

Gumbrecht, Production of Presence

The product of a profound <sup>and weary!</sup> disillusion (a falling away) from the radical-left literary and social critics of his generation (the generation of 1968 = p. 145) (p. 4!)

- Chapter 1, "Materialities" recounts this story, step by step  
WEARINESS, WEARINESS, with all the babble (Babel) of words, words, words → interpretation  
Gradual interest in:

① "MATERIALITIES OF COMMUNICATION" (pp. 6 ff)

a) How physical media (their "touch") were basic to all effects of communication — (medium is the message)  
→ Not what they claim to convey or mean, but the nature of their physicality + its impact. (Read p. 11, bottom)

1) Walter Benjamin (physical 'touch' → p. 8)

2) Marshall McLuhan

3) Friedrich Kittler (p. 8)

(anti-humanist)

Discourse Networks (1985, Engl. 1990)

"media theory" → media as determining how we perceive things and ourselves.

Gramophone, Film, Typewriter (1986, Engl. 1999)

↓  
∴ "nonhermeneutic" (+ "nonhumanistic" (p. 12) (13)) in the usual sense.  
- Less need to inquire 'beneath the purely material' surfaces of the material (p. 4)

↓  
② Productions of Presence [instead of "meaning"] → coined, p. 16  
(the "problems regarding emergence of meaning"? p. 13)  
interest → communication media and the production of "greater or lesser intensity" (or spatiality) (17)

(p. 11)  
"media history"  
+ "body culture"

Is the book completely anti-hermeneutic?

Almost! Most of it is spent attacking the supposed exclusivity of the post-Cartesian cogito + the hermeneutic enterprise.  
(res cogitans, res extensa, p. 33)

BUT time and again Gombrecht supplies the  caveat  that his concern for presence is only a corrective to restore a lost balance  
- Implied or stated → we cannot, of course, exclude meaning effects + interpretation (esp. in the modern world) but we can restore a balance. (restore the "loss of the world" p. 49)

pp. 16 → \* challenge absolute dominance  
18 → "simultaneity of presence effects and meaning effects"  
(19 → intellectually productive tension between them)

XV - OSCILLATE BETWEEN PRESENCE EFFECTS AND MEANING EFFECTS

E.g. Also p. 49 ; 107 ; 116

- 52 - "develop noninterpretive in addition to hermeneutic concepts"
- 105 - "always appear together"
- 144 - "not really interested in a radical repression of meaning"

# History of Loss of Presence and Its Potential Restoration

Fullness = Eucharistic "Real Presence" in Med. Catholicism 28-30  
(partial loss in Protestant collapse into a mere "act of commemoration" or a symbolic "meaning" 29-30)

THE FALL → Mostly Descartes (with some caveats, p. 33; not D. alone)  
split of: (Mind-Body dichotomy)

33.

res cogitans → the mind, the essential "ego" (I) - independent of body  
res extensa → (lesser), the body, the things of the world.  
e.g., in Principles of Philosophy (1644)

↓ and soon to Enlightenment  
Diderot + D'Alembert's Encyclopédie

↓  
Dilthey (interpretation!) → p. 43)

But then → the turn away from sober interpretation in favor of materiality and presence

Nietzsche (41) "ridiculing all efforts to find meaning + truth"  
Freud (41) → physiological links  
Bergson (41-42)

ultimately ... getting closer  
(Eco) 56 - almost

57

Jean-Luc Nancy, The Birth to Presence (trans. 1993)

58

Karl Heinz Bohrer, Aesthetic Negativity (2002)

58

George Steiner, Real Presences (1989)

(64) a bit of Gadamer (64) - at least "an acknowledgment of the remnants" c)

But real affinity + model:

Heidegger - Origin of the Work of Art 64-78!

66 "Being-in-the-World" (Dasein)

Four Theses of Gumbrecht (on Heidegger)

- ① "Being" (in Heidegger) "takes over the place of truth" (67)  
(truth as a "happening" 67)  
E.g. "Being is not a meaning" (68)
- ② "Being [as a movement in space] is multidimensional" (68)  
(a simultaneous emerging + withdrawal)  
∴ [Being] is meant to refer to the things of this world  
independently of (or prior to) their interpretation" (70)
- ③ "The happening of truth" → ready-to-hand (Zuhandenheit)  
... goal: Gelassenheit, letting things be.
- ④ "Art as a privileged site for the happening of truth"

WORLD / EARTH distinction (73)

WORLD → an integrative dimension of that which is founded  
by Dasein's interaction with things.

Summary/conclusion, p. 76, ~~top~~ (Being vs. world)  
and middle

76 WORLD = "configurations of things in the context of specific  
cultural situations?"

76 EARTH = "things seen independently of their specific  
cultural situations"

NB/ earth might correspond to "presence" } } 77, 90 p.  
world " " " " " " " " " " " " }

"Aesthetic Experiences" → "modalities of enjoying beautiful things" 96  
 [on EPIPHANY]

- 1) "feel specific moments of intensity ... elation" (97)  
 - "no message, nothing we could really learn from them" (98)
- 2) fulfills preconscious needs and desires apart from everyday world (99)  
 - but (100) while culturally specific, it is not clear that we need to inquire into their "historicity"  
 (i.e., no interrogation or ideology critique) [See no. 8 \* below]
- 3) "aesthetic autonomy" / "insularity"<sup>(101)</sup> — emphasizes, again, distance and separateness from everyday world ... and hence separateness from ethical norms, whose appearance can only "evoke" the intensity of experience ... (102) — ∴ no ethical content (if one reads ethics, other media are more direct → 103)
- 4) suddenness / "eventness" / of the experience, usually unsummoned (103)
- 5) Attraction → beyond tiresome explanations and "meaning", one gets instead an impression of "presence" (105) within a meaning-culture (106)  
 "Effects of presence" are always "ephemeral"  
 ∴ offer what our world cannot give.  
 Meaning and presence are "always in tension" and "appear together" (105)  
 ∴ "oscillation between presence effects and meaning effects" (107)  
 within a system of "experience" (Erlleben: 107-108)  
 Neither meaning nor presence will cause the other mode to disappear (108)  
 - Desire for presence → "reaction" to an overly Cartesian world (111)
- 6) Epiphany = ephemeral (∴ an "event" with "temporality" — (111))  
 ... "seems to come out of nothing" (111)  
 - but also a spatial dimension (112)  
 How is it an event? 1) we don't know how or when it will occur  
 2) we don't know in advance its form or intensity 3) it unfolds itself as it emerges (113)
- 7) Involves an "element of violence" (114) ... "in the sense of occupying and thus blocking our bodies" (115) ... one "loses control" (116)

2) what is the effect of "getting lost" in presence? Recreation and restoration (116)  
of that which our Cartesian world suppresses.

Recuperate "the spatial and bodily dimension of our existence"

- State attained → Gelassenheit; serenity, composure ...  
"being in sync with the things of this world" (117) (118) (119 = desire for harmony)
- related to "unconcealment" of Being" (117-18) [Heidegger]
- \* [Subsequent chapter "To Be Quiet for a Moment; About Redemption"  
explores submission + Gelassenheit —  
above all, abandon any goal of 'social function' or  
'political yield']

PRESENTIFICATION (121) → seeking to recreate in present experience

the epiphanies of the past

- "the possibility of 'speaking' to the dead or 'touching' the objects of their worlds ..." (123) an "illusion" (123) but valuable,
- goal → forget about "practical use" ... instead, recover "historical objects" and give them a specific aura" (124)
- - Forget about practical benefits ... instead "indulge in the past — and simply enjoy our contact with it" (125)

He mentions historical films + novels, museums (123)

JH

But what about musical performance → "presenting" artifacts of the past, with an "aura" + presence-effect  
— Maurizio Pollini or Renée Fleming or Pavarotti →  
is this presentification?  
(Same as Abbate's dramatic? or ... ?)

— And what about "historical performance"  
orig. instruments ... maybe even in costume (like  
the staged tourist-events in Vienna)

— Does Gumbrecht completely ignore the gap in horizons between past + present? (transhistorical immediacy)

— Is this similar to Dahlhaus's aesthetics of presence?  
(No! why?)

(109: music  
is, above all,  
"dominated"  
by presence-effects)

DEIXIS (pointing toward) as the goal of teaching (and writing) (128)

- 1) "Good teaching should be deictic rather than interpretative and solution oriented" (128)
  - "no 'solution' or answer immediately expected" (128)
  - "enthusiasm" + nonresolution is prior; "knowledge" is secondary (129)
  - intertwined with the "risk" of thinking what cannot be thought in our everyday worlds. ∴ "RISKFUL THINKING" (pp 126-27; 130)
  - teacher [or writer?] → "a catalyst of intellectual events" (131)

Gumbrecht addresses four critiques/dismissals of his views

1) "fascist" to "renounce concepts, meaning, understanding, or interpretation" (142)

JH → more to the point → to lack a will to adopt a critical stance vis à vis apparent epiphany or intensity ... to embrace ephemeral intensity [of any kind] as valuable in itself' Coupled with concept of submission and serenity [Gelassenheit], in effect "believing it" to be good + true in itself"

— no concern with manipulation or self-deception

— indeed, a strong argument against suspicion and critique (interpretation; social utility)

∴ Postmodernist or ideology critique or suspicion → "beauty" [because manipulative] is fascist.

or milder version (143) → "conservative" or a "betrayal of a generational legacy" (143) ... "neoliberal" (143)

GUMBRECHT REPLIES → His concern is only one of restoration and recuperation of "the full complexity of our existence", i.e., to escape the "exclusive dominance of the Cartesian worldview" (143) — He's not out fully to replace it (143)

2) Not 'critical' enough; too 'affirmative' (143)

JH → this is essentially the argument always thrown out by the proponents of the hermeneutics of suspicion (+ transformationalists)

— i.e. self-deception; naive submission to illusion + enchantment; "false consciousness"; "opium of the masses," etc.

GUMBRECHT REPLIES → for all of it, one still has a longing for presence and harmony ... especially "as an aging man" who "treasures the rare moments of harmony that happen to me" (143)

cf. change of "naïveté" p. 53



3) fetishism (pathology) 143-44  
à la Marx →

GUMBRECHT REPLIES → Marx claimed that the fetishism of commodities removed us from reality. But presence (or recuperation) brings us closer to that reality. (144)

à la Freud

GUMBRECHT REPLIES → his goal is not an obsession or a fixation in the Freudian sense (144-45)

4) Is becoming a "religious thinker" (145)

GUMBRECHT REPLIES → he is searching for Being in "things" (à la Heidegger), so he feels an affinity there,

- Also a "strong affinity" with "a contemporary group of young British theologians ... 'RADICAL ORTHODOXY'" (143)

e.g. Catherine Pickstock

(Others → John Milbank, Graham Ward [Colin Gunton] <sup>similar?</sup>  
(Postmodern critiques of Enlightenment reason... blowing a hole in rational critiques to allow faith to enter)  
cf DANIEL CHUA) → RADICAL ATTACKS on the Cartesian + analytical world view ... to let in the "chaos" of belief... etc.)

Gumbrecht's "affinities" are clear. Where he separates himself is only in matters of doctrine (Christian) and the need for any "liturgical practice" (147, 148)

- In short, he sees no need to become "theological" or ask questions of Pickstock's "unknown sources" (149)

(cf Zen + Kabuki → 149-52 →)

cf. Gumbrecht's longing for exclusive "real presence" - p. 28-30; 85

JH needs to write an article about all this?

Other, related grounds for criticism? (JH)

- 1) Couldn't the same argument (contra rational engagement in favor of ecstatic epiphany and "being in sync with the things of this world") be used [or misused] by any tyrannical regime or dictatorship (or by Madison Avenue) to shut off critical thought in favor of belonging

Cf. Baudrillard → simulacrum → intense experience of the artificial or the substitute [via the media and "hyperreality"] instead of experiencing that which is more real  
 - JH → cf. "virtual reality" or "artificial reality" → more intense than everyday experience... at times [Baudrillard] no relation to reality whatever

In short → Gumbrecht expresses no concern about (e.g.) technological manipulation to produce ecstatic states of epiphany

(Huxley → "soma" in Brave New World)

No inquiry into who is offering you this ecstasy and for what purposes they are doing so,  
 i. Essentially an attitude of TRUST, Gelassenheit.

- 2) Essentially anti-intellectual in its thrust (sacrificium intellectus the subordination of reason to faith [or, in fact, to any posited authority])  
 A central aspect of certain strands of Christian theology (e.g. a Jesuit maxim from Ignatius Loyola)  
 cf. Credo ut intellegam → St. Augustine  
 Again (NB) any such sacrificium means (I think?) giving up yourself to the assurances (or experiences) provided by an authority, or to an entity that, however provisionally, you grant that authority.

Sought only → the "oohs" and "aahs" of epiphany.

NB → p. 80 → For a presence culture, legitimate knowledge is typically revealed knowledge. It is knowledge revealed by (the) god(s) or by ... " [cf. 82 → concept of "MAGIC"] →

3) In a practical sense, how could we implement his program of response (epiphany) and deixis (pointing) w/o rational commentary?  
(Taruskin → impractical; "can't use it")

Except perhaps, to validate performance (thrill) only?  
(both performing and attending live performances)  
(a with Abbate?)

- to remain silent in the presence of presence ("To Be Quiet for a Moment" → epilogue, p. 133) →  
(cf. Dahlhaus "mute submission to the authority of all that used to be, FMH, p. 69 → his description of "naive traditionalism")

- Gombrecht, "from time to time ... be silent (for presence cannot use too many words)" p. 134.