Jacques Derrida

Scribble (writing-power)[1]

Who Can Write? What Can Writing Do?

We sense that the (advanced) form,of these questions can be, already
on its own, diverted. It harbors a ruse, of writing, and this is not
accidental. What would it divert from?

Fostering the belief that writing *befalls* power (one can, in general,
and one can write if occasioned to), that it can ally itself to power, can
prolong it by complementing it, or can serve it, the question suggests
that writing can *come* [*arriver*] to power or power to writing. It
excludes in advance the identification of writing *as* power or the
recognition of power from the onset of writing. It auxiliarizes and
hence aims to conceal the fact that writing and power never work
separately, however complex the laws, the system, or the links of their
collusion may be.

Now what is astonishing is not writing as power but what comes, as
if from within a structure, to limit it by a powerlessness or an efface-
ment. But this was said elsewhere;[2] let us leave it at that.

Writing does not come to power. It is there beforehand, it partakes
of and is made of it. Starting from which, in order to seize it—namely
power, such as determinate power (politics, for example, which does
not assume an exemplary position by accident)—struggles and
contending forces permeate writings and counter-writings. For the
question also led to the singular abstraction: *power, writing*. It ran the
risk of reproducing that political operation which, to heap blame on
something like *power* in general, assimilates all kinds of power for
whatever purposes they may serve (we know the rest). Hence, *struggles*

[2]Cf. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns
Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 7, 60 ff. [Tr.]

for *powers* set *various* writings up against one another [*les* luttes pour *les* pouvoirs opposent *des* écritures]. Let us not shrug our shoulders too hastily, pretending to believe that war would thus be confined within the field of literati, in the library or the bookshop. This has been treated at length elsewhere;[3] let us leave it at that. But it is true that the political question of literati, of intellectuals in the ideological apparatus, of the places and stockages of writing, of caste-phenomena, of "priests" and the hoarding of codes, of archival matters—that all this should concern us.

What interests me first, here, today, in Warburton, is the theory of powers. I thus assume a discriminating reading and will attempt to justify it. Politically, for example. Where the *Essai* touches on language as such, on the use of rhetorical schemes in the interpretation of writing, its history, and its varying and unvarying features, in the genesis of idolatry or oneirocritical knowledge, it interests me less. All this is rich, exciting, but better pinpointed today, and fascinates only by leaving—"in order to" leave—in obscurity the theory of powers that is coextensive with them. Indeed, Warburton proposes a history and a general system of writings, which he always analyzes according to an interpretation of "ideological" and politico-religious powers—of the ideological in general. This can be inferred from several clues.

The most general might be called *economy of action*, even if it means displacing these two words along the way. What about action, in the first place? And how is a *veil* necessarily implied, with the values of dissimulation, ruse, crypt, sexual modesty, and hymen that it always envelops?

Language and writing possess a common filiation, according to Warburton. From the very beginning it passes through "action language." The common genealogy authorizes a continual comparison between the two "arts," which must be understood as two powers, themselves already analogous to a rhetorical power (tropical or figural) evenly distributed within one family, one law of kinship, one

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[3] As the generalization and dislocation of the notion of writing is constitutive and pervasive in Derrida's project, this "elsewhere" is scattered and multiple. Cf., for example, "La Double séance" in *La Dissémination* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 207 f., n. 7; *Of Grammatology,* p. 86, p. 332, n. 34, pp. 3-93 *passim.* [Tr.]

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economy: "Comparison of these two arts, which one may, as it were, regard as brothers [*sister-art,* as Warburton himself put it], will shed light on them both" (§ 7).* The "comparison" between the two arts, as well as the "influence" of the one upon the other, will be continually re-instigated: both are powers of graphico-rhetorical "comparison." For this reason also, the relationships can no longer be those of auxiliarihood or ancillariness (this time between speech and writing). And yet, if auxiliarihood does not determine *ex post facto* the speech/writing relationship, a certain auxiliariness (one must once again say supplementarity) marks its first emergence.

"Action language," the common origin of verbal and graphic powers, is indeed rendered indispensable by an essential limitation, an irreducible finitude of "sound,"—in human communication, naturally.

The sound of the voice never carries far enough. It lacks extension. Extension fails it. The scarcely paradoxical consequence: although it belongs to duration, sound never lasts long enough—duration fails it too.

> We have two ways of communicating our ideas. The first with the help of sounds; the second by means of figures. Indeed, the opportunity of perpetuating our ideas and of making them known to people far away presents itself often; and as sounds do not extend beyond the moment and the place that they are uttered, we invented figures and characters, after having imagined the sounds, so that our ideas might partake of extension and duration. This manner of communicating our ideas by marks and figures at first consisted in drawing quite naturally the images of things. Thus, to express the idea of a man or a horse, one represented the form of one or the other. The first attempt at writing was, as we see, a simple picture. (§ 1 and 2)

The deficiency of the word [*verbe*] is not due solely to the element of sound in which it is deployed. It also appears on the semantic or referential side. In the beginning language is said to have been, necessarily, "rude, barren, and equivocal." This proposition has axiomatic value in the *Essai*; it is the price to be paid for a conception of language that is massively (let us say so just as massively and without delay) evolutionistic, naturalistic, representativistic, almost linearistic.

> Language, if one judges by the monuments of antiquity and by the nature of the thing, was at first extremely rude, barren, and equivocal: so that men were perpetually at a loss, with each new idea and each extraordinary case, to make

*Section numbers refer to the French *Essai* only.

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themselves mutually understood. Nature led them to obviate [*prévenir*][4] these deficiencies by adding to spoken words apt and significant signs. Accordingly, conversation in the first ages of the world was upheld by a mixed discourse of words and actions. (§8)

This "action" is obviously an "action language" (§9) already informed by an entire rhetoric, by a thorough, active, and discriminating sifting [*criblage*] of figures. Examples of this are first drawn from the Orient of Holy Scripture, either from the language of the Prophets ("When the false Prophet shakes his iron horns to mark the utter rout of the Syrians," etc.) or from their "visions," which are in fact only translations, equivalents of action "turned into vision," the effects of a *practical* rhetoric: the vision is thus the language God speaks by "condescension," "to conform to the custom of the time."

But insofar as this rhetorical "action" is original, insofar as it supplies the deficiencies of a natural and primary impotence of speech, nothing—neither upstream nor downstream—can overflow its realm. The entire realm is a realm of action. There follows a sort of generalized "practicism" that offers its foundation, its place, and its meaning to a theory of writing as power. The concept of action ensures the (homogeneous or analogical) passage between action in general (physical, technical, political, etc.) and that of "action language": manifestation through action, act of manifesting.

How will this manifestation come to the point of concealing? The question awaits us—it is that of scrypture [*écrypture*]; it is too early to formulate it.

With this generality of action only the generality of nature can contend. With its equivocalities and its powerful resources, the concept of nature presides over all of this discourse. It does so according to the rules that organize the entire historico-theoretical configuration to which such a discourse belongs.

On the one hand, this configuration permits a break with a certain type of dogmatism. Explanation no longer has theoretical recourse to

[4] Warburton has "supplying": ". . . supplying the deficiencies of speech by apt and significant signs. Accordingly, in the first ages of the world, mutual converse was upheld by a mixed discourse of words and actions; hence came the eastern phrase of the voice of the signs." This last sentence, like many others and sometimes whole paragraphs, is omitted in the *Essai.* [D]

revelation: "it is nature and necessity. . .that have produced the various kinds of hieroglyphic writing and have given them currency. . ." (§7). "Language, if one judges by antiquity and by the nature of the thing. . ." (§8). "Nature led them to supply these deficiencies by adding to spoken words apt and significant signs" (*ibid.*). Even the deficiency is natural, but equally natural is the supplement to the deficiency—here, writing as action language. Nature fills up: that is history (the history of action, of language, of action language). It foreruns itself. [*Elle se prévient elle-même.*] It leads to the obviation [*à prévenir*] of those "deficiencies" that are at first its own but that are no longer simply its own from the instant it obviates them, from the instant it forewarns [*prévient*] man in nature of them. Nature is the necessity, order, and arrangement of the world (cosmos or creation); it is essence ("the nature of the thing"), providential finality, the condition and object of knowledge.

But on the other hand, and just as regularly, the value of nature is at the service—is the very service—of a Christian apologetics, a "true defense," a "reasonable defense of prophetic writings" (§9). Mediation here takes the form of natural language and even—it may be said without anachronism—of ordinary language. In prophetic texts, figures of action language will cease to seem absurd, odd, or fanatic as soon as one no longer attributes them to an "extraordinary language" but rather to ordinary usage and the natural "idiom" of a culture (*ibid.*). Figures of rhetoric active in the idiom of language, in its natural and ordinary usage, "discourses expressed by actions," pictography (and by natural development hieroglyphy, ideography, alphabet)—all this arises from one and the same *natural* system, from a great, universal, and analogical chain of analogies. It is the powers of "comparing" that are being compared among themselves. This signifying practice of nature expresses itself by signs—which amounts to expressing and silencing itself at the same time. Already the crypt *en abîme* is presenting itself *naturally*:

> It is not only in Sacred History that we encounter these examples of discourses expressed by actions. Profane Antiquity is full of them, and we shall have occasion to refer to them subsequently. The first oracles were rendered in this manner, as we learn from an ancient saying of Heraclitus: "That the King, whose

oracle is at Delphi, neither speaks nor keeps silent but expresses himself by signs." Proof that it was, anciently, a normal way of making oneself understood to substitute actions for speech. Now this way of expressing thoughts by actions agrees perfectly with that of preserving them by pictures. I have noticed in ancient history an instance that so exactly reflects discourse by action and writing by pictures [the first writing] that we may consider it as the link that binds together these two means of expression and as proof of their likeness. Clement of Alexandria tells this story in these words: "As *Pherecydes Syrus* recounted it, it is said that *Idanthura,* King of the Scythians, being ready to do battle with Darius, who had passed the Ister, instead of a letter sent him, by way of symbol, a mouse, a frog, a bird, a dart, and a plough." This message having to supply speech and writing, we see its meaning expressed by a mixture of action and picture. (§ 10)

Always present to itself, in one form or another, nature is self-presence, come to itself in anticipating itself [*venue à soi se prévenant elle-même*].

Action is the manifestation or the production of this nature *pre*serve. The "deficiencies" that are produced in action are still natural ones; they are the means of production proper to it. It anticipates [*prévient*] them, in this was preceding itself and as it were advancing itself.

One may speak here of an *economy of nature.* What about action? we asked above in connexion with the economy of action. What about economy, now? Economy because nature is always at home, close beside itself, not going out without preventing/advising of [*prévenant (de)*] its return. And it orders everything according to its own proper law and the law of what is proper to it: economy. But also because the natural law that presides over the modes of production and over the evolution of systems of writing is, in a more restricted sense of economy, a law of *saving* and *abridgement.* The point is always to improve the efficiency of the signifying practice and to save space in the storage of information and in the repository of the archive: *ecotoponomy.*

If nature is always present to itself, the metaphor of its self-production will tend to be vocal: the voice of nature. At this point (the metaphor of nature as a whole), auxiliarihood recovers its rights, along with phonocentrism. Contradicted, overturned, or neutralized by the affirmation according to which speech and writing belong as it were to the same generation (as one says of family relations but also of data machines), auxiliarihood reappears just as the most general metaphor

expresses [*dit*] nature, lets nature express itself [*se dire*]—which is done, one thinks, as close to home as possible, only in the voice, "the uniform voice of nature." If there are universals in the history of language and writing, if from one nation to another the analogy of the process can be explained neither by "imitation" nor by "chance" or "unforeseen event," it is because the voice of nature carries, everywhere, without bounds, without alteration, everywhere the same, "the uniform voice of nature, speaking to the rude conceptions of men" (§7).

This attentiveness [*prévenance*] of the voice can be explained, explains itself, even if only through metaphor: although the arts of speech and writing are "brothers," although the necessity of marks, figures, and language arose from the very beginning by reason of the (human) finitude of the word, it remains that, of the "two ways of communicating our ideas," the "first" came about "with the help of sounds": elder brother if you like or, closer to the English, elder sister who resembles more nearly her progenitor, nature, whose sex we shall leave indeterminate. "First" way, immediately followed or accompanied, but first. If the deficiency of the human voice in its finitude is immediately supplied by action language and by the marks of writing, the "voice of nature" everywhere and ceaselessly supplies its own deficiency in metaphors, properly, of itself.

Since nature produces, utters, and makes up for itself—in other words, *unveils itself* in its *truth* through speech and its writing supplement—how does one explain that it came to the point of *veiling* (hiding, encrypting) itself throughout history? throughout history as the history of language and writing (which is why the veiling is cryptic and the concealment encyphering), as the history of science, religion, economy, and politics, and even of a certain unconscious such as arises in dreams and in the science of "oneirocritics"? That is the only question. Warburton poses it as such. He provides an answer. The possibility of the question, of its systematic unity, concerns us today. More than its knowledge-content, its examples, and its answer, more than the content of the answer. Not that the point is formally to isolate problematic schemas, ideal types of explanation, a certain style in the articulation of regions (the political, the economic, the linguistic or graphic, the rhetorical, the religious, the oneirocritical, etc.), but

rather to pinpoint, within that which links knowledge-contents to question-forms or to procedures of analysis, a system (of powers and limits) relevant to a present-day discourse, an unevenly developed discourse that the system may favor here and hinder elsewhere, in any case disorganizing every sort of hasty and comfortable periodization and simplistic determination of limits. The engrossing [*préoccupant*] relation between two (or more than two) scribbles: such will here be the "object." I am thus assuming my scribling selection not in order to impose it but in order to ask: why must the question of *power* (an old word that needs differentiation, an abstraction that needs analysis) be worked out today, urgently and insistently, as a question of *writings?* What must follow from this, with regard both to the powers and to the writings?

To summarize. It is as if a catastrophe had perverted this truth of nature: a writing made to manifest, serve, and preserve knowledge— for custody of meaning, the repository of learning, and the laying out of the archive—encrypts itself, becoming secret and reserved, diverted from common usage, esoteric. Naturally destined to serve the communication of laws and the order of the city transparently, a writing becomes the instrument of an abusive power, of a caste of "intellectuals" that is thus ensuring hegemony, whether its own or that of special interests: the violence of a secretariat, a discriminating reserve, an effect of scribble and scrypt.

This perversion is described as the violent effect of a *veil* (the word recurs regularly—at least, I have determined, in the French *Essai*[5]), of a veiling: something is *veiled,* like a presence or a truth, but also like the rotation or revolution of a social wheel. Warburton often calls the course of this process *revolution*. A certain natural revolution is turning out badly. The perversion is said not to have limited its (real) effects to the cultures under study (Egyptian antiquity, mainly) but by the same token to be at the root of the errors mady by Europeans (Kircher, mainly) in the interpretation of hieroglyphs, their structure, and their finality, and consequently—following this clew—in their conception of language and writing in general. "The undertaking is

[5]Though not, as D. will himself point out, in the English original. [Tr.]

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extremely difficult owing to the general error into which we have fallen regarding the first use of hieroglyphs, believing as we do that Egyptian priests invented them so as to hide their knowledge from the common man. This opinion has cast over this part of ancient literature a shadow so large that one can dispel it only by unveiling the error completely." (*Object of this paper.*) Warburton will not claim that the priests never wanted to "hide their knowledge" by veiling it. But by demonstrating that neither this veil not this intention was originary, he wants to "unveil" the error that had made concealment the (secret) mainspring of writing. Kircher's mistake is itself the effect of a (real but secondary) veil: by lifting the veil and returning to the natural origin, one will unveil the error. One will even show the cause of the error, its necessity, and its law by going back to the origin or to the original ("*it will be necessary to trace up hieroglyphic writing to its original*") (sentence omitted in the *Essai*).

For such is the (extreme) difficulty of the undertaking, the riddle of the riddle and hence of history: the catastrophe of the veiling is not an accident; it remains natural. The error of deciphering that results for the science of writings is also natural and must be decipherable as such.

The dual figure of the priest and the hieroglyph occupies an exemplary position in this: apparently one among others, it is true, in a series or group of social types and types of writing, but at the same time bringing together the essence of social power *qua* power of writing or at least as an essential moment of these powers and of what is represented in them. And these two figures are inseparable; they belong to the same system and are mutually constitutive. No priests without a hieroglyphic writing, no hieroglyphics without a working priesthood. Occupying the *center* within the succession of types of writing, the hieroglyph is also, as we shall see, the elementary milieu, the medium and general form of all writing. It is twice marked, occupying a space and all the space. This is also true of the priest: this very special social agent also represents that place and function in which scientific, religious, political, technical, and economic powers are capitalized in the power of a lever of writing that overturns natural relations.

The *Essai* revolves around this critical overturning (cryptic catas-

trophe). It adjusts its rhythms and its composition according to it: three parts, as in Section IV of *The Divine Legation of Moses demonstrated,* are in this respect faithfully reconstituted. The first part describes a sort of ideal normality, the natural derivation of writings when they fulfill transparently their function in communication (notably of laws) and as archival instruments (of science, political history, financial accounts). The only problems—and they are solved by the technical improvement of writings—are hence economic problems of storage. The second part, a central and catastrophic moment in the natural revolution, explains the veiling of this ideal normality. The third part demonstrates that oneirocritical science and the animal cult draw all their resources from hieroglyphic writing. The existence of such a writing thus proves the great antiquity of the sciences in Egypt. It is the sought-after "internal proof": hieroglyphic writing does not surround knowledge like the detachable form of a container or signifier. It structures the content of knowledge. This explains why, according to Warburton, when other peoples were reaching toward a more manageable and economical system of writing (the alphabet), the Egyptians should have wished to preserve, with their writing, the very treasure-house of their knowledge—a premise indispensable to the author's theses on the religion and politics of the Hebrews and the condition for a revival of Biblical studies as well, a major concern of Warburton's in his struggle against "freethinking."

It must therefore be explained that the accident is necessary: that the veiling, which *befalls* writing, is also prescribed for it by a certain nature, from within; and finally that this effect of writing remains at once secondary and essential: a non-accidental accident. This is not a simple matter. Prejudices, themselves provoked by the veiling, have made the undertaking "extremely difficult." One must go back to the origin (*"trace up hieroglyphic writing to its original"*) to explain what has befallen.

From its origin, the simplest and most representative writing (representative of the thing: "to draw naturally the images of things," §2) was designed to preserve laws and history. The best example of this is drawn from the Mexican Empire, whose pictography (*picture-writing*) is attested by the tax rolls of the royal treasury and by the

abstract of their civil code, the most developed part of which treats, not insignificantly, *de jure patrio*[6]. From this simplest of stages onward the pictogram is scribed by an entire rhetoric. Things that had no bodily shape were represented by "other significant characters": an-Indian-kneeling-before-a-priest signified "I confess," three-heads-crowned stood for the Trinity.

From the pictogram to the hieroglyph, a simple techno-economic restraint. The size of volumes had to be reduced and data storage improved. The art grew by means of three types of abridgement: the principal part for the whole, the instrument ("real or metaphorical") for the thing (the eye set on high for the science of God), one thing for another (the snake coiled in a circle for the universe). These three stenographic representations suppose knowledge, a growth in knowledge. They are the premises of the thesis, and Warburton dwells on them particularly in regard to the third type of abridgement, that which proceeds from "some resemblance to or delicate analogy with the other."

At the point we have now reached (the second stage, hieroglyphic writing in the strict sense), we are dealing solely with a "method devised to preserve the memory of the deeds and thoughts of men," nothing is being contrived with a view to "secrecy," everything is following a natural necessity.

This remains true when the same economic imperative forces the passage from the hieroglyph (Egyptian) to the ideogram (Chinese). But this time the economic difficulty no longer derives solely from "the enormous size of the volumes written in pictures" (insofar as there is still some pictogram in the hieroglyph). The limited number of hieroglyphic characters also necessitates a change of system, a rejection of the images that the Egyptians still preserved, and an augmentation of the "characteristic marks" that they were adding to them. Chinese writing thus went "a step further." It multiplied the "abbreviated marks . . . to a prodigious number"; "each idea has its distinctive mark." Independent of language, it can be spread among nations speaking different languages and thus possesses the "universal character of picture-writing" (§4).

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[6]The father's right to the power of life and death over his children. [Tr.]

But just as the pictogram (already scribled by a rhetoric) partook *already* of the hieroglyph, so the Chinese ideogram partakes of it still. It is a "more abbreviated and refined hieroglyph" (*ibid.*). "These more modern characters are nevertheless *true hieroglyphs*" (*ibid.*). The hieroglyph is thus clearly the exemplary center of writing, its medium, an element, a species and the genus, a part and the whole, general writing.

It was however a writing in advance of its time—before the letter. Now, the passage to the letter ("for letters are the last step that remains to be taken after the Chinese marks" §5) does not break with this law of the hieroglyph. The Chinese marks that "partake on the one hand of the nature of hieroglyphs," "on the other partake of letters." The last step, the alphabetic letter, completes "the general history of writing, brought by simple gradations from the state of the picture to the state of the letter." The advantage of the alphabet still remains *steno*graphic; it holds meaning in a narrower, *stricter* place. Chinese characters were already so "close" to letters that the alphabet simply *restrained* their number and hence the space they occupied without altering their essential nature. It "merely lessens the cumbersomeness of their number and is a succinct epitome of them." What I have elsewhere proposed to call the law of *stricture*[7] would indeed manifest itself as the process of general writing. That this law does not possess the linearistic, economistic, and continuistic simplicity that it sometimes takes on in the *Essai* is only too obvious but would involve us in a problematic of which I can here only indicate the locus.

For the moment, then, in this "general history of writing," no recesses, no "mystery," contrary to what Kircher thought. The apparent and badly analyzed rupture between picto-hieroglyphic representation (representation of things or meanings, of "idea") and alphabetic representation (of words) led to belief (which it produces by its structure) in the mystery and divine origin of the "marvelous artifice of letters." Whenever a new type or a new stenography arises, one believes that a rupture has occurred instead of analyzing the simple

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[7] *Glas* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1974), pp. 271-2, 115, 120, 124, 215. [Tr.]

gradation: an effect of breaking and of mystery. This was already true before the alphabetic event. A little more than simply another steno-gram, the letter conceals the natural necessity of its production. And its continuity. According to Warburton, Plato and Cicero already were mistaken about this. They did not pay "attention," simply, to that "natural and simple progress" which moves from the hieroglyph to the letter and to which the "words" *sēmeia* and *sēmata* bear witness, as words, precisely, as well as natural indices, "meaning both *images of natural things and artificial marks or characters:* and *graphō,* signifying both *to paint* and *to write*" (*ibid.*). The opposition between nature and artifice therefore has no relevance to writing.

But it is itself—insofar as it is a lure—an effect of writing. One should therefore be able to propose that if mystery and secrecy (with all their political and religious overtones) *befell* writing, the cause is external to them ("an exterior cause" and one "foreign to their nature" §6, that of stenographic progress: "some private or peculiar cause unrelated to their general nature"), although of an exteriority that natural and hence internal laws must explain. Here lies the entire difficulty of the *Essai.* It will have to be explained that the *veil* of mystery and secrecy was necessary and inevitable, but like the exteriority of the alien, the parasite: the necessity, at once natural and unnatural, of the crypt. It is not natural that nature naturally likes to encrypt itself.

If the natural, and hence universal, necessity of this general history of writings has not imposed itself uniformly on all nations, it is because of accidents of various kinds. Warburton's explanation is here, for reasons that I have just indicated, necessarily involved. This general history of writings, as it is conceived, has small hold on history. It will prove necessary to say that the Mexican Empire was not sufficiently long-lived to pass from the pictogram to the hieroglyph; that the Chinese (another kind of explanation, less external in appearance) did not attain to letters because of their "scant inventive genius" and *their* xenophobia.

Henceforth, in order to prove the natural necessity of the laws without recourse to choice or art, a detour is necessary, this time

through the origin and history of speech. In the process, the rational and naturalistic explanation of prophetic languages will serve religion. The freethinker will no longer judge fanatical or absurd the visions of the prophets: they will be explained to him by the necessity of action language, "a common and familiar manner of conversing" (§9) to which God, as well as the prophets, could or had to have recourse. The prophets were content to speak the "idiom of their country." This argument opposes both freethinkers and Christian authors who wish prophetic language to retain its supernatural character.

Parallel growth of the two arts: as language develops and is refined, Warburton follows the analogy with writing or action language. For example, the apologue is a kind of discourse that "corresponds" to hieroglyphic writing: in the two cases, the "symbol of a different thing" is "understood" (§12). Not only are the same symbolic displacements comparable but the same economic condensations as well. The privilege of the economic viewpoint (the economistic mechanism) in the analysis of structures biases the attention toward condensations rather than displacements, and hence, no doubt, toward metaphorization. In this way we follow the process of the apologue which becomes "simile" when language is refined (the economy of narrative); then the "simile," which would correspond to Chinese writing, produces the metaphor: by stenolexia, one might say, metaphor being a "simile in small" (*ibid.*), exactly as the ideogram makes way for the letter, or rather becomes the more economical letter.

In its two parallel or analogous paths, this analysis can be reduced neither to the diachrony of a genetic narrative nor to the placing of structural, ahistorical relationships. One kind of writing or language may remain in use when another, later and more economical, has already imposed itself. This permits not only a more finely differentiated, suppler, and more faithful historical description, but also a more admissible explanation of the fact that matters above all else to Warburton: the Egyptians maintained their writing in spite of its relative inconvenience because it was the very treasure-house of their lore, whose antiquity is thereby demonstrated.

All those were mistaken, whether ancients or moderns, who

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believed that hieroglyphs were designed for secrecy, for mystery, for the cryptic concealment of knowledge. Nothing in the natural laws of their production determined them for this.

And yet this is what came about. Warburton does not contest it. That which should not have come about was to come about.[8] May one even venture, in the margins, this proposition: that such is the structure of that which comes about if it does come about—in other words, of the event? The *should-not* describes (by force and play of structuring forces) the very edges of that which is thenceforth to fix itself in it, in the form of the "unforeseeable" event. That which should not have come about, or should have not come about (an imperceptible and immediately necessary transformation of the utterance) was to come about, could come about, could not fail to come about.[9] The matter at hand is still writing and a play of power. Warburton must maintain that this—the crypt or the veil—ought not to have come about (an accident has supervened) and that it has come about nevertheless, has come about in accordance with a rigorous necessity; and that what has thus come about does not weaken—on the contrary—the premises of this explanation, according to which nothing of the sort was naturally foreseeable. This is the task of the Second Part—laborious, involved, but also richer. The entire difficulty of the crypt is sheltered in the fold between two parts: *how did this come about?* "I hope to have shown that the opinion of the Ancients and the Moderns, regarded until now as incontestable, that the Egyptians invented Hieroglyphs in order to hide their lore and to make it mysterious, has no legitimate foundation. However, as it is certain that this nation did put it to that purpose in the end, we must examine how this came about . . ." (§ 15).

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[8]"*Ce qui ne devait pas arriver devait arriver.*" D. here sets into play various meanings of the verb "devoir" which cannot be rendered by a single word in English. The possible readings may be schematized as follows:

	a. did not have to happen	a. had to happen
That which	b. was not to happen	b. was to happen
	c. should not have happened	c. should have happened [Tr.]

[9]"*Ce qui ne devait pas arriver, ou devait ne pas arriver . . . devait arriver, pouvait arriver, ne pouvait pas ne pas arriver.*"

How did this come about? How did writing become *veiled* (covered and twisted, concealed and devious, masked, hypocritical)? Warburton claims to answer this question by taking up again the analysis he elaborated in the first part, by *reapplying* it, so to speak, this time to Egyptian hieroglyphics alone, the non-limiting element and milieu of writing. The reapplication is much more minute and highly differentiated; it is the solemn and critical moment of the book. A sort of battle is joined at the moment (as for the moment) that darkness has fallen over history.

After a description of the *four* kinds of hieroglyphic writing (1. *Hieroglyphic,* curiological or tropical; 2. *Symbolic,* simple and tropical or mysterious and allegorical; 3. *Epistolic,* intended for civil affairs; 4. *Hierogrammatic,* intended for matters of religion:—the first two consisting of marks of things, the latter two of marks of words), after a description of the relationships between them (sometimes of *supplementarity (supply)* §18) and of the errors to which they have given rise, Warburton comes down to the question of veiling, of what veils a body or a machine or indeed a vehicle of writing that begins suddenly, veiled, to act differently and with a view to mystery. Léonard des Malpeines translates: "Examinons présentement comment les hiéroglyphes sont devenus un voile mystérieux." Warburton: "Let us next enquire how *hieroglyphics* came to be employed for the *vehicle of mystery.*" If one takes into account, in addition, the role that the figures of the veil and the vehicle played in the rhetoric of rhetoric, in an impossible meta-rhetoric, the secret fold linked to superencoding manifests (or veils) itself from the very moment the question is uttered.

Everything is then re-examined, from the pictographic origins of Egyptian writing onward. The veiling is a continuous, gradual, imperceptible passage. The cryptic catastrophe seems never to have taken place in an event. Even the reversal is not apparent. This non-event should not, if such is really the case, have any proper place. *It does not take place here.* It does however manifest itself on analysis; it lets itself be located strictly, the structure producing precisely an effect of place, yet of an improper place since the "proper place," if one might still say so, of the catastrophe would be located very precisely

between the so-called *"proper"* hieroglyph in its most highly evolved form, the *tropical,* and the so-called "symbolic" hieroglyph in its least highly evolved form, still the *tropical.* The veil falls between the second kind of the first hieroglyph and the first kind of the second, between the two of one and the one of two—which have in common, in a common weld, being tropical. Dissimulation, ruse, and perfidy of writing, reversal of places and of history, again a catastrophe of tristes tropiques. A tropical revolution, inside the trope, since the first tropes served to make manifest and the second to encrypt: "such was the progress of the two kinds of proper hieroglyphs, which, in their final state as tropical hieroglyphs, came close to being symbolic ones, of which we are going to speak. They had this in common: both represented one thing by means of another; and they differed in that the tropical hieroglyph served to divulge, and tropical symbol to keep hidden" (§23). The passage from one to the other was progressive, continuous, imperceptible, one of complication by refinement. A *passage,* says Léonard des Malpeines, though Warburton said a *fall,* both however stressing the "insensible degrees." "The following examples will let us see how easily the tropical hieroglyph passed into the state of (*fell into*) the tropical symbol. Eternity was represented now by the sun and the moon, now by the basilisk: Egypt by the crocodile, and formerly by a lighted censer with a heart on it. The simplicity of the first figure in these two examples and the refinement of the second show that the one was a tropical symbol, intended to be known, and the other a tropical symbol, invented for secrecy" (*ibid.*). Again a continuous passage from the tropical symbol to the enigmatic symbol; and the fact that this occurs by "insensible degrees" should not harm the rigor of the demonstration. This imperceptibility is the very condition of the occultation. The concealment must conceal itself, the crypt encrypt itself; it must never be recognized for what it is. Its power then becomes impregnable.

By the same token, these insensible degrees spreading out over all of hieroglyphic space from the first kind of "proper" characters (curiological) up to the last kind of symbolic characters (enigmatic), the general affinity becomes unrecognizable. One believes in the

rupture and the overturning. This is the origin of the common and naive mistake: blind to the continuity, one no longer understands the sense of the overturning.

In the interval of "insensible degrees," the veiling of writing shelters, conceals, and *produces* perhaps all of the history of metaphysics. Let this be translated: of a certain tropics. If this is the case, the metaphysical would be the effect, within the event of that which is proper to it, of a veiling of writing concealing itself in accordance with all the implications (historical, political, economic, technical, and psychic as well, as we shall see further on) that we acknowledge while reading the *Essai.* Is it forcing this text to attribute to it this interpretation (itself perhaps metaphysical, by yet another turn) of metaphysics? Let us see. Just when he notes the "insensible degrees" between the first and last hieroglyphs, an example comes up. It is not just any one. It concerns the hieroglyph (the two hieroglyphs, rather, since there is also a doubling) as it comes "to mark universal nature." How is universal nature written? How is the concept written that plays such a role in Warburton's discourse? How is nature, or rather *physis,* written. It is written twice and in two ways: one he calls *physical* (we must still see about this) and the other *metaphysical,* the latter being, in short, only the *enigmatic* refinement of the first trope (*curiological*), the whole of the operation remaining within the *symbolic:* "One is the figure commonly called *Diana multimammia;* the other is a winged globe with a serpent emerging from it. The first, which is in the simplest taste, is a curiological hieroglyph; and the second, by its mysterious assemblage, is an enigmatic symbol. But observe that, in the first figure, universal nature is considered *physically;* and in the latter, *metaphysically,* according to the different genius of the times in which these two riddles were invented" (*ibid.*).

It will be said: Warburton is here making use of a received opposition, already traditional and itself metaphysical, between the physical and the metaphysical. He does not question it and, particularly, he does not talk about the origins of metaphysics just when he is opposing the physical mark (a metaphor that is moreover coded as feminine and maternal) to the metaphysical mark (a metaphor classified on the masculine and phallic side). So much is

true. But if one takes into account the fact 1. that he does not merely turn writing into an auxiliary; 2. that the history of hieroglyphs appears to him indissociable from a history of meaning and knowledge, along with their politico-technico-economic condition; and 3. that metaphor is here being conceived as originary, then one must read in the *Essai* a formal and general description of the metaphysical, of the process of idealization running from the physical to the metaphysical. Whether a cover for or a veiling of *physis,* this can only further urge us on.

But metaphysical supplementarity is not limited to this. Once a refinement of scrypture [*écrypture*] has produced the metaphysical as an effect of enigma (the concentration of a secret narrative), once hieroglyphs "have ceased to serve to communicate thoughts openly and have become a means of keeping them hidden (*vehicle for secrecy*)" (§24), a "more remarkable change" affects them further ("they suffered a more remarkable change"). It consists in a supplementary and inverse veiling that overturns: a catastrophe of catastrophe, a strophic veiling of the veiling. The abstract metaphysical elements are metaphorized in their turn—not in order to render them accessible to the common man, as one would be naïvely tempted to believe, but "as an addition made by design to lead the vulgar astray" (*ibid.*). And "in order to render the matter still more mysterious" (*ibid.*), modes and substances were represented by images.

This gives rise, for example, to an entire zoography (openness: a hare; destruction: a mouse; knowledge: an ant, etc.), which is affected by a supplementary complication. It has bearing on a certain passage between this problematic and that of the "contradictory meaning of primal words"[10] that sought its first examples in Egyptian writing: "in order to render the matter still more mysterious, one animal served to represent several very contrary moral modes. Thus the falcon signified loftiness, humility, victory, excellence, etc. On the contrary, and for the same reason, a single thing was represented by several and various hieroglyphs. . ." (*ibid.*).

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[10]Cf. Freud, *Über den Gegensınn der Urworte, G.W.* VIII regarding Abel's hypothesis. Recourse to the example of hieroglyphs is essential to it. Cf. also Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*; Derrida, *Freud et la scène de l'écriture,* in *L'Ecriture et la différence,* Seuil, 1967, p. 326. [D.]

This undecidability will be one of the privileged resources for the workings of mastery and priesthood. The politico-symbolic workings of the master and the priestly interpreter [*l'interprètre (sic)*] come into play between two contrary meanings of the same mark or between two distinct marks with the same meaning.

This is the very status of the priest, it is there that he takes place but also that he takes care not to stand up and show himself or to expose his place. One can have no access to the meaning of priesthood, nor even to the priestly caste itself in the concentration of all its powers (religious, political, scientific, psychic, etc.), without going through this veiling by catastrophes and this contrived undecidability of the mark.

The common man now no longer knows which way to turn, where to find the master-meaning, the repository, or the lay-out of knowledge. He is manipulated, misled, doomed to a wandering controlled from without, a programmed nomad, indeed, and this also holds for future Interpreters of Hieroglyphic Writings. Kircher, for example. They are the victims, a few centuries overdue, of the priestly stratagem, of the same one acting *at a distance,* for such is the nature of its power.

The process is never-ending, by definition. To the supplementary complication of the "remarkable change" another alteration is yet to be added. Again in order to save *volume,* both time and space, and thus to concentrate the reserve of power and knowledge, Egyptian men of learning substituted abstract "marks" of the Chinese kind, a sort of "cursive script," for hieroglyphs that still retained *representative* value. The abstraction and arbitrariness of these signs added, to be sure, to the effacement of the marking mark in front of the thing signified. This effacement was a "natural effect." The use of the mark "detracted considerably from the attention paid to the symbol and fixed it on the thing signified." But, paradoxically, what was added to by this was the power of the mark. One had no longer to remember the figuration, the representative figure-head, the content of the symbol—in short, all the knowledge concerning the symbol. The attention was freer to turn to the side of the "thing signified," to be sure, but also to dispose of the arbitrary mark in its maximum condensation. Arbitrariness and power unite more successfully than ever under the

veil of abstraction. One can even say the arbitrariness-power and, by the same token, the power that holds the arbitrary position. This occurs in the form of differences of force, for example in the attention lent to the concrete symbol. The weakening of this attention always serves priestly mastery. And the apparent freedom opened up by the arbitrariness of the sign is a commandeering [*arraisonnement*] of forces, the diversion of another system of non-semiotic motivation. In this regard, let us say so stenographically, the scope of the *Essai* can not be *simply* exceeded by the Nietzschean and post-Nietzschean period, whether it is a question of power, of force, of writing, of the arbitrariness of the sign, of motivation, of the priest, and therefore of still other themes. Therefore: "I mean, that its use detracted considerably from the attention paid to the symbol and fixed it on the thing signified. By this means, the study of symbolic writing was much abbreviated, there being then little else to do but to remember the *power* of the symbolic mark, whereas before one had to be instructed in the properties of the thing or animal employed as a symbol. In a word, this reduced this kind of writing to the state that is presently that of the Chinese" (§26). Léonard des Malpeines translates faithfully but deletes—as he does regularly, and sometimes at much greater length—that which concerns the institution, the expressions, and the concepts of "signs of institution," marks of institution, etc. His last sentence in this paragraph curiously abridged this one: "*this, together with their other* marks *by* institution, *to design mental ideas, would reduce the characters to the present state of the* Chinese."

The power of the mark thus increases with its degree of arbitrariness. That is to say also insofar as the mark seems to fade away in front of the meaning—whence the devious twist of this power.

Warburton, citing Huntington, describes the monumental example of that powerful, vertical writing which is read from top to bottom, like Chinese. It is Aguglia's Columns or the Columns, as the native inhabitants say simply.

By an "easy step" and quite "naturally," one is thus led from cursive writing (hierographic) to epistolic, to the "abbreviated method of letters by means of an alphabet: the sublime invention from which epistolic writing was formed." It was attributed, Léonard des

Malpeines recalls, to the Secretary of the King of Egypt. But if he names Theuth (Hermes) in a note, he omits a paragraph in the course of which Warburton cites Plato's *Phaedrus* and the scene of the *pharmakon* (Theuth presenting writing to King Thamus, who declares himself hostile to it in the name of unsound reasons). Léonard nevertheless proposes the word *remedy* in the course of his free adaptation. It was while seeking a remedy that the Secretary invented the alphabet, but a remedy against the equivocality and obscurity of discourse. To ensure proper communication of the orders of the King to generals and provincial governors, it was better to represent words than things. "I think therefore that our Secretary, in seeking a remedy for this, invented an alphabet, of which he made the letters serve to express words and not things. By this means, all the inconveniences detrimental in these circumstances were avoided, and the writer passed along his instructions with the utmost clarity and precision" (§27). This writing of power was at first designed for State secrecy, more precisely for Letters of State, whence the name *epistolic:* ". . . as the government doubtless sought to keep the invention secret, Letters of State were for some time conveyed with all the security of our modern ciphers" (*ibid.*).

What was invented "for secrecy," and for political secrecy, would thus be, according to this hypothesis, phonetic writing, that which first professed to be the invisible (imageless) vehicle of a spoken word— and not the hieroglyph in the strict sense, even if the functions could subsequently, in the course of the revolution, be interchanged.

As the political code cannot, by its essence, be kept secret, "this alphabet, which we may call *political*," had as it were to be doubled quickly. Whence a "sacred" alphabet, which was none the less political. Whenever a code is unveiled, disencrypted, made public, the mechanism of power produces another one, secret and sacred, "profound." Its *natural* producers are the priests insofar as they have a share in power and knowledge. They secrete the code supplement. This artificial perversion is hence, like the secret/sacred that it engenders, a natural production. It was "naturally" that the priests made use of the political alphabet and then, when this was divulged, it was "naturally again" that they added another one. "This alphabet,

which we may call *political,* soon occasioned the invention of a *sacred* alphabet. For the Egyptian priests, having a share in the government, doubtless knew the secret early on; and being then immersed in the study of philosophy and in deep speculations, they naturally made use of it for their hidden doctrines. But the various uses to which this alphabet was put in civil affairs did not permit it to remain a secret long; and when it was known, the priests would, again naturally, invent another one for their use" (§28). And this was true (naturally, and hence universally) of the priests of "nearly all nations," jealous of power and knowledge, seeking to "keep learning to themselves" (§32) and so, by the same token, to ensure their power.

The growing phonetization of writing multiplies the veil supplements. For the alphabet, in serving to signify words and not things, in "substituting words for things" (§32), is democratized or divulges easily since the language is "common." Whence the necessity of a code supplement and another language, of a "double veil": "But the simple mystery of a special alphabet, for which the words of a common language would have served, would quickly have been uncovered. It therefore appears that they invented a special language for the use of their alphabet, and that they succeeded in hiding their lore under a double veil (*double cover*)." This supplementary language ("sacred dialect") would then have been formed *on the basis of writing:* ciphered names would be assigned according to the graphic code relating hieroglyphs to the Egyptian language. *Yk* signifies snake in the "natural" language; the snake denotes a king in hieroglyphs; *Yk* will mean king in the secret language. Warburton, who here borrows from Manetho, can conclude in favor of this graphic origin of language. The natural democratization of writing, for instance its phonetization, immediately requires a crypt supplement, a new language, a new writing, a new language. "It is in this way that their hieroglyphs became a basis for a wholly new language" (*ibid.*).

Always more veil, "continual revolution" (*incessant revolutions of things*) since the crypt is incovered regularly and another must be invented which in turn. . . etc. At each turn, more veil. "But as a result of the continual revolution of things, these same figures that had at first been invented for clarity and then converted into mystery, at

length resumed their initial use" (§33).

There is thus a wearing-away of the veil, of the double veil, a double wearing-away of the veil: use deteriorates the veil, makes it more and more common and transparent, but prompts the production of a surplus-value whose wearing-away, redistributed in its turn, will call for the more-veil. This revolutionary wearing-away is also the law of language. Warburton turns back a second time to language, "of which even the slightest progress and changes followed the fate of writing (*ran parallel with writing*)." He follows this parallelism through allegory ("veil and disguise of discourse," "*covering and disguise to the discourse*"), parable, riddle, and the dark sayings of wisdom. The surplus-value that accrues to writing also increases the power of the priestly interpreter [*l'interprètre*]. "The veil (*cover*) of this kind of wisdom made it, as such a veil always will, the most high prized of all talents" (§34), but also made it, as a Hebrew proverb attests, the "skill of defrauding and deceiving."

Need or desire, the movement toward knowledge is not *served* by writing or by language. Rather, it serves them. It is in the service of veil effects sought with a view to power, to all powers. Knowledge is thrown into the bargain, or more precisely it is a market effect in the cryptopolitics of writing. And this last originates in a "mere need":

> After the art of writing had been perfected to the point of being symbolic, the Egyptians, in order to give it an air of elegance and learning, and a mysterious veil at the same time (*as to cloud it with a variegated obscurity*), studied all the singular properties of beings, and their various relations, so as to make use of them to represent other things. It was the same with the art of speech. Men soon began to adorn the various manners of expressing themselves just mentioned with tropes and figures: for which reason posterity subsequently doubted the origin of figurative expressions, just as it doubted the origin of hieroglyphic painting. But both arts owed their birth to mere need and the coarseness of men; that is, to a want of words and the coarseness of conceptions. (§35)

Knowing how (or in order) "to represent other things"—this is the first action, the first action language as well, dictated by *need*, by that which begins by lacking (words and concepts, for example, that is to say already representatives). Power, the power that the priest commandeers, results from the necessity of "representing something else"; and it appears at the threshold of representation. When need

supplies the lack by representation, a priest is born. And fetishism, too (*as to cloud it* introduces both the theory of fetishism in *The Twilight of the Idols* and the theory of the "mystic cloud" and of the movements of "veil" (*mystischen Nebelschleier*) that supports the discourse of *Capital* on merchandise, fetishism, religion, and political economy).[11] The motivation is never interrupted. Arbitrariness is a ruse to conceal motivation and power by creating the illusion of an *internal* system of language or writing in general. One is still taken in by this today, by a supplement of ruse or naïveté—which, by reason of the essential limit that constitutes need, always comes back, somewhere, to the same thing. In sheltering the inside of a functioning, systematic partitioning always conceals the more powerful manoeuvers of motivation—and of another system. What regularly bursts open this reassuring enclosure is the *duplicity* of the functioning that is always possible, even always inevitable, from within a system. Examples: 1. the pleonastic redundancy that translates the "lack of words," the excess of words letting itself be motivated by need and indigence themselves; 2. the doubling of metaphor which, supplying the deficiencies of the "coarseness" of the concept, always supersaturates itself with an esoteric double. Warburton compares metaphors to letters of an alphabet. Here, too, they are of two kinds: "one for the use of the public, the other for the use of the priests." "There were clear and intelligible metaphors, and others that were obscure and mysterious. The writings of the Prophets are full of this latter kind of metaphor" (§36).

Even if they do supersaturate indefinitely a natural and originary process, Warburton considered all these veilings, until now, as normal, in a way: a normal complication of the natural norm, a natural revolution in writing.

The sacred crypt, the genealogy of a political religion, the diversion of power and knowledge—everything that is brewing beneath the veils of a caste or the robe of priests sinks to depravity or degeneracy only

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[11]Cf. J.-M. Rey, *L'Enjeu des signes*, Seuil, 1970; Bernard Pautrat, *Versions du soleil*, Seuil, 1971; Sarah Kofman, *Camera obscura—de l'idéologie*, Galilée, 1973; also *Baubô* (*perversion théologique et fétichisme chez Nietzsche*) in *Nuova Corrente*, 68–69, 1975–1976; Jacques Derrida, *Nietzsche et la question du style*, in *Nietzsche aujourd'hui*, Plon 10/18, 1973; also *Eperons*, Flammarion, 1977; also *Glas*, Galilée, 1974, p. 231 sq. et passim. [D.]

with the advent of magic, superstition, or charms. Warburton would like this moment to remain distinct, ulterior, supervenient. He therefore struggles with the implacable constraint of a dangerous supplementarity that he does not wish to recognize—and yet has to admit—as coming from without only by virtue of having already worked within. He must endlessly say (the) "besides": "To conclude, we will observe in the last place that besides all these changes, which the ancient hieroglyphs underwent, they were finally put to very depraved use (*a very perverse corruption*) like the Mysteries, that other important source of Egyptian wisdom, which, in the end, degenerated into magic. Precisely the same thing befell hieroglyphs" (§40). Warburton would like to see in this a pathological depravation, an unjustifiable negativity, a mere waywardness that must be set right— because it leads religion astray, to be sure, but also science, the modern science of interpretation. It must also, for example, have induced the hermeneutic aberration of Kircher, who confused Egyptian wisdom with this refuse of superstition and magic, with the power of spells, with a "magical pollution." These last words disappear in the *Essai.*

Yet the difference between Warburton's theses and those that he professes to oppose may still seem slim, indeed even imperceptible. It is admitted on all sides that the power of writing was crypto-gnoseo-political. And Warburton goes so far as to acknowledge a law in this becoming-cryptic even if he affirms that writing was not *originarily* devised for secrecy. Can we not raise this resemblance between the two theses as an objection against Warburton and propose that he forego a question of origin, the question of an origin which, as he admits, had to be veiled? Can we not, on the same impulse, judge relative and hence loose the alleged antiquity of Egyptian lore, which Warburton insists on so strongly and which he conceives of in fact as a priority or at least an anteriority?

Warburton pretends to address to himself an objection of this sort: "Since in asserting that hieroglyphs were not invented for secrecy you agree that they were later put to that use and that they long continued in it even after the invention of letters, it might very well be, one will say, that this profound learning, which authors agree to have been put

into hieroglyphics, is the work of centuries later by far than the antiquity that you attribute to it" (§42).

Two replies to this objection: the one that Warburton articulates himself and the one that we might develop beyond his stated purpose.

1. If hieroglyphs had not from their beginnings been the treasure-house of learning (the "repository of so great a treasure of learning" (*ibid.*)), if they had not been inseparable from knowledge, the Egyptians would have abandoned them, by reason of their incon-venience, with the invention of letters. Techno-economic law would have come into play by itself, simply and linearly, in favor of letters, "if the hieroglyphs had not contained this learning, so highly prized, and if they had been merely records of civil matters." And the Egyptian nation was the only one "that continued to write in *marks* after the invention of *letters.*"

This explicit reply already has a general bearing: the power of the archive and of the historico-political order always maintains, within the broadest structures of the apparatus of writing, an irreducible adherence to power that is properly epistemic. Adherence does not mean homogeneity, absolute synchrony, or immediate permeability, but a complex buttressing of all of these, the impossibility of a pure history of knowledge, the necessity of taking into account all the technical, economic, and political apparatus that bind knowledge to its text. Warburton in this way provides himself, at least according to the principle, with the means to explain or describe the remanences, the stases, the inequalities in development, and the traditional inertias to which he pays a great deal of attention. Despite certain appearances, even the principle of his "evolutionism" is not simply "economistic" or "linearistic."

2. By claiming to return to this side of the double veil, and by considering the crypt effect as a historical quasi-event, Warburton precisely avoids naturalizing it or taking it to be a primary fact whose constitution or construction, historical process, and techno-political motivation no longer have to be analyzed. A certain naturalism, a certain apologetism as well, permit Warburton to de-naturalize the crypt. They give him *in principle* the means to analyze the structure and genesis of this gnoseo-political crypt of writing, and

at the same time to appeal to a scientific decipherment of the hieroglyphs. The means to analyze a constructum may also become, under certain conditions, means of action, with a view to a decon- struction that would not be only theoretical. But it is true that the naturalism implied by any question of ideal origin immediately limits the means that it provides. This limit doubtless has a specific form in the historico-theoretical space that borders the *Essai*. Rousseau's *Discourses,* which are precisely contemporaneous with it, and his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* as well as many others are affected by it. It remains that this schema, which opens questions even while imposing a logic of the *fall* (original sin is only one example) and an accidentalist treatment of the supplement, passes as such far beyond this historico-theoretical configuration.

There is not *one* power, *the* power of *the* mark. This singular would still lead to some mystification: fostering the belief that one can do otherwise than to oppose powers to powers and writings to other writings, or again that the unity of *power* (and of *knowledge*) is always itself, the same, wherever it is and whatever force it represents.

But there are *powers, knowledges,* in every instance interlinked and linked to marking forces in a general agonistics: irenic, apathetic, angelic, or anarchic discourse always answers, too, to the purpose of the priesthood. Whoever situates and settles it at once, limits his movement within a strict margin.

The power of knowledge, State power, economic power, moral power, religious power, etc.—so many *political* institutions of *crypto- graphy.* One more must be named. Without rushing into analogism, some might recognize in this the unvarying features of a system: the *institution linked to the science of dreams.*

When Warburton wishes to demonstrate that oneirocritical science, born wholly of hieroglyphic writing, must have formed part of the treasure of science, he is still speaking, of course, of the theological science reserved for priests and not of the one that today possesses its powers only by virtue of having entered upon the sure course of a science. But if one does not believe in the (political) simplicity of the epistemological-break, is there not something to read, for us today, in this interpretation of the "art of interpreting dreams"? in what it says about the relations between the science of dreams, writing, knowledge

in general, power, the hegemony represented by a priestly caste, etc.?

Warburton, of course, does not believe in the truth or even the effectiveness of Egyptian oneirocritics. He only wants to show, in support of his general thesis, that the oneirocritics possessed their knowledge and their power, without admitting it, from writing. As Freud will later do in the *Traumdeutung,* he refers to Artemidorus, who divided dreams into *speculative* (a simple and direct image of the event foretold) and *allegorical* (a typical and symbolic image requiring an interpretation). Those who consulted the interpreters (who were not "imposters," but were sometimes more "superstitious" than others) were looking for a "known analogy": "But what other analogy and what other authority could there be than the *symbolic hieroglyphs,* which had then become a sacred and mysterious thing" (§43). The treasure-house of hieroglyphs thus furnished them with the "materials." And the symbolic science of the priests "served as a foundation for their interpretations." It was moreover the same word (to be translated by *stoikheia* or elements) that served to designate, according to Artemidorus, the "phantoms seen in dreams," "symbolic marks," and the "first elements and principles of things." "There was nothing so *natural* [my emphasis] as to use the same term to express the same images engraved on stone and in the imagination" (§44).

The symbolic marks of writing did not serve as a resource for oneirocritics alone, which was more anxious to interpret dreams by writing than to turn the question around (but is it enough today to turn a cryptographic question around?). These marks furnished animal-religion and idolatry in general with powerful symbolic materials. This is Warburton's conclusion. Here again, as he insists, the cryptographic stratagem presses toward knowledge. In order to occult by writing, *knowledge is needed.* And the substitution of a supplementary crypt, the superencoding *ad infinitum,* takes on a truly compulsive air.

> The Egyptians worshipped not only animals but plants as well, and, to say it in a word, every being in which they had noted singular or sovereign qualities; that is, *those same beings that had found their place* in symbolic writing. For when hieroglyphs came to be used for mysterious writing, we have shown that the Egyptians, as soon as a symbol became known, would invent another, more hidden one; and if it was again necessary to change it, they invented a third. So it was necesssary to have a nearly complete knowledge of the animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds in order to explain the story of their gods. (§45)

Thus the politico-religious power represented by the priests can borrow its forces and its material only from the crypt of writing, but it requires and animates to this end an epistemophilic drive that is always in motion. Nothing is here dissociable.

Priests are not inventors of religion. They accumulate a sort of natural religiosity, commandeer it, divert it for their benefit, for the benefit of the caste and the hegemony it represents. It was "natural" to worship the mark, to turn "toward the mark" (§46) and toward divine representation. But this natural fetishism of writing was "favored and fostered" by the priests, who are priests by this very fact, as well as hermetics, esoterics, seeking to make theological science "more difficult to understand," to reserve it for interpreters, to keep away the impious "curious minds" which, "in enquiring maliciously into the genealogies of the Egyptian gods, had gone back so near to their origin that, in order to counter the danger that their cult was running, the priests could do nothing else than multiply the difficulties of such an enquiry. . . ." Nothing could have been easier, first because of the overmarking and essential plethora that followed from it: "there were several hieroglyphs to describe each divinity" (§47). And whenever a priest wishes to write "the history of the sciences" and of human discoveries, that of his own hieroglyphic science first of all, he always invokes the intervention of the gods in an immemorial origin (§56): "It was something so opposed to the politics of a pagan priest to ascertain the era of a deification that we cannot believe him guilty of such an error. He was, on the contrary, careful to push this era back beyond familiar time or at least to encourage the belief that immemorial time had since elapsed."

This process leads them, here again, to multiply the supplements, to "add new fables to the old theology of the gods" (§57). A violent process: by dint of veil, the supplement supplants. This law of supplementary veiling and general cryptography constrains all explanations of origin, that of writing or that of the gods, that of the power of genealogical explanation which the priest appropriates only by pretending to receive it from a divine origin. And however far one goes back toward the limit of the first need, there is always a writing, a religion, already. No first text, not even a virgin surface for its

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inscription, and if the palimpsest requires a bare, material support for an arche-writing, no palimpsest.

No preface.

This is why the political manoeuver of cryptography does not consist in inventing new religions but in making use of the remanence, in "taking advantage of those that they [the politicians] find already established" (§61). Such is the "method of politicians."