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## **Heuretics Modelling as Our Response to the Digital World**

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**Abstract:** We encounter picto-ideo-phonographic texts on the internet. We enjoy them and have become cybernauts. We are inventive and use grammatology and heuretics to surf through the worlds of the internet. This is why we propose a conscious adoption of the practice of heuretics as a mode of response to the Digital world. We elaborate on the CATTt model of Gregory Ulmer and also attempt a demonstration of the same to manifest that it is effective and can enable us to produce a responsible and emancipative response.

**Keywords:** Heuretics, Hermeneutics, cybernaut, CATTt, Hypertext, Trace, Traceology, Signifier, Signified

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Gregory L Ulmer has offered heuristics as the practice that suits the new electronic media. It is an alternative and not an opposition to hermeneutics and critique. It supplements these already established academic practices. Like them, heuristics is concerned with the text but strives to approach them with an inventive intent. In the context of this study, we shall first try to understand Heuristics as taught by Ulmer and then take it to understand how it has become part of our practice in the cyber world. Finally, we shall close with a demonstration of doing heuristics to manifest how it can model our creative, responsible and emancipative response to the worlds of the internet.

### **The Method in the anti-Method of Heuristics**

Heuristics has been characterised as the other of hermeneutics which is a science of interpretation. We can derive its links with eureka, heuristics and even heresy. Hermeneutics asks, what can we make of a text? Heuristics asks, what can be made from the text? Hermeneutics gained popular currency while Heuristics is still in the waiting queue. Here we shall try to understand what is heuristics and try to unearth how they can enable us to understand and respond to the cyber world. Heuristics strives to use texts generatively. It is inventive in nature. Gregory Ulmer, an American thinker has elaborated it in his books, *Teletheory* (Ulmer, 1989) and *Heuristics* (Ulmer, 1994). Textual production has become the goal of hermeneutics these days. In fact, hermeneutics has become a road that leads to heuristics. Any text is germinative and productive. Heuristics depends on the potency of the text. Ulmer proposes that we need heuristics to understand and respond to the texts of the new communicative media that are based on the web.

The invention in the classical oral and print culture is an art of recalling and determining what it is that one would think or say regarding a given subject (Vitanza 2012). Ulmer teaches that Grammatology of Derrida assists inventive writing (Ulmer, 1994). This belief enables him to move from linear discursive production of discourse to non-linear, hypertextual / multi-media production. The discovery or inventive writing is inventive in the process of writing. This means composition becomes discovery. It is serendipitous.

Maybe we can call it her-ethical to demonstrate the unacceptable connections of the word heretical and thus manifest how we can write heuretically. Thus, heuretics takes a leap out of oneness, binaries to threes-as-excess and transcends the either/ or binary structure of our habitual thinking.

It calls us to return to rhetoric/ poetics. But this return is an anti-methodology. It is not concerned with critique or what could be the meaning of the existing text (hermeneutical concern). This means Ulmer does not critique ludic discourses for not being political but calls for them to invent politics (Vitanza, 2012). Therefore, the principle of heuretics is not about saying what something is by saying what it is not. But by affirming heretofore unacceptable connections. This is why heuretics are heretical. Maybe we can call it her-ethical to demonstrate the unacceptable connections of the word heretical and thus manifest how we can write heuretically. Thus, heuretics take a leap out of oneness, binaries to threes-as-excess and transcend the either/ or binary structure of our habitual thinking.

The either/ or thinking puts all our thinking to two tests to qualify to become knowledge. The first test checks whether thought is universal and the second test checks whether it is teachable (Vitanza, 2012). Right from the time of Socrates and Plato, all knowledge had to submit to this Phallus. Hence, often such a piece of knowledge is thought to be masculine. Heuretics being heretic and being her-ethics does not Oediplalize to the phallus of either/ or thinking. It stays generative and productive by negating the principle of contradiction and thus it makes room for the return of the excluded third...fourth...fifth... This means hereutics as taught by Ulmer is unaccountable and as such is an anti-methodology. But in the very unaccountable position, we can find accountability. This is why we can trace a method in the anti-method of Ulmer's heuretics. Hence, we find an acronym CATTt to stand for his anti-method:

C = Contrast (opposition, inversion, differentiation)

A = Analogy (figuration, displacement)

T = Theory (repetition, literalization)

T = Target (application, purpose)

t = Tale (secondary elaboration, representability) (Vitanza, 2012).

Contrast counters the dominant discourses. This is the first step of the anti-method. It breaks the either/ or thinking and makes a way to move beyond one (monism), two ( dual dialectics) to three (trilectics) and beyond. This is further achieved by reading the discourse, not at the level of its arguments but the level of its particulars, such as its examples, analogies etc. This exercise displaces the argument. Once the argument is displaced, we replace it with an opposite argument that is also made coherent (secondary elaboration). This brings us to the step of poetising. It is the moment to say yes to the text twice. It leads to the affirmation of other connections that makes room for novelty/ third option to irrupt. This shows that Ulmer

invites us to concentrate on the tropes and not on the linear logical argumentation of the text. It is in the tropes of the text one can find ways of novel writing of the text that grammatology challenges us to do. It challenges us to say that which remains unsaid. It leads us to say the unsayable. This means it takes us away from the binaries to excess. This approach to writing is different from the protocols of normal academic writings that are linear and hierarchical (Ulmer, 1994).

Perhaps, heuretics and not hermeneutics will explain how we deal with the worlds generated by the internet. It is heuretics that go beyond linearity and logicity and takes us into the non-linear trans-logical world that might have the keys to explain why we enjoy hopping from one site to the other on the internet. Conventional either/ or thinking cannot explain this illogical and somewhat non-cognitive behaviour. This space cannot be colonised like Euclidian topographic culture. We need a new logic that is non-linear, non-Euclidian. This new logic has to be anti-tree but rhizomatic. The old binary logic that tied to either/ or thinking is simply replaced by associational networks. Therefore, it also simply replaces topos/space with Chora, the excluded one between being and becoming ( Platonic celestial and the terrestrial) (Vitanza, 2012). This replacement enables us to view the worlds of the internet/ cyberspace with the dynamic imagery of choreography. This choreography brings us to the grammatology of the internet and heuretics enables us to have an insight into what we do with the cyber world. The internet is a world of abundance and we explore its inexhaustibility until we ourselves are exhausted. This is why to respond to the dilemma, trilemma, quadrilemma of the internet we need to adopt Hereutics and find the third, fourth and fifth

option that remains hidden because of our habituated binary logic of the either/ or thinking.

### **Understanding the Cybernaut in Us**

The dynamics worlds of the internet are taking us into a gap between being and becoming. The gap that has always been between the signifier and signified is widened and rendered deep by the dance of the worlds of cyberspace. This barrier is growing today faster than ever before. But this gap enables productivity. It renders the signifiers of the digital world emptied of partial meaning and makes them ready for us to insert the meanings that we bring into them. The Asemiotic semiotics on the internet then are semiotized to suits the desires of those who mediate their life on its basis. There is no one meaning that animates the dance of a set of signifiers on the web. Each of us has become inventive and use hermeneutics that has become heuristics to write meanings with the alphabets/ signifiers that dance on the internet. As we surf the net, we are actually composing our stories/narratives. Strictly speaking, the internet has broken down our logic that is based on the principle of identity, contradiction and excluded middle. We know that we can have several identities on the web, the self can have larvae selves as taught by Deleuze and Guattari (Gaudlitz, 2011). Besides, the fact that we can insert meanings into the signifiers that are dished out to us in the worlds of the internet, we can experience that there is no strict identity between the signified and the signifier. Thus, the principle of identity is demolished by the internet. As a result, we have made room for the return of the third which becomes the return of the suppressed/ repressed, the unnamed, all that has been not thought by our canonical either/ or thinking.

Ulmer says that the logic of the internet and allied communicative technologies are governed by the principle of choreography (Tofts, 2012). He says that this logic does not

choose between the meanings of the term but compose by using all the meanings. This means the logic of the internet makes room for grammarology. This is a mode of saying yes to everything. It connects the dots (write) in unexpected ways that lead to novel paradigms of thought. It is heuritic and inventive and thought generative. We are hybridizing the texts of the internet. We have become cybernauts who are using grammarology to make sense of the texts of the internet. The GPS of the web has become the EPS (existential positioning system) for us. We are living a life mediated by the internet. Each of us is indeed a cybernaut in our own right.

We live our life mediated by the picto-ideo-phonographic writings of the web. It is exactly a return to what we do with spoken language while we write or speak. We use the phonetic alphabets (signifiers) and infuse meaning (signified) into them. This meaning is found in the collective language that we have within our society.<sup>1</sup> But we are inventive too. We also assign our own meanings to what we speak or say. We are composing and therefore, are grammarologists. Unfortunately, we are lost in the logocentrism of the language and have forgotten that our own role in the construction of the meaning while we speak or write. That is why we have to come to realize that we have been always heuritics and clever users of grammarology. Today with the widening of the gap between the signifier and the signified, our dexterity at heuritics becomes radical.

With the growing gap between the sign and the signifier, we are facing the death of the signifier and we are left with the trace of the play of signs in the web. This is why Ulmer puts together electricity and trace and holds that we have

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand Saussure's *Langue/parole* binary can explain us this.

come to electracy in a new world of electronic media (Ulmer, 2019). We begin and end with nothing but the play of traces. This play is digitized and electrified. Our life is mediated by these traces and we leave our traces on the various platforms of the internet to be used as raw material by the world of big data analytics. This is why traceology cannot be overlooked. It has become the alphabets of our life. We are into plastimatics of the trace. We adapt them to our conditions. When we panic like the Disney games, our legs become elongated when we are amazed our necks grow longer. The cyber-world is shaping our life.

Traceology is mediating our life. This akin to drawing. It shows the power of a line. We are drawing/ writing our lives using the resourceful traces that we find on the internet. We are plasticizingly transforming the texture of our life as cybernauts. This has an impact on our political life. There is a trace in democracy. We are simply left with traces of democracy in an age of electracy. When life becomes a plasticized dance of plastitracy, we are left with nothing but its traces. We do figure out our ways of assembling these traces into stories that animate our own stories of life. This can be amplified by inventive heuristics. We have this gift and are already at work. We have to become conscious of the same to be able to resist mind manipulations and the theft of our freedoms that are employed for both commerce and politics these days.

Conscious we must be because we love experimenting, looking for novel experiences. This desire to experiment to experience the novel on the web is haunted. It is haunted by its dissatisfaction/ failure as well by the danger of those that might use it as baits to trap and manipulate us to ride the flow of worlds of electracy towards their purposes and goals. There is a threat to our freedom as much there is an expansion of the space for freedom on the net. As cybernauts, we have to take



responsibility for our flight and surfing in cyberspace and choose emancipating freedoms that set us as well as others free. In the days of orality, humanity was parroting what it gets outside itself. It was hey time of mimesis. This made us largely a herd. In the days of literacy, humanity became individualized and found its own voice. In our times of electracy, humanity is dividualized (Smith, 2012). and disperses and disseminating its traces everywhere on the internet. It time that the cybernaut in us stands up and takes note.

### Heuretizing ‘The Nation Wants to Know’

Applying heuretics to the new media is a challenge. Here I take up this challenge and try to do what may be called applied grammatology. The work of Ulmer is our lighthouse in this task of heuretics. Maybe we can take the notorious prime time debate on television by a famous editor anchor who often shouts at the top of his voice: ‘Nation wants to know’ (World, n.d.). as our case to perform heuretics. Using the heuretics, the anti-method of Ulmer which is portrayed to us by the acronym CATTt, we may begin our applied grammatology. The effort here is to let the same text produce altogether different meaning, the meaning remains hidden or unaccounted. Here we have taken the statement, ‘nation wants to know only for pedagogical reasons and there is no intention to bring any discredit, defame and pain to anyone. We are only activating the heuristic generator of the statement, ‘nation wants to know’ in all its senses. To take us to our goals we use the anti-method of Ulmer given to us by the acronym CATTt.

#### Contrast

The nation already knows. The nation wants to know frames the debate. It marks what is acceptable and what is

illegitimate. It draws the boundary between a nationalist and a traitor. Therefore, in the very first step, we break the frame when we say: the nation already knows. It does not mean that there is nothing to be known. The new frame is a punctum.<sup>2</sup> It punctures the structure of the old frame. It knows that one who claims that 'nation wants to know' also known to the nation. This means the new frame marks space and time. Its spacing and timing actually turn the table on the one who asks the nation to want to know. The nation knows who knows whom. Thus, we have not taken a linear, vertical and hierarchical approach. We have taken a horizontal approach and just juxtaposed a contrast with the existing frame. We are not analysing any arguments. We are just taking a trope and replacing it with a contrasting trope.

### Analogy

Here we choose to go by phonology. The sound now also resonates and sounds like no. The semantics are different. There is sonic congruence between the word know and the word no. The statement nation wants to know, sounds like a big no. By inserting the big no in the nation wants to know, we get nation do not want to know. Therefore, the question is what does the nation does not want to know? Or rather who wants the nation not to know? What has to be kept out of the knowledge of the nation? What is the secret that the nation does not know? What will happen if the nation knows that secret?

### Theory

The word know also means to sleep with, to have sexual intercourse (Merriam-Wester Dictionary). Hence, the nation

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<sup>2</sup> Punctum is not a point. It is a duration. In this contest, Punctum is duration that breaks apart the frame. It becomes a tenacious resistance. It cause doubling. It shatters the frame but it is still the frame. See Burchill, L. (2015).

already knows who is sleeping with whom. Who is a prostitute. The nation recognizes, identifies the prostitutes who thinks that nobody knows. The body of the nation knows. The nation knows that God knows that it knows who is wounding its body.

### Target

Our target concerns with the demonstration of the fact that when anything is framed as 'nation wants to know', it becomes a divisive operation. It becomes a wall that breaks our nation. The statement 'nation wants to know' hides something that it wants the nation not to know. Hence, our aim is to manifest that which is hidden. That which is kept out of the horizon by the logocentric principles of identity, contradiction and excluded middle that frame our either/ or thinking.

### Secondary Elaboration

We have shown that statement, 'nation wants to know' also includes the one who is using the statement to mark those that are loyal and those that are traitors. This means 'the nation wants to know' whether the one who wants to know knows the powers that be and he/she is, therefore, a prostitute. This means nothing can be kept secret to the nation that wants to know. The one who hides by the statement 'the nation wants to know' is also included in this thirst of the nation to know.

We have tried to use the heuritic anti-method of Ulmer to the notorious statement: 'nation wants to know'. We have not used critical hermeneutics but have tried to engage inventive heuristics to open the horizon of the statement: 'the nation wants to know'. We have successfully transcended the logocentrism of the principles of identity, contradiction and excluded middle and brought into our view, the hidden, the repressed meaning which simply

says that one who is using the statement ‘nation wants to know’ is also included in the frame of the statement. This is why one who is using the statement to mark those that are loyal and traitors to the nation is also marked by the same statement. The statement becomes the judge of its users. Often we have come under the discourse of ‘the nation wants to know’. Somehow it had triggered our love for our nation and produced hatred of its enemies. Indeed, it fired our neurons together. It is said that neurons that fire together wire together. This is perhaps why we like what is called the godi media in our country. We enjoy others when they are marked as traitors and by the logic of either/ or thinking, we count ourselves as loyal nationalists. But our heuristic grammarology has demonstrated that we are blinded. The breakdown of either/ or thinking has shown that we can be counted among the traitors of our nation. I have tried to do this experiment to open what remains closed by the statement that we have tried to heuritize. This is why I think we have to recognize that we use heuristics as we engage with cyberspace. Once we recognize it and we shall begin to see its value it has to widen our often narrow horizons. It has been rightly observed that with the growth of the internet humans have become narrow-minded across the globe. Hence, conscious cultivation of the heuristics will enable us to offer a responsible and emancipative response to the worlds of the internet.

## Conclusion

We have attempted an applied grammarology to understand and respond to the new electronic media that blooms and flowers on our internet. Applied grammarology has introduced us to heuristics, an inventive science that takes us beyond the structure of either/ or thinking. It enables us to understand how we have productively engaged it in our dealings with the worlds of the internet. This is why we have concluded with a

demonstration that we can use it to develop a creative, responsible and emancipative responses to the cyber world.

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