

## Notes

### Introduction

1. I use the terms “Western metaphysical tradition,” “Western culture,” and like terms somewhat hesitantly because they suggest that such traditions designate permanently delineated national regions, civilizations, “peoples,” and so forth, to which the beliefs and practices that I discuss in this book belong. What I mean by such grandiose terms, however, are cultural “family resemblances” of certain dominant beliefs and practices. I see metaphysical traditions as sort of long-running cultural psychologies, with all the problematic qualities of any cultural psychology, regarding ethnic and national bodies, problems of stereotypes, and so on.

2. Michael Buckland, in a recent paper on a 1948 paper by Briet’s student, Robert Pagès, has suggested that such an investigation on this question may have been begun by Pagès with his notion of there being entities that are “auto-documents” (Buckland, 2017). As I will suggest in this book, something like the concept of an “auto-document” can have several different meanings, from being that of a semiotic or “social fact” (Ferraris, 2013) to that of being a natural power of self-expression. In Briet’s (1951, 2016) notion of documentation, an animal must be captured and put in a knowledge or information structure in order for it to become evidence; for Briet, documents are, necessarily, social facts.

### Chapter 1

1. Der Titel nennt den Versuch einer Besinnung, die im Fragen verharret. Die Fragen sind Wege zu einer Antwort. Sie müßte, falls sie einmal gewährt würde, in einer Verwandlung des Denkens bestehen, nicht in einer Aussage über einen Sachverhalt.

Der folgende Text gehört in einen größeren Zusammenhang. Es ist der seit 1930 immer wieder unternommene Versuch, die Fragestellung von “Sein und Zeit” anfänglicher zu gestalten. Dies bedeutet: den Ansatz der Frage in “Sein und Zeit” einer immanenten Kritik zu unterwerfen. Dadurch muß deutlich werden, inwiefern die kritische Frage, welches die Sache

des Denkens sei, notwendig und ständig zum Denken gehört. Dem zufolge wird sich der Titel der Aufgabe "Sein und Zeit" ändern.

Wir fragen:

1. Inwiefern ist die Philosophie im gegenwärtigen Zeitalter in ihr Ende eingegangen?
  2. Welche Aufgabe bleibt dem Denken am Ende der Philosophie vorbehalten?
2. Giorgio Agamben (2009) argues from a reading of Plato and others that paradigms are particulars compared to particulars—i.e., analogues—displacing a universal-particular framework. While this is an interesting conception, in the case of Plato's works it seems to me that though paradigms are spoken of as analogues, they are analogues that model a path forward in inquiry in such a manner that their exemplarity exceeds their particularity. Paradigms, in this sense, are exemplary by virtue of their representing some larger idea. They don't escape a universal-particular framework.
3. I discussed this in *The Modern Invention of Information: Discourse, History, and Power* (Day, 2001).
4. This "immanent" critique of *Being and Time* follows that book's own immanent critique of consciousness in Husserl's phenomenology. For more on the relation of *Being and Time* to Husserlian immanence, see Carmen's *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in Being and Time*, pp. 86–93.
5. Paul Edwards has discussed data smoothing in scientific models of climate science (Edwards, 2010).
6. Bernd Frohmann, in his book *Deflating Information: From Science Studies to Documentation*, writes in regard to journal articles, for example: "The third consequence for the journal article follows from the first two. If neither truth nor epistemic significance are inherent properties of documents, then neither is information. Whether an article is informing depends on what happens to it later on, as it becomes implicated in particular epistemic alignments. Its informing character is therefore emergent, an effect of its enrollment in further projects, rather than a consequence of the completeness and presence of epistemic content. The article communicates no information by itself, whether information be conceived as inhering in the text or in 'interpretations' resident in the minds of representing subjects. Instead, its significance depends upon the temporal, open-ended, and in principle incomplete epistemic alignments in which its inscriptions are engaged" (Frohmann, 2004, p. 138).
7. Let us take a fictional example: Bill's *person* may indeed be said to have the character of "being" a jerk, if this is seen over time. "Jerkness," however, doesn't necessarily belong to Bill's *self* like a car belongs to Bill nor does it belong to him like his arm or brain belongs to him (as an innate part of his body), but rather, it is a moral quality given to observed behaviors that others see, and these have a stronger

correlation to innate dispositions of Bill's being if these behaviors are displayed over time, rather than in a few inconsiderate acts. The self is a set of dispositions, not a set of fixed transcendental traits. (Fortunately, "Bill," like the rest of us, can change his moral being, since it is made up of cultural expressions in social situations, and so inappropriate behaviors can be unlearned. Indeed, the task of moral improvement over a lifetime is what makes up "virtue ethics.") "Bill is a jerk," as a statement of dispositions, can only fairly be asserted by observing his behavior over time and seeing that such dispositional properties for Bill are not necessarily forever, no more than any of our own selves' expressive dispositions are. On the other hand, social understandings of "jerk behavior" may be quite common and accepted, so it may be right for us to assert in this case that, as a person, Bill's acts fit this profile (as ours do too, when we act in such ways as to conform to this moral category), and, in this sense, Bill really is a jerk. People are not transcendently good or bad, but rather, they act in good and bad manners, and from that we infer that they "have" these moral qualities. (But, as Wittgenstein warned us, we have to be careful with this grammar of "to have," because it not the same in all our uses of the term.) The same is true of "having knowledge," "having intelligence," and so on; mental dispositions and expressions can only be *correlated* through seen or measured expressions.

## Chapter 2

1. See also Alice L. Conklin's *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Conklin, 2013).

2. It may be possible, however, to see a difference in these two modes of representation, similar to making a distinction between scientific documentaries and fictional documentaries in film (or beginning historically earlier, the difference between the emergence of social science claims and fictional realism—this latter which we will discuss in a later chapter). The difference involves a problem that is central to this book, namely, the role of representation in knowledge processes. In the former, representations are inserted into discursive arguments; so, for example, the renowned anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon's documentary films of the Yanomami indigenous tribe might be used as evidence within claims of their ferocity, among other descriptive claims. This parallels the use of natural science experiments as evidence within claims about the nature of physical reality; there are resistances and supports to this evidence outside of the content of the represented evidence itself. This is very different from the case of the 1922 film, *Nanook of the North*, or earlier in Balzac or Flaubert's depictions of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century, where the representations themselves claim to contain the evidence of what is. The role of evidence in the first is indexical in regard to not only the presenter's argument, but also in regard to the evidence and arguments of others. The purpose of scholarly or scientific works are to put something into discursive play—they put into discursive play an argument for what is. In the second case, the representation

is iconic; in fact, it aims to erase its mode of production so that it produces a totally aesthetic representation.

3. On this latter, see Bertrand Russell's introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

### Chapter 3

1. Scholastic theological arguments, on the other hand, seem to lack this temporal and experiential horizon, since truth appears from out of argumentative, logical-deductive modes of reasoning rather than descriptive, empirical ones. Rationalist devices are used to keep understanding "pure" and unpolluted by experience. The experiential horizon disappears, and with this, the particulars are analytically derived from universals. History, here, appears only as an explanation of rational arguments; scholastic arguments are distant from phenomenological perspectives, so they are language games that are accessible only to the philosophically initiated. The point of view with these is that of viewing God as a rational being of beings, whose phenomenological manifestations are inflected in the confused human world, like a stick that appears bent by the water it sits in. Scholastic argument attempted to discover the true rationality beyond the irrationality of the phenomenological world.

### Chapter 4

1. Long ago, in an interview, I said that "we must now all be information professionals" (Day & Pyati, 2005). Now I would add, "We must also all be literary critics and humanists," since so much of our lives are mediated by literary forms and rhetorical devices through information devices.

2. Flaubert's novel demonstrates that in bourgeois society the other person is taken as a personification of poor moral qualities, but the self is understood as a limitless potentiality of both good and bad actions. This is a particular social extension of the tendency in modern psychology to see others as person types, with known causalities, and so fixed intentionality, while one's self remains a toolbox of potentialities of choices, actions, and in short, "freedom" The formal irony in the novel, and so many other novels since, is that characters see one another as being characters, but one's self as not being a character, and finally from such a viewpoint—particularly those written in the first person—that the story is not a story but a depiction of reality.

3. These and other such rural values in a Chinese context can be found in Eli Blevis and Shunying An Blevis's account (Blevis, 2018).

4. "If it were the intention of the press to have the reader assimilate the information it supplies as part of his own experience, it would not achieve its purpose. But its intention is just the opposite, and it is achieved: to isolate what happens from

the realm in which it could affect the experience of the reader” (Benjamin, 1968a). Conversely, in modernity the mass media also commonly expands a microscopic event so that it seems the whole of the viewer’s reality. In so doing, it can give undue weight to issues that were previously absent or minor and distort the viewer’s or reader’s perception into being a product of an increasingly extreme attention economy.

## Chapter 5

1. An earlier exploration of this section on jokes was “Rethinking unsaid information: jokes and ideology” (Day & Ma, 2011).
2. This and the following section of the chapter were stimulated by Professor Peggy McCracken’s paper, “Metamorphosis and Living Death,” which she gave at Indiana University at Bloomington in the autumn of 2016. I had long been wanting to discuss the absence of trauma in discourses on information, and Professor McCracken’s discussion of the Old French *Philomena*, a twelfth-century translation of the Philomela story from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, particularly as it intersected in time with a lecture I attended by Professor Cindy Bethel on her study of a robotic dog, Therabot, as a device for eliciting narratives from adult and child trauma victims, provided an impetus to discuss these as modes of evidence in the present book. I am grateful to both these researchers for their presentations at Indiana University and to Professor McCracken for sharing with me a copy of her text to read and her kind correspondence afterwards. I am also grateful to my colleague at Indiana University, Professor Selma Šabanović, for organizing and inviting me to Professor Bethel’s lecture.
3. For a fuller account of this term, particularly in French psychoanalysis, see House (2015).

## Chapter 6

1. I am grateful to my Brazilian colleague Professor Lídia Freitas for introducing me to the case of the SPI.
2. <http://www.oabpa.org.br/index.php/25-noticias/4573-cfoab-comissao-da-verdade-da-escravidao-negra-toma-posse-na-oab-nacional>.
3. Tool use is sometimes used as a distinguishing trait of human beings, but this seems to me problematic, except in regard to what was just discussed. It is often assumed that only recently have human beings noticed that nonhuman animals use technology (e.g., crows with sticks). However, it seems to me that the skills and abilities of animals to negotiate their environments by means of building nests and so forth have always been observed and noted. The difference that has been asserted is that of the ability to *represent or imagine* these activities and to transfer them to other activities. The abstraction of immediately afforded *techné* to other activities is

key to understanding the difference between *techne* and technology in Heidegger's works, for example. It is *technological transfer* that constitutes the core of modern technology and human reason in the philosophical tradition, not "tools" as immediate affordances. The role of representation or "imagination" in this regard is what is of importance.

4. In my previous book, *Indexing It All*, I discussed androids in terms of documentary identity. Related to this, it might be mentioned that androids could be subject to a similar analysis as Heidegger's analysis of animals in terms of domesticity. The phenomenon of the "uncanny valley" is perhaps a poor criterion for analyzing androids, for the very category itself is rather uncanny for its lack of specific meaning. An analysis of androids in terms of their inability "to go along with us" for very long at all perhaps can better express the lack of human *pathos* toward androids, at least at this stage in their technological development.

5. The difficulty of some of these positioning narratives for rights and identity can be seen in the case of Kohn's (2013) work, which raises the perplexing problem of how it is that people who supposedly treat their environment and its beings as fellow subjects can also treat those other subjects as if they were mere objects—killing, and in the case of nonhuman animals, devouring them, with seemingly little hesitation.

## Chapter 7

1. The mid-twentieth-century French philosopher of phenomenology and aesthetics, Raymond Bayer (professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne, who is cited in Briet's *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?*), gave the opening lecture in the second year of the L'Union française des organismes de documentation's Cours Techniques de Documentation (1946–1947) (an educational course that would later evolve into the curriculum of Briet's l'Institut national des techniques de la documentation). In this lecture, Bayer suggested that documents are the forms imposed upon floods of information during modernity. He viewed documentary technique lying within the hands of documentary specialists who could control information, rather than be controlled by it. Nonetheless, his remarks deserve our reflection today, as every person sees him- or herself as Bayer's "man of science" through the Internet, which, as we have discussed in this book, mediates our worlds as second-hand knowledge. Addressing an audience of documentalists, Bayer opens his lecture with this theme of information as being the producer and product of the human mind or spirit (*l'esprit*—I will keep the French term in the translation below, as Bayer plays with this dual meaning in his sorcerer and his apprentice metaphor and also both meanings play back and forth with one another throughout his lecture). Documentary techniques and technologies (today in the form of algorithms) as tools for the organization, but also as the producers, of "information," assume the role of Kantian apperception—or mind—in constructing the world we live in. This is the

philosophy of what I called in *Indexing It All* the “modern documentary tradition”; the idea of documentary technology as the driving force of the spirit of existence in modernity (the central theme of Briet’s 1951 book). Documentary technologies and their products are not just categories of organizing the world of information, but are productive of that world, as a lived experience. This is the essence of “the information age.” Bayer writes (in translation):

You [documentalists] are the group of specialists that prevents the Sorcerer from remaining apprentice. In modern times, this has been the adventure of the man of science; he has, by the spirit [*l'esprit*: mind or spirit], unleashed *l'esprit*: the producer has submerged himself under his products. Information leads us, it knocks on our door, it hits our private thoughts, it gnaws at our minutes of meditation, it upsets our inner life. The actuality and the passing moment ring and resound near us like an intrusive telephone. It organizes chaos. We are, according to the mood, the slaves or the clients of this imperious master. . . . Because documentation is the form given to all information. It is the information that is craved and grasped by the *l'esprit*, bearing and keeping all the intentions of the *l'esprit*. (Bayer, 1946–1947)

I am grateful to Professor Claire Scopsi for her assistance in locating this material.

2. I was a middle and high school librarian at the time of the appearance of the graphic user interface Internet, and so I literally witnessed the massive growth of the Internet week by week with such searches: one week several thousand hits for a search term, the next week or two, several million hits for the same term, and so forth. School librarians at the time first thought that they could create user guides for their students of the best sites, but this very quickly became comical as the number of sites massively grew week by week.

3. So, for example, if one looks in Google for “hot dog,” the highest ranked results are for what in English is also called a “frankfurter.” To find a dog that is hot on a summer’s day, one has to modify the search in such a way as to get around the popular frankfurter. More than any theoretical argument, Google Search shows the superiority of social epistemology over professionally imposed categories for establishing user relevancy. It is a wonderful example of the importance of Blair’s insight that earlier IR was misled by a philosophy of language based on the notion that meaning was created by categories rather than by language use.

4. An astute reader of the manuscript of this book argued that there is nothing to stop a professional cataloger from using the formulation “dogcat” when describing an object. He or she argued that LCSH itself is not a barrier to this, since it is simply a set of terms. The larger point was that there’s no need to assert a notion of post-documentation technologies, since traditional and newer documentation techniques and technologies both follow rule-based practices. In this sense, they are both Wittgensteinian language games.

My response is that while it is true that both natural language and professional cataloging are rule-based activities, the nature of the rules is very different. LCSH is a controlled vocabulary within a professional practice of naming items according to that language, nothing else. The terms within it constitute identities marked by

differences within a set number of terms. Natural language functions very differently in that there are wide varieties of synonyms, multiple senses to terms, and other sources of ambiguity. Meaning comes about in natural language through use, not through identity and differences within a “closed vocabulary” structure. The professional cataloger can, of course, use any term that he or she wants, and sometimes does this in error. But the whole point of a controlled vocabulary is to try and stabilize the relation between a term and its concept by using an authorized vocabulary. An entry such as “dogcat” in LCSH would be seen as an error, whereas its use in user-centered tagging, for example, would more likely be seen as simply a user’s choice of terms, however idiosyncratic or useful or not.

There are many means of algorithmically mediated searching, with or without user prompting, that attempt to substitute for controlled vocabulary toward gaining greater precision or relevancy, such as keywords in context searching, keywords out of context, and of course, link analysis such as PageRank, or even social or geographical context mediation. All these techniques attempt to “control” natural language in ways different than through traditional documentation techniques, but the goal is the same: to create conceptual reference. However, newer vocabularies can incorporate a broader sense of terms as used in natural language usage by following vectors of word use, where professional controlled vocabularies such as LCSH incorporate very limited senses of a term in order to keep very defined conceptual referents.

Traditional controlled vocabulary is characterized by minimal grammatical sense and a controlled sense of reference by means of strict differences between terms with little ambiguity being allowed. Natural language is characterized in most cases by high degrees of ambiguity that are resolvable by grammatical context and real-world use. While it is true that libraries, for example, are “real-world” sites, the use of vocabulary there, at least in the case of subject searching using LCSH, is so peculiar as to be a barrier to most searchers. There are few, if any, “real-world” examples outside of libraries for using LCSH formulations, such as saying, “Midway, Battle of, 1942.”

5. See, for example, Jan Pieter Barbian’s account of the Nazi usurping of the publishing industries and the library committees and institutions in *The Politics of Literature in Nazi Germany: Books in the Media Dictatorship* (Barbian, 2013).

6. I am grateful to my colleague at Indiana University, David B. Leake, for these references.



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# Documentarity

## Evidence, Ontology, and Inscription

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