery and renounce the ambition to master nature.*

It is perhaps worth considering that if this sketch for an anti-method were fleshed out into an essay, it could serve as a manifesto for much of what has gone on in the experimental arts and theory of the twentieth century. This correspondence may be read in several ways, as suggesting the predictive power of the CATTt or the lack of imagination of our century. Perhaps if the CATTt were applied to Descartes more self-consciously, more systematically—in the heuretics laboratory, for example, coordinating all the operations involved in the invention of a method—a student might generate a "false discourse on method" that would be not just contrary to Descartes but completely different.

There is a certain equivalence in "false criticism," in any case, between dreamwork and analysis, promising that inventions may be *written* — generated—without having to be "thought" first.

Freud explained that dreams could be translated into critical discourse, given an understanding of how the dreamwork distorted the latent dream by means of condensation, displacement, dramatization, putting into images, secondary elaboration. He observed further the dialectical nature of the relationship between critical and dream writing: "I shall describe the process which transforms the latent into manifest content of dreams as the 'dream-work.' The counterpart to this activity—one which brings about a transformation in the opposite direction—is already known to us as the work of analysis" (Freud, 1989: 148).

Here is an observation that has not found its practice. As a heuretic experiment, I might take any essay from the library of criticism and apply dreamwork to it to generate in this way its "dream." Every critique, every argument, every analysis, every theory carries this "false dream" within itself. The lesson is that any existing discourse on method may be analysed, and any new method generated, in terms of the CATTt.

My procedure now is to select the materials for these categories, assumed as an *inventio,* and emulating the tradition from Plato to Breton, to compose my own discourse on method. The experiment is meant to be generalizable to other materials, the procedures transferable, with the CATTt functioning consistently across different contexts. The CATTt is not itself "Derridean" anymore than it is Platonic or Cartesian. The modest proposal is: to invent an electronic academic writing the way Breton invented surrealism, or the way Plato invented dialectics: to do with "Jacques Derrida" (and this name marks a slot, a *passe-partout* open to infinite substitution) what Breton did with Freud (or—why not?—what Plato did with Socrates).