

at same sweeping gesture bypasses the move through sensation, the virtual envelopment of the virtual.

Digital technologies have a connection to the potential and the virtual *through the analog*. Take word processing. All of the possible combinations of letters and words are enveloped in the zeros and ones of ASCII code. You could say that entire language systems are numerically enveloped in it. But what is processed inside the computer is code, not words. The words *appear* on screen, in being read. Reading is the qualitative transformation of alphabetical figures into figures of speech and thought. This is an analog process. Outside its appearance, the digital is electronic nothingness, pure systemic possibility. Its appearance from electronic limbo is one with its analog transformation. Now take digital sound: a misnomer. The sound is as analog as ever, at least on the playback end, and usually at the recording end as well (the exception being digitally synthesized music). It is only the coding of the sound that is digital. The digital is sandwiched between an analog disappearance inside at the recording and an analog appearance out of code at the listening end.

Take hypertext. All possible links in the system are programmatically rearranged in its architecture. This has led some critics to characterize it as liberating but as downright totalitarian. While useful to draw attention to the politics of the possible, calling hypertext totalitarian is inaccurate. What it fails to appreciate is that the coding is not the whole story: at the digital always circuits into the analog. The digital, a form of actuality, must be actualized. That is its quotient of openness. The freedom of hypertext is in the openness of its analog reception. The hypertext reader does something that the co-presence of alternative states code cannot ever do: serially experience effects, accumulate them in an programmed way, in a way that intensifies, creating resonances and preference patterns moving through the successive, linked appearances. For the hypertext surfer, the link just departed from overlaps with the next. They doppler together. They are not extensively arrayed, beside d outside each other, as alternatives. Neither are they enveloped in each other as coded possibilities. They are co-present in a very different mode. The analog process of reading translates ASCII code into figures of speech enveloping figures of thought, taken in its restrictive sense of conscious reflection. There is no thought that is not accompanied by a physical sensation of effort or agitation (if only a knitting of the brows, a

pursing of the lips, or a quickening of heartbeat).<sup>12</sup> This sensation, which may be muscular (proprioceptive), tactile, or visceral is backgrounded. This doesn't mean it disappears into the background. It means that it appears as the background against which the conscious thought stands out: its felt environment. The accompanying sensation encompasses the thought that detaches itself from it. Reading, however cerebral it may be, does not entirely think out sensation. It is not purified of it. A knitting of the brows or pursing of the lips is a self-referential action. Its sensation is a turning in on itself of the body's activity, so that the action is not extended toward an object but knots at its point of emergence: rises and subsides into its own incipency, in the same movement. The acts of attention performed during reading are forms of incipient action. It was asserted in the last chapter that action and perception are reciprocals of each other. If as Bergson argued a perception is an incipient action, then reciprocally an action is an incipient perception. Enfolded in the muscular, tactile, and visceral sensations of attention are incipient perceptions. When we read, we do not see the individual letters and words. That is what learning to read is all about: learning to stop seeing the letters so you can see *through* them. Through the letters, we directly experience fleeting visionlike sensations, inklings of sound, faint brushes of movement. The turning in on itself of the body, its self-referential short-circuiting of outward-projected activity, gives free rein to these incipient perceptions. In the experience of reading, conscious thought, sensation, and all the modalities of perception fold into and out of each other. Attention most twisted.<sup>13</sup>

All of this equally pertains to inattention. Distraction, too, is accompanied by characteristic, self-referential actions: scratching, fidgeting, eyes rolling up or around in their sockets as if they were endeavoring to look back in at the brain. Every predominantly visual activity is an economy of attention and distraction, often with a pronounced tendency toward one or the other pole. Television assumes and fosters a certain inattention, as the viewing body is invited to zap channels or slip relays to other activities into the commercial slots and slow patches. Watching movies and reading books command considerably more attention, and thus tend toward the other direction. Hypertext surfing combines both modes. Link after link, we click ourselves into a lull. But suddenly something else clicks in, and our attention awakens, perhaps even with a raised eyebrow. Surfing sets up a rhythm of attention and distraction. This means that it can fold into its own process a wider range of envelopments