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›Nachahmung und Illusion‹: Functions and Dysfunctions of the Protocol as a Medium of Humanities Research Based on the Example of Adorno's Seminars and ›Poetik und Hermeneutik I‹

1. *Academic Ephemera, Academic Protocols*

Publication as a professional necessity and the main currency of academic systems has tended to structure scholarly discourse into a teleology in which books and articles are often taken as a self-evident end in themselves.[1] This can lead to the overestimation or misunderstanding of the function of publications. Given the tight relation of academic publication to credentialling and professional advancement, the writings of scholars can also be thought of as mere requirements and byproducts of the larger and relatively unstructured systems of reading, writing, teaching, learning, talking, thinking – and countless other activities.[2] The ›domestic life‹, so to speak, of academic publications takes place in the traffic of quotes and footnotes, but this life is for the most part much less vibrant – less detailed, less accurate, less critical, less creative – than their ›outdoor life‹ in seminars, colloquia, exchanges of letters and emails, as well as collegial debates. This can be understood as inherent to the relation between ephemera and the official written record, but it also poses the question, not infrequently asked in the context of archive-based research on *Wissenschaftsgeschichte*:[3] How can such ephemera be manifested in and as scholarly work? What are the effects of doing so? To begin to answer such questions, the recent collection, ›Das Protokoll‹, edited by Peter Plener, Niels Werber, and Burkhardt Wolf, provides essential orientation with respect to the complex history of the protocol (both as a concept and a practice).[4] In

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1 This brief discussion of teleology-effect summarizes findings presented in: Kirk Wetters, Afterlives of the Academic Conference: Paratexts and Parabases of the First ›Soziologentag‹ (Frankfurt am Main, 1910), in: Paratexte der Theorie, ed. by Michael Gamper and Wolfgang Hottner, Berlin 2025, pp. 29-58. On academic publishing see: Caspar Hirschi, Carlos Spoerhase, Die Gefährdung des geisteswissenschaftlichen Buches. Die USA, Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich, in: Merkur 69, 2015, no. 788, pp. 5-18.

2 Steffen Martus, Carlos Spoerhase, Geistesarbeit. Eine Praxeologie der Geisteswissenschaften, Frankfurt am Main 2022.

3 Cf. Andrea Albrecht et al., Vorder- und Hinterbühnen der Germanistik. Das Verhältnis von öffentlicher und privater Kommunikation aus fachgeschichtlicher Perspektive, in: Scientia Poetica 25, 2021, no. 1, pp. 225-236; Andrea Albrecht et al., Vorder- und Hinterbühnen der Germanistik (Fortsetzung). Das Verhältnis von öffentlicher und privater Kommunikation aus fachgeschichtlicher Perspektive, in: Scientia Poetica 26, 2022, no. 1, pp. 361-368. This is only the most recent layer of transgenerational legacies associated with the role of archival research in the context of disciplinary histories. See, for example, Eberhard Lämmert's ›Marbacher Impulse für die Geschichte der Germanistik‹, which is the introduction to the first publication of the symposia of the *Marbacher Arbeitskreis für Geschichte der Germanistik*. Cf. Christoph König, Eberhard Lämmert (eds.), Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 1910 bis 1925, Frankfurt am Main 1993.

4 Peter Plener, Niels Werber, Burkhardt Wolf (eds.), Das Protokoll, Stuttgart 2023. In addition to its excel-

widespread everyday use in a range of contexts, a protocol is a transcript or written record – but also a rule, a norm, an instruction or established practice, which is to be followed (in the sense of ›obeyed‹ or ›imitated‹). Whereas the law or *Rechtsnorm* is *intentionally posited* and requires enforcement through punitive sanctions, protocols are *intentionally followed* and thus tend, even in their emphasis on writing and recording, to sink into the unmarked space of the unwritten, traditional and habitual.[5] A breach of protocol, for example, is a transgression that produces effects, but they may remain within the protocollary system itself without requiring the intervention of another instance.

On the other hand, following protocols – whether in diplomatic, ceremonial, legal or computational contexts – frequently produces a written record, a confirmation or re-inscription, which codifies the pre-existing protocollary norm as a norm and at the same time subtly transforms it. Following protocols produces protocols – in either or both senses. Such a recursive, prescriptive and self-reproducing protocol is not a mere transcript, *Mitschrift* or notes. A protocol in the administrative-bureaucratic sense must be authorized as belonging to a particular series of official records. Protocols of this kind are neither mechanical means of translating spoken words into text, nor are they a genre of text. The protocol is, strictly speaking, a medium, an administrative form for the self-reproduction of institutions over time. Protocol requires process (*Verfahren*), and process requires protocols, with decision-making as the context and telos.[6] Thus the scholarship speaks of the difference between a *Verlaufsprotokoll*, a detailed chronological record of deliberations (as in the ›minutes‹ of a meeting), and an *Ergebnis-* or *Beschlussprotokoll*, a record of the results or decisions themselves. Both kinds of protocols need not be verbatim transcripts but are selective and ideally rather concise accounts which are meant to serve as a basis for subsequent actions or as a precedent for future decisions.

The volume ›Das Protokoll‹ does not specifically address the role of protocols in present-day or historical academia. It goes without saying that protocollary forms are used in university administration and decision-making. Such protocols do not require special consideration because they do not substantially differ from those of non-academic bureaucracy. The process-form of academic publications, on the other hand, would seemingly only count as a protocol in an overextended, figural or metaphorical sense. But let us test this hypothesis in more detail: Scholarly writings follow a protocol whenever they treat already-published works as a system of precedents or authorities; academic publications, like protocols, proceed chronologically and serially; they are

lent coverage of its main topic, this *Sammelband* is highly recommended for its bibliography, which includes many canonical texts of media theory. The volume's detailed and varied contributions are the main basis for my own synthetic characterization of the form (or medium) of the protocol.

5   Comparing and contrasting legal vs. literary hermeneutics, see Christoph König, Dieter Grimm (eds.), Lektüre und Geltung: Zur Verstehenspraxis in der Rechtswissenschaft und in der Literaturwissenschaft, Göttingen 2020.

6   On the importance of decision, see Niklas Luhmann, Legitimation durch Verfahren, Frankfurt am Main 1969.

governed by systems of authorization, such as peer review, which transform them into authoritative permanent records. On the other hand, the temporality and temporal horizon of academic writings overextend the analogy. Especially the aspect of decision, *Beschluss* or *Ergebnis* is difficult to localize: Even though a scholarly conjecture may eventually be proven beyond doubt,[7] such validations would be external and diffuse in relation to the protocol itself (e.g., as collective judgments of the scientific community). The ›protocol‹, one might say, only registers possible proofs, lends them a virtual existence, whereas the discovery process writ large depends on countless externalities. The ›scientific‹ protocol in this sense does not recursively and self-referentially create its own reality out of whatever data it is given to record. Instead, it seeks to realize a reality that resists it. In such a highly controlled discursive environment, errors are not mere glitches but steps on the path toward truth.

Protocollary and procedural elements are crucial to such a conception of scientific progress, but nonetheless it remains implausible to think of the totality of academic publications as comprising a comprehensive protocol, whether in the conventional sense of a transcript or in the strictly administrative-procedural sense. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that the terms themselves – protocol in its common vs. strict senses, the differentiation of *Verlaufs-*, *Beschluss-*, and *Ergebnisprotokoll* – are not clearly defined and in individual cases ambiguously overlap. A protocol, for instance, just as it is not a law, also is not merely a cybernetic system – though cybernetic systems could be a kind of protocol, assuming they involve transcriptions. A protocol is closer to a ›program‹ – but not in all senses of the term. Protocols often (but perhaps not always) require or elicit the compliance of human actors. (Here one could think of computer programs, which mix automation with human interaction and oversight.) Also, the relation of the *Verlauf* – as a narrowly structured temporal proceeding – to the *Beschluss* or *Ergebnis* can only be thought of as variable according to exactly what is transpiring in relation to its possible forms of closure, stoppage, referral or deferral. This loosening of the strict definitions of the protocol makes it possible to see how academic systems' reliance on protocollary forms may be complex, sporadic, possibly merely superficial, but that this makes them very much like other kinds of protocols. In the following short excurses, I will attempt to show this in some exceptional cases when scholarly communication did attempt to cleave more strictly to protocollary forms.

2. Adorno's Frankfurt Seminars

The four-volume 2021 edition of Adorno's Frankfurt seminars, edited by Dirk Braunstein,[8] represents a wholesale transfer of the archival documentation of an essentially oral and ephemeral format – the seminar – into the context of an existing published

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7   Cf. Kirk Wetters, Illegitimacy as Norm: On the Temporality of Science and Theory, in: Reframing Critical, Literary and Cultural Theories, ed. by Nicoletta Pireddu, London 2018, pp. 63-90.
8   Dirk Braunstein (ed.), Die Frankfurter Seminare Theodor W. Adornos. Gesammelte Sitzungsprotokolle 1949-1969, Berlin and Boston 2021.

oeuvre. The long-term effects of this remain to be seen. The possibility, however, that the seminars can be a game-changer, was already registered in 1999 when Alex Demirović argued for their distinctiveness as a record of Adorno's theoretical practice.[9]

The intended function and scope of this record-keeping is not entirely clear. The summaries of the individual sessions are not protocols in the sense of word-for-word transcripts. The authors (or rather: protocolists) were evidently familiar with this kind of writing, which back then was commonly assigned to the junior members of the academic community. The seminar protocols were nothing extraordinary but part of an established routine; this can be inferred from the fact that they span Adorno's entire career in Frankfurt (1949-1969). Insofar as the use of the format was more reflexive than reflected, it is difficult to speak confidently about a clearly defined purpose. Certainly these records would have been multi-functional: The preceding protocol was read aloud at the start of the next session, which suggests that they primarily served as memory aids for the internal use of the participants, contributing to the overall continuity of the group's deliberations (e. g., for those who were absent). They were thus written for a very small initial readership but were also preserved and used later in varied contexts (as described in Braunstein's introduction).

The importance of the seminar documentation, following Demirović and Braunstein, is its depiction of critical theory as an ›open source‹ rather than a simply proprietary project. The seminar setting requires that theories and topics do not represent inalterable, authorially copyrighted theoretical knowledge but must be taken as starting points for future research and possible revisions. Theory in the seminar context – like any subject matter – must be up for discussion and open to impromptu reactions. Demirović shows how Adorno successfully meets this expectation, arguing that his pedagogical practice of theory was distinct from the fixed canon and dictums which were characteristic of many of the published writings, and primarily established his reputation as a theorist and the co-founder of a theoretical school. By approaching Adorno through his institutional and pedagogical practice, Demirović's reading of the published ›classical‹ *Gesamtwerk* thus does not seek to make it philosophically consistent but rather highlights its internal differentiation, context-dependency, and ability to elicit various kinds of participatory, even passionate engagement from different readers. Based on this example, it seems like there is much to be learned from the ephemera, but that they may also fundamentally change what is meant by »theory.« The preservation and publication of past ephemera like Adorno's seminars are more than just fetishism or nostalgia but represent the promise – to committed readers – of a viable intellectual nexus that is fundamentally different from that of the published corpus. That such a text survives and maintains its coherence and interest for read-

9   Alex Demirović, Die Lehrpraxis der Frankfurter Schule, in: Der nonkonformistische Intellektuelle, Berlin and Wien 2023 (originally Suhrkamp 1999), pp. 345-384. Additional details on the protocollary practice, the constitution and function of these texts – of which Adorno is not the author – can be found in Dirk Braunstein, Einleitung des Herausgebers und Editorische Richtlinien, in: Braunstein (fn. 8), vol. 1, pp. 1-16.

ers who lack the context of the seminar itself is far from self-evident. What does survive, however – with a kind of immediacy that is often lacking in academic publications – is a strong sense of what was discussed (*Thema*) and who said what (*Beitrag*). The seminar protocols are not verbatim transcripts, but the form of the protocol requires that stylization and aestheticization are kept to a minimum. Internal records of this kind have been edited for accuracy (up to and including their published edition) and thus conceivably underwent multiple approval processes. This means that they are authorized works – and that they are protocols – but that they do not have an author in the sense typically implied by the word »authorship.«

Despite this surprising epistemic robustness, deficiencies or one-sidedness are also evident. To discern the real import of the discussions, their exact back-and-forth flow, their speed and intensity, their tone and emotional tenor, their bottom line (*Ergebnisse*), would require an audio recording or the – possibly unreliable – testimony of someone who was there. The records of Adorno's seminars thus blend the forms of the *Verlaufs-* and *Ergebnisprotokoll* while providing neither extensive documentation of the former nor the intensive closure of the latter. The relation of the sequence of what was said to the flow of time (the passing of the ›minutes‹) is lacking, and, although many individual statements represent a kind of preliminary result (*Ergebnis*), these protocols, based as they are on the open-ended discussion-based format of the seminar, do not reach any kind of definitive finding, decision or conclusion.

3. Poetik und Hermeneutik

Viewed as protocols or even just as books, the publications of disciplinary societies (*Fachgesellschaften*), traditionally referred to as either *Verhandlungen* (proceedings or transactions) or *Kongressberichte* (»reports« on the congress), may provoke many questions and irritations. In the decades after World War II, it was typical (and remains a common practice) that disciplinary societies did not attempt to publish a full transcript of the entire congress – but they did publish the discussions of the papers. Such »reports« can appear to be scripts or transcripts, but in fact are more or less loose summaries that provide a limited, incomplete – or possibly completely inaccurate – record of what was said. Given this tenuousness of the protocollary structuration, the bureaucratic language of officialdom (»Verhandlungen« etc.) is primarily metaphorical here and seemingly serves to compensate for the deficiencies of the documentary record itself. Such language adds to the feeling of importance, the event-ness of the event, and indirectly contributes to the logic and justification of the congresses and their publications. Potentially unintentionally misleading, however, is the published volumes' implication that they are not only an official record (which they also are) but that they can be mistaken for a transcript of (the entirety) of what took place. This impression is furthered by the fact that such volumes rarely offer details about how they were recorded, produced, and edited. At one pole is transcription technology (e.g., audio recording and stenography) and at the other are the editorial possibilities of rewriting and retrospective reconstruction. It must also be kept in mind that many conference

texts, including responses, are scripted in advance. Even at the former end of the spectrum (which is partly a question of technology and partly of individual disciplinary practices),[10] the scholarship on protocols warns against assuming that an »official record« is ever identical with a word-for-word or verbatim transcript.[11]

This matters in the case of academic *Kongressberichte*, which stand in place of what happened and what was said and thus might be mistaken for verbatim records. This posited identity of the event and its publication enhances the credibility of the volumes, both as academic and historical sources. Whatever they may omit or distort, they purport to be the true record of the event and are often handled as such. Thus, as I have shown more extensively elsewhere,[12] published volumes of conference papers and discussions might be best characterized as a textual reenactment of the public-facing side of the event; they surface aspects of the event that the organizers and editors want to be remembered.

I would hypothesize that the seemingly contradictory elements of the genre of the *Kongressbericht* are the result of its need to simultaneously fulfill heterogeneous academic functions, as well as administrative and representational demands: (1) The documentary preservation of the in-person academic communication at the congress (*Verlaufsprotokoll*); (2) the production of a book-length academic publication, which (3) is coherent, citable, and (4) at the same time increasingly also addressed to a non-disciplinary readership and (5) has a chance of selling more than a few copies; and, finally, (6) serves as a comprehensive representation of the congress in its entirety (*Beschlussprotokoll*). Because of the contradictions and multifunctionality, few if any of these goals can actually be met, since what is published may diverge radically from the form of the protocol and certainly is not a verbatim transcript – but still might be mistaken for one. Perhaps the most problematic point is (6), the volume's ability to substitute for the congress as a whole by standing for its »conclusions« (*Beschlüsse*) or

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10 As if aware of these problems, the publications of the DFG symposia of the 1970s begin to much more systematically thematize their own form and »Spielregeln« – noticeably distancing themselves both from the form of the protocol and the claim to re-enact the in-person event. See especially the introductions to: Albrecht Schöne (ed.), Stadt–Schule–Universität–Buchwesen und die deutsche Literatur im 17. Jahrhundert: Vorlagen und Diskussionen eines Barock-Symposions der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft 1974 in Wolfenbüttel, München 1976 (›Spielregeln‹, p. XXI) and Richard Brinkmann (ed.), Romantik in Deutschland: Ein interdiszipläres Symposion, Stuttgart 1978.

11 Anna Weichselbaum, Wort für Wort: Bedingungen der Analyse diplomatischer Wortprotokolle als historische Quellen, in: Das Protokoll, ed. by Peter Plener, Niels Werber and Burkhardt Wolf, Stuttgart 2023, pp. 31-45. In calling attention to a »verbatim ideology« that informs the memory of organizations and institutions, Weichselbaum follows findings from the fields of ethnography and linguistics, especially: Miyako Inoue, Word for Word: Verbatim as Political Technologies, in: Annual Review of Anthropology 47, 2018, pp. 217-232 [https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102116-041654] and Mary Buchholtz, The Politics of Transcription, in: Journal of Pragmatics 32, 2000, pp. 1439-1465. Inoue uses the word »entextualization« as a technical term, which is uncommon in English but corresponds to the German *Verschriftlichung*. (I will use the term in this sense in the discussions that follow.)

12 Cf. Kirk Wetters, Prehistory of the Edited Collection, in: Theory as Event, ed. by Matt Erlin and André Fischer, Evanston: Northwestern Univ. (forthcoming).

»results« (*Ergebnisse*). Even if not intentionally deceptive, the effect can be highly misleading. By usurping the intrinsic authority of the form of the protocol without strictly adhering to its most salient features, a fictive identity is created between the event of the congress or conference and the book that comes out of it.

This vacant space, a vast room for improvement, became occupied by ›Poetik and Hermeneutik‹, which not only took inspiration from the interdisciplinary content of other *Kongressberichte*,[13] but also from their form. Published in 1964 based on a June 1963 colloquium in Giessen, the strikingly well-designed but text-heavy cover evokes multiple aspects of the form of the protocol, thereby setting up frameworks of form and content for the potential reader.

The designation of the chapters as *Vorlagen* suggests that the included publications are unrevised conference papers, indeed the same ones that were pre-circulated to the participants. Whether this is in fact the case cannot be verified by the reader of the volume, but the illusion is furthered by the fact that post-conference emendations are marked with an asterisk (*). Making later additions visible in this way produces a form of cyclical and serial rereading that strongly resembles the procedural work of the protocol and gives the impression that the rest of the text – the parts without the * – is an unedited original document. Protocol theory, however, suggests that whatever is taken to be the official record is official only because it has been approved as such – and not because it is word for word, raw, unedited, or verbatim. Condensation and improvement of phrasing and formulation, for example, tend to be a requirement, often tacit, of entexualization (*Verschriftlichung*), which converts spoken language into a transcript or *Aufzeichnung*, upon which the final product is based.

The *Vorlagen* are organized into chapters, i. e. a recommended narrative, thematic or logical sequence. The *Verhandlungen*, on the other hand, refer to the discussions that are published at the end of the volume, which do not follow the sequence of the chapters but of the conference itself. The reader is thus invited to recreate the *Ab-* and *Verlauf* of the conference, starting with a review of the ›files‹ (*Akten*) and then by retracing the deliberations.

The only thing that is missing is the conclusion, the *Beschluss* or decision, which is left in the hands of the reader who engages with this demanding recursive process of intellectual labor. The book, the volume which contains the ›Arbeitsergebnisse einer Forschungsgruppe‹, is thus itself the performative final act, the closure, the result, the initiator of further actions and communications – and the beginning of a new series. Thus, similarly to the Adorno seminars but much more radically and intentionally, the documentary basis of the *Vorlagen*, the *Verlauf* of the *Verhandlungen*, the *Ergebnisse* and the *Beschluss*, are pushed to the point of total identity. This ambitious presentation is excessive in the demands that it places on the reader (who

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13 According to Hans Robert Jauß: »Vielleicht ist es kein Zufall, dass die Gründung und der Erfolg unserer Forschungsgruppe im Zeichen des gleichen interdisziplinären Prinzips stand, das auf dem Münsteraner Kongress so eindrucksvoll hervortrat.« Quoted from Julia Amslinger, Eine neue Form von Akademie: Poetik und Hermeneutik – die Anfänge, Paderborn 2017, p. 330.

is likely to ignore or misconstrue these complex paratextual frames). It is, I want to claim, a deliberate and motivated attempt to improve the existing procedures of humanities research and at the same time a literary experiment with the medium of the protocol.[14] This ›bureaucratization‹ of humanistic research may explain why readers did not always respond positively to the ›Poetik and Hermeneutik‹ volumes,[15] while others have idealized them as setting an unsurpassably high bar.[16] In ›Nachahmung und Illusion‹, the written text of the academic contribution (*Beitrag*) is staged as an official record embedded in a procedural framework which retains the ambience of oral communication and at the same time prefigures the thoughts and questions of future readers whose participation is thereby elicited. By imitating the form of the protocol, the volume includes its own reception, performatively producing and steering its own future.

The laborious editing that this conception requires is emphasized by Hans Robert Jauß, *Herausgeber* of the first volume of ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹. He describes his work as »einen ganz besonderen Spaß, den ich mir auch ein ganzes Freisemester kosten ließ, das kontingente Gespräch zu redigieren, Korrekturen, Ergänzungen und Repliken einzufordern und das Ganze mit Resümees der jeweiligen Vorsitzenden zu überbauen.«[17] A letter from Wolfgang Iser to Siegfried Kracauer on March 23, 1965 – now working on volume two – paints an even more drastic picture of the complete revision of the content of the raw ›protocols‹:

> Ich habe zwar noch keine Gelegenheit gefunden, mir Ihre Korrekturen anzusehen, so dass ich im Augenblick Ihnen noch nichts dazu schreiben kann. Ich werde dies jedoch bald nachholen. Sie werden in den nächsten Tagen die restlichen vier Protokolle zugeschickt erhalten, und ich darf Sie in diesem Zusammenhang bitten, recht weitgehend von der Möglichkeit Gebrauch zu machen, zusätzliche Stellungnahmen in die Protokolle einzufügen. Manche Diskussionen benötigen ein wenig ›Substanzzufuhr‹, und nach einer Rücksprache mit Herrn Jauß und Herrn Blumenberg sind wir zu der Überzeugung gekommen, dass die Teilnehmer noch entsprechende Erweiterungen in die Protokolle einfügen sollten. Ich wäre Ihnen daher dankbar, wenn Sie bei den noch ausstehenden Protokollen davon ausgiebig Gebrauch machen würden.[18]

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14 Cf. Amslinger (fn. 12), esp. pp. 11-12, 85, 155-57, 370. Amslinger traces the ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹ workflow during the first years of its existence. I am only focusing on the aspects that seem most theoretically relevant to the functionality or dysfunctionality of protocols of academic events.

15 Cf. Carlos Spoerhase, Rezeption und Resonanz: Zur Faszinationsgeschichte der Forschungsgruppe *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, in: Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur 35, 2010, no. 1, pp. 122-142 [DOI 10.1515/iasl.2010.008].

16 Anselm Haverkamp, Nothing Fails Like Success: Poetics and Hermeneutics – A Postwar Initiative by Hans Blumenberg, in: Modern Language Notes 130, 2015, no. 5 (December), pp. 1221-1241 [https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2015.0083].

17 Quoted from Amslinger (fn. 12), p. 147.

18 Quoted from Amslinger (fn. 12), p. 275.
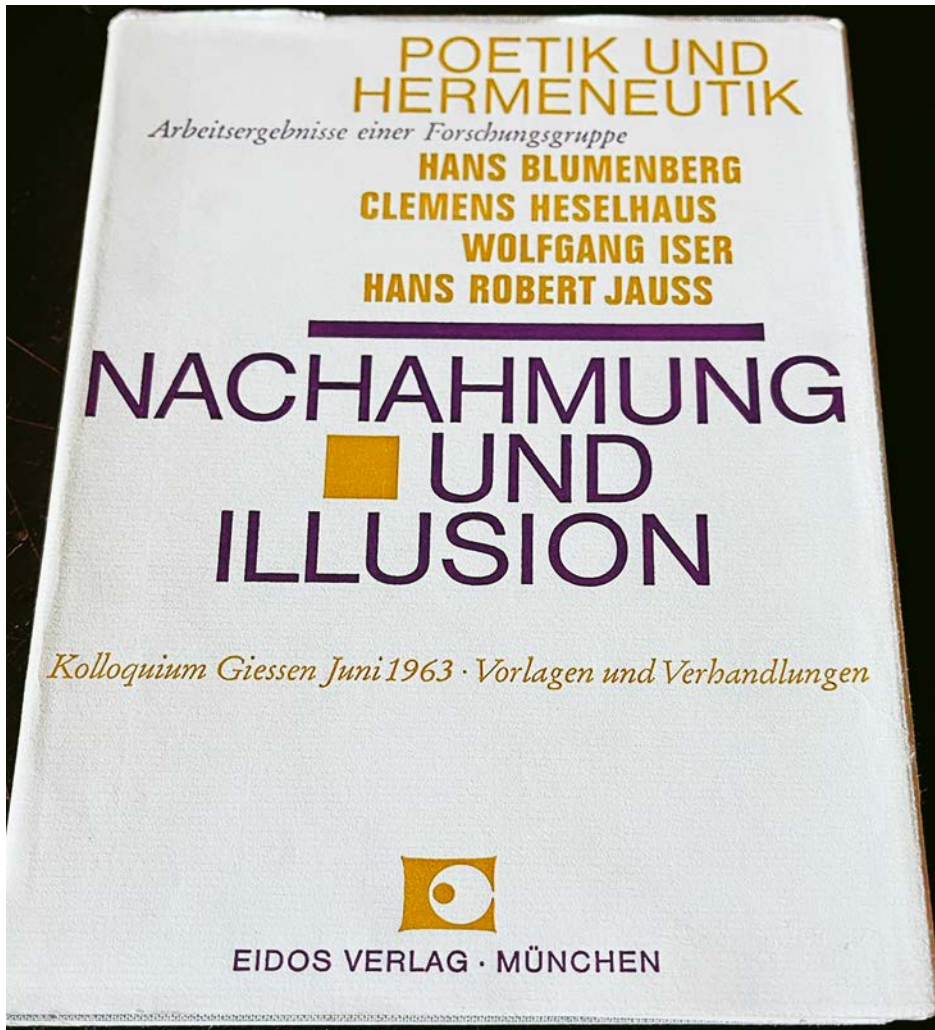
The term »Protokoll« in this passage (and in general in the context of ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹) refers to the transcripts that were circulated among the participants.[19] Only after 1966 were such »protocols« produced on the basis on of transcribed audio recordings.[20] Either way, what was said at the conference is only raw material. Thus Jauß writes (in a different letter) of the »Puzzle-Spiel der Redaktion.«[21]

Knowing how and that such an editorial process took place, functions as a *caveat lector* with respect to the representational limitations of any kind of protocol. Academic

19 This imprecise usage illustrates the divergence between the common usage and the bureaucratic-technical sense of the term (a difference which the ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹ editors were certainly aware of).
20 Quoted from Amslinger (fn. 12), p. 156-57. The audio tapes were not preserved.
21 Quoted from Amslinger (fn. 12), p. 283.

publications – including *Verhandlungen*, *Tagungs-* and *Kongressbände* – are only in a very narrow sense representations of what happened at the conference. They are not literal reenactments, *Re-Präsentationen*, but proxies, *Vertretungen*, *Repräsentationen*. As such, they represent an idealization of a relevant sequence of ideas, a reconstructed *Verlauf* in relation to a pre-given topic or *Thema*. The coherence of such a text depends on a time- and labor-intensive organizational, editorial and bureaucratic production process. This calls into question the ability of editors (in the sense of *Redaktion*) to produce a coherent and substantial text – despite the huge time investments, which Jauß, for example, emphasizes. One may also ask whether the compensatory coherence of such extensive post-production is always desirable. It may appear dubious insofar as tightly edited publications will misrepresent the event and at the same time overtax readers, who will never be able to match the Jaußian super-editor in internalizing the complex moving parts of a multi-layered and multi-authored text. The awareness of this situation turns the tables once again, however, by encouraging the reader or writer of academic texts not to see them simply as disaggregated and heterogeneous ›findings‹ but as a vast, overarching system whose apparent coherences and incoherences, blank spaces and capillary networks are where the mental labor of ›research‹ takes place.

In this sense one might say that ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹ presents itself, especially now, more than sixty years after its first publication, as a school of reading. The behind-the-scenes view made possible by the archival traces (published by Julia Amslinger) retrospectively highlights the difference between what was published and what was actually said, thereby directing attention to the production process, the ›cutting-room floor‹, and the unresolvable difference between in-person spoken interactions and the processes of entexualization that flow into and out of them. The most essential medium of scholarly work, which the protocol brings to the fore, is the minds and memories of the participants. These minds, which need to work in coordination, require *Vorlagen* and mnemonic tools, which produce a system of constraints. The ›minds‹ are never completely or individually responsible for the *Verlauf* or the *Ergebnisse*, but they do have some shared control of the processes of entexualization. The ›final products‹ (*Endergebnisse*) of an academic publication can thus never be detached from the complex interplay of mental and literal inscriptions and are always re-entering this larger para-textual system.

This conception implies neither a ›black box‹ nor a heroic ideal of authorship. It is instead the editor and the conference organizer who emerge as the most important figures. With respect to the problem of the black box, procedural and protocollary forms produce a *Schattenspiel*, a grey or shadowy box which contains both visible documentary traces and invisible undocumented, undocumentable substrates. Experiences of ›shadow boxing‹ in this sense are common to colloquia, seminars, Q&As, exams, defenses, etc. Participants in such events may feel that something is ›happening‹ (or not), but this ›something‹ by definition goes beyond what was said, beyond any official result or outcome, whose substantive existence relies entirely on mnemonics and reconstruction. Conscious and unconscious processing (as well as the official valida-

tions) always take place after the fact, even when the events themselves are forgotten. Thus the example of ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹ and everyday institutional experience both suggest that the archaic level of the ›happening‹ of academic events always latently subtends and complements the reality of the event as an event. In order to become a discrete object, a result, this shadowy material must be actively and selectively (re)produced and remembered through the lens of its official and unofficial records.

This corresponds to the finding of protocol theory that in-person oral communication is rarely if ever *druckreif*. It may appear that way in skillful oral presentations, but retrospectively it proves difficult or even impossible to distinguish ad lib formulations and pre-scripted formulae.[22] And spontaneous talk, which may seem to make sense at the time, often needs retroactive ›substantialization‹ (in Iser's sense). Such considerations highlight the fundamental asynchrony and *Nachträglichkeit* of the generation of ideas, which rarely if ever arise in the present – are never fully present in any form of presentation. It only occurs to one later what one should have said at the time. Such belatedly substantialized ideas (not the transcript of spoken words) are what seem the most elusive – the object of ›research‹ itself – and in need of recording, writing, passing on and handing down. At the same time, the imperfections and intensities of oral interaction are the occasion for more fully honed formulations and remain indispensable as relay-points in the processing of thought and writing.

4. Conclusions: Freud's Protocols

The fundamental challenges of the entextualization of academic discourse explains why its literal language, which is supposed to be clear and reliable and rational, has such a notoriously shady quality. The situation bears a strong resemblance to that of the psychoanalyst as described in Sigmund Freud's ›Ratschläge für den Arzt bei der psychoanalytischen Behandlung‹. Here it is a question of *how much* to write down and *when*. Freud's answer, in a nutshell, is: *much less* and *much later*. One certainly should not take extensive notes during the analysis itself; nor is it advisable to attempt to write down everything the patient is saying. The reasoning behind this advice is that, by concentrating on the act of writing (*Aufschreiben*), the analyst is distracting themself, is focusing on the wrong thing, and ultimately is blocking the filter of mere listening, thinking, remembering, interpreting.

Freud's depiction of the scene of in-person analysis also applies to educational and academic settings: »Man darf nicht vergessen, daß man ja zumeist Dinge zu hören bekommt, deren Bedeutung erst nachträglich erkannt wird.«[23] Regarding large-scale notetaking and session protocols, Freud asserts: »Man trifft notgedrungen eine schädliche Auswahl aus dem Stoffe, während man nachschreibt oder stenographiert,

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22 On the relation on written scripts and »fresh talk,« see Erving Goffman, The Lecture, in: Forms of Talk, Philadelphia 1983, pp. 160-196.
23 Sigmund Freud, Ratschläge für den Arzt bei der psychoanalytischen Behandlung, in: Gesammelte Werke, vol. 8, London 1945 (reprinted 1955), p. 377.

und man bindet ein Stück seiner eigenen Geistestätigkeit, das in der Deutung des Angehörten eine bessere Verwendung finden sollte.«[24] Freud continues, indicating that one may make some exceptions to this general rule (e. g., writing summaries from memory at the end of the day *is* recommended). But the overriding premise of delayed entextualization is held constant. Likewise in the academic context: Summaries written with the advantage of hindsight may prove more useful because they are able to interpretively synthesize multidimensional interactions about complex subjects. Such syntheses are in any case functionally completely different from a raw transcript or stenographic recording.

Freud further questions the usefulness of session protocols (in the sense of verbatim entextualizations). His experience is that »genaue Protokolle in einer analytischen Krankengeschichte weniger leisten, als man von ihnen erwarten sollte.« Freud writes here of *Scheinexaktheit*, and his next remark equally applies to protocols in the academic context: »Sie [Protokolle] sind in der Regel ermüdend für den Leser und bringen es doch nicht dazu, ihm die Anwesenheit bei der Analyse zu ersetzen.«[25] I take this as saying that protocols as mere transcripts are unable to replace the in-person experience;[26] they may function as memory aids for the people who were there in person, but as documentary representations or official records they would be too unselective (or falsely selective).

Freud also urges the analyst not to write too much down or publish findings while the case is still ongoing. He expresses concern that the goal of »wissenschaftliche Verwertung« will unduly influence and prematurely conclude the process of analysis. His advice on this topic is quite radical in its opposition to the traditional association of science with method (as in: ›scientific method‹). The analyst should proceed »wie absichtlos,« »unbefangen und voraussetzungslos.«[27] He again recommends delaying the synthetic work until after the analysis is completed. The unsystematic approach, he explains, is a result of the present state of knowledge of »die Psychologie des Unbewußten« and »die Struktur der Neurosen,« which is in its infancy.[28] This means

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24 Quoted from Freud (fn. 22), p. 379.

25 Ibid.

26 The awareness of such a limitation is clearly noted by Richard Brinkmann in his editorial ›Vorbemerkungen‹ to the second DFG-Symposium, ›Romantik in Deutschland‹ (fn. 9): »Der Erfahrene weiß, wie schwer sie [die Diskussionen] – so paradox das klingen mag – auch dann wiederzugeben sind, wenn sie Wort für Wort, These für These, Replik für Replik reproduziert werden. In eigentümlicher Weise ist aus dem konservierten Wort der gesprochenen, aufgenommenen, erwiderten Rede das Leben entwichen; nicht nur die Gegenwart der Personen, selbst wenn man sie kennt oder sogar Augen- und Ohrenzeuge, ja Teilnehmer der Debatte war, ist dahin und papieren geworden, vielmehr hat selbst der intellektuelle Gehalt häufig Dimensionen eingebüßt, die in der Aura der dialektisch-dialogischen Situation ihrer Träger durchaus gegenwärtig waren, und dies keineswegs nur als ›irrationale‹ Zutat« (pp. IX-X). Part of the innovation of *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, one might surmise, already by the late 1970s – before the publication of the ephemera – was a heightened awareness of what is possible and impossible in the academic space of ›Nachahmung und Illusion‹.

27 Quoted from Freud (fn. 22), p. 380.

28 Ibid.

that with respect to the science of the mind, at present psychoanalysis must be thought of as an open-ended discovery process and not simply as the application of a pre-established method. The emphasis is on receptivity over authority, or, more precisely, on the slow process of generating authority through receptivity.

Freud poses far-reaching questions of practical epistemology and the role of ›grey boxes‹ – memory and the unconscious – in relation to conscious processes of selection and retention through entextualization. He posits the fundamental unknowability, temporal extension, and un-reconstructability of the interactions and interferences of variously co-present epistemic filters. The idea is not that one should never write anything down or take notes, but rather that the decision about whether and when to write something down has unforeseeable consequences. Decisions about the process of entextualization – *Verschriftlichung*, *Aufschreiben*, *Aufzeichnen* – will lead to different protocols and different results.

5. Postscript: Today

Arguably we need to look to the past to find an intellectual nexus like those of Adorno's seminars or the protocols of ›Poetik und Hermeneutik‹. These are issues of scale and technology, of how unimaginably laborious it would be to systematically produce and publish protocols and transcripts of present-day academic events. Of course, the technological situation is in some sense easier, and there *are* records – for example zoom session recordings – to say nothing of online lectures, podcasts and similar content. But such sources are highly discontinuous (both in terms of form and content), not part of an integrated process and thus not in sustained dialogue with each other. Google and word-search functions may help in some regards, but they also amplify the tendency to disregard procedural and serial unities (the book, the journal, the discipline) and view everything on a single plane. The seminar, moreover, seems to represent a kind of lacuna, insofar as present-day academia preserves seminars as a space of privacy and face-to-face spontaneity. The seminar today is most often conceived as a ›safe‹ educational environment for the participating students, and its role as an incubator of academic innovation is correspondingly deemphasized. At the same time, the form of the seminar may be conservative and have a long institutional half-life precisely because seminars are mostly just remembered and retrospectively internalized rather than systematically recorded. Notetaking in present-day seminars is in any case a sporadic and individual practice, while *Mitschriften* are for numerous obvious reasons no longer a factor.

None of the older practices of transcription play a meaningful role in digital environments. The oft-noted unlikelihood that the present-day ephemera will be preserved for a specifically academic posterity suggests that academia today leads a much more protocol-free existence than at any point in the past. But perhaps this is only a half-truth – considering, for example, that MS Word files can preserve detailed editorial histories. The ephemera, one might say, are potentially still quite robust, but the lack of transcripts, records and protocols in specific contexts (such as the semi-

nar) might make a significant difference. Do such ›un-protocolled existences‹ reflect a major deficiency – something that might help us to better understand what we are doing, or to improve the accessibility of contemporary scholarship for future readers? Does the lack of a certain kind of written record in certain areas of present-day academia enhance our sense of privacy to the detriment of the idea that the ›ephemera‹ might have a public and collective future that is not exhausted in their own present? Might it indicate that in the past 50 years, without even realizing it, international academia lost crucial dimensions of its institutional memory and continuity with itself? For example insofar as the lack of protocols reduces overall robustness and redundancy of the transmission of knowledge, thereby exposing it to manifold contingencies at the level of publication processes, individual style and formulations; in the case of Adorno, multiple ›channels‹ were preserved – published work, lectures, seminars, as well as public-facing work and radio speeches. On the other hand (following Freud), one might imagine that the younger academic generations have an advantage by virtue of not being burdened by the historical overhang of arcane modes of entextualization? In either case, the temporal scale and complexity are massively increased in comparison to Freud's scenario of face-to-face analysis, which confronts historically aware scholarship with a kind of monstrousness which certainly cannot be completely resolved by digital and computational approaches – especially, for example, if the data is lost and we are forced to ›hallucinate‹ the epistemic situation of past historical moments.

For us, in short, these are questions of technical mediation, up to and including dictation software, digital and audiovisual sources, as well as generative AI. With respect to the history of protocollary media within academia (and perhaps elsewhere), these recent radical shifts underscore the importance of retaining proficiency with the older cultural techniques while maintaining an experimental attitude with respect to the manual, oral and social side of the work. This entails not only *tolerance* of uncertainty and unpredictability, but their *cultivation* as essential to a discovery process whose medial basis rests upon the interplay of human brains, spoken language and textual records.

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