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If only by the discontinuity or the elliptical character of its prose, this book revives the question of the relationship between philosophy and poetry. Is the constellation of ideas that it forms the product of a poetic vocation, or of a thought that seeks to liberate truth from its linguistic reification? This question, the question of the relationship between philosophy and poetry, between signification and *melos*, between a prose whose implicit philosophical determination regulates the effects of its signifying function and a poetry whose purely sonorous and rhythmic dimension seems to resist any translation—this question is also explicitly posed in the fragment or aphorism that carries the same title as the book: *Idea of Prose*. It is not a matter of keeping signification apart from poetic sound and rhythm. Indeed, the question of the relationship between philosophy and poetry becomes that of a language or a prose that no longer lets itself be governed by the difference inscribed in this relationship: “*Né poesia né prosa, ma il loro medio*” (*IdP*, p. 23). How are we to translate “*medio*,” the word with which the aphorism or fragment entitled *Idea of Prose* closes? If there is an idea of language or an idea of prose that leads beyond the opposition between signification and sonorous rhythm, between content and form, between the syntactical and the metrical, then these terms are all divided by what they share: “*il loro medio*.” On the one hand, the idea of prose does not merge with either (philosophical) prose or (poetic) sound; on the other hand, it is the divided place, the milieu where (poetic) sound and (philosophical) prose constitute

themselves in their specificity: prose and poetry expose themselves thus to one another, they never succeed in constituting a unity, a stable identity. To turn to the idea of prose (but this idea does not belong to a suprasensible world) is to understand that, if prose and poetry do not each form a unity, there is no unity that gathers them together. It is for this reason also that what thought must confront and what poetry leaves behind as a heritage is neither poetry nor prose: thought must confront or come to terms with a "poetic legacy" that consists precisely in the impossibility of attributing an absolutely distinct and recognizable identity to poetry: "This sublime hesitation between meaning and sound is the poetic inheritance with which thought must come to terms" (*IP*, p. 41). Could thought put itself into action as thought if it did not have to *confront* or *come to terms with* something—put differently: if it did not have to mark the tradition of a non-identity, of a hesitation without psychology?

The double negation—"neither poetry nor prose"—takes the form of a double injunction: thought has to orient itself towards an "idea of prose" (or towards an idea of poetry), but it can do so only by assuming a "poetic legacy." The "*medio*" which already divides philosophical prose and poetic sound at the very moment they affirm their instable identity (faithful to the Aristotelian allusion of the text, and orienting himself by the spatial reference that attributes an opposite movement to the cadence of poetry and the sequential character of prose, the American translator renders "*medio*" as "*middle term*") is certainly not a term placed in between the extremes, a third term adding itself to poetry and to philosophy—if such a term existed, the question of the relationship, of the relationship between the three terms, would pose itself anew; nor is this an amalgam made up of a philosophical element and a poetic element, a language half poetic and half philosophical—otherwise the elements of such a language would either allow themselves to be distinguished, and then the question of the relationship would come up again, or else they

would become indistinguishable, and then one would have to let oneself be guided by the radicality of the “neither . . . nor,” instead of being content with the compromise of the “half . . . half.” “*Medio*” has the double sense of the word used by the German translators of the book, “*Mitte*”: when Hegel, for example, notes that the Greeks lived in the “happy midst” (“*glückliche Mitte*”) formed by the moral substance (“*sittliche Substanz*”) and a free and self-conscious subjectivity, he refers to what takes place in the middle, what, not giving way to the extremes, remains surrounded by the milieu that characterizes such an intermediary state. The “*medio*” of poetry and prose designates perhaps this “midst/milieu” of the “between” without which there would not be a relationship between philosophical prose and poetry. But this “midst” is an originary “milieu,” not a milieu created by two extremes already constituted or already presupposed. The milieu on which poetry and philosophical prose depend, this “between” that exceeds what it simultaneously separates and brings together, is nothing but language, language itself in its sharing or in its division, neither poetry nor prose. The idea of prose is language as midst/milieu, it is this “communication of communicability” which, in Benjamin’s diction, describes the being-language of language: language, Benjamin says, is the medium of communication, “*das ‘Medium’ der Mitteilung.*” If there is language, if there is communication, then there is necessarily an idea of prose, a medium that can never be reduced to a philosophical or poetic particularity, a communicability that always communicates itself. Each time poetic singularity and philosophical generality point out—and, in this way, dissociate themselves from—each other, they are already effacing themselves.

Communication cannot be anything but the communication of communicability, because it is impossible to communicate what is not communicable, what does not belong to the order of language; but, as such, communication implies an exteriority that originally transforms it into communication of *something*: it is in this

way that language gives rise to poetic singularity and to philosophical generality, it is in this way that it lets differences be. To confront the “poetic legacy,” to think the idea of prose, means therefore—at least if one subscribes to the proposed interpretation—to attain communicability and language as midst/milieu. One will wonder, however, if it is in this case a question of touching the limit of a “sublime hesitation” (at this limit, the exteriority of communication disappears and continues to manifest itself), or if it is a case of achieving the passage into an integral actuality of language, into an actuality without hesitation, into an actuality that can no longer arise out of an opposition or a gap between potentiality and act, between possibility and reality, between essence and existence, between communicability and communication, between the “between” of the midst/milieu and the midst/milieu itself.