1. Is feeling a phrase? And if it is, to what sort or family of phrases does it belong? In §22 of The Differend we read: ‘The differend is the unstable state and instance of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase, but it also calls upon phrases which are in principle possible. This state is signalled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling. ‘One cannot find the words’, etc.’ And in §105: ‘The absence of a phrase (a silence, etc.) or the absence of a linkage (the beginning, the end, disorder, nothingness, etc.) are also phrases. What distinguishes these particular phrases from others? Equivocality, feeling, “wishes” (exclamation) etc.’ It is not clear whether the feeling is a non-phrase, a negative phrase or a particular sort of phrase. Nor is it clear whether the feeling results from an impossibility of phrasing an event or, on the contrary, it is the cause of this deficiency. Do we remain silent because we are greatly moved, or find ourselves moved because the words are lacking and we are obliged to remain silent? – The question is badly formulated. It presupposes a relation of causality. It might be thought that this category is, in this instance, inapplicable.

2. Feeling is a phrase. I call it the affect-phrase. It is distinct in that it is unarticulated. – We read in The Differend that a phrase presents a universe (§§18, 25, etc.). A phrase universe is in principle (i.e. transcendentally) polarised according to two axes: the poles of addressee and addressee on the axis of address, the poles of meaning and referent on the semantico-referential axis (which Aristotel describes apophatically). According to the latter axis, something (a meaning) is phrased about the subject of something (a referent). According to the former axis, that of the address, this something (the meaning) is phrased by or in the name of something (the addressee) towards something (the addressee). We can say, in order to be brief, that the former connotes the semantic axis, the latter the pragmatic. A phrase universe is in principle arranged according to this double polarisation. A phrase is articulated to the extent that it presents a universe.

3. It is necessary to say that this double polarisation is a transcendental condition of the articulation of a phrase, rather than an empirical fact. Many given phrases neglect to mark this or that instance or such and such a relation between instances. They presuppose them or imply them. Such omissions are not, in general, obstacles to linking. On the contrary, it is the foreseeability of linking (the rule of the genre) which makes them acceptable. The demand for an articulation that is as complete as possible characterises certain genres of discourse. The questions which actualise this demand are: What exactly are you talking about? How do you know what you have said; who told you? What exactly do you mean by . . . ? etc. One argues in response. In the cognitive genre, one seeks to establish not only what the referent, the addressee, the addressee and the meaning are, but also the reality of the first three, as well as the legitimacy of the linkages. Establishing these realities demands procedures which are specific to the cognitive genre and which link together groups of phrases bearing upon the meaning, upon the designating and upon the nomination.

4. In the ‘Preface’ to The Differend we read: ‘A damage [un dommage] results from an injury done to the rules of a genre of discourse, but which is repairable according to those rules. A wrong [un tort] results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse according to which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genres of discourse.’ And further on, in §7: ‘This is what a wrong would be: a damage accompanied by loss of the means to prove the damage’.

5. Many noteworthy characteristics follow from the fact that the affect-phrase is unarticulated. Here are three: (1) The affect-phrase appears not to allow itself to be linked or to according to the rules of any genre of discourse; on the contrary, it appears only to be suspend or interrupt linkages, whatever they are; (2) The affect-phrase makes the rules of the genres of discourse; it creates a damage; (3) This damage in its turn gives rise to a wrong, because the damage suffered by discourse can be settled within the rules, but argumentation is in all cases inappropriate to the affect-phrase, if it is true that it does not give rise to a genre and cannot be argued. Consequently the damage that the affect-phrase makes the genres of discourse suffer is transformed into a wrong suffered by the affect-phrase. – The articulated phrase and the affect-phrase can meet only in missing each other. From their differend, there results a wrong. If articulation and inarticulation are irreducible to one another, this wrong can be said to be radical.

6. A phrase can be more or less articulated, its polarisations more or less marked. But the affect-phrase does not admit of these gradations. Unarticulated would signify: this phrase does not present a phrase universe; it signals the meaning; this meaning is only of one kind, pleasure and/or pain (‘it’s alright, it’s not alright’ [‘ça va, ça ne va pas’]); this meaning is not related to any referent: the ‘it’s alright’ and the ‘it’s not alright’ are no more attributes of an object than are the beautiful or the ugly; ultimately, this meaning does not proceed from any addressee (1) and does not address itself to any addressee (you). The signal that the affect-phrase is, is tautological: aisthesis, Empfindung. The affect-phrase is at once an affective state (pleasure or pain) and the sign of this state; this is
what Kant said about aesthetic feeling. Equally Freud separated affects from representations of a thing or a word: they are testimonies, but testimonies that represent nothing to anyone.

7. One or more articulated phrases can take the affect-phrase as their reference. They can endow pleasure or pain with a referent: 'the spectacle of this misery was intolerable'; and place them upon the axis of destination: 'your friend's little comment was enough to get me down'. Thus the affect is attributed and addressed in the same way as a cognitive signification. It appears that this transcription is inevitable, if only because within the order of discourse the affect-phrase is inopportunely, unseemly, and even disquieting. Your joy, your suffering, will be shown, despite everything, to have been legitimate all along; they would only have been distressing because their 'logic' was misunderstood. It could almost be said that the affect-phrase demands to be articulated in this way, and even argued - as if the scandal that it causes for discourse was intolerable. Discourse does not appear to be able to support long an unarticulated and unargued remnant remaining outside of its grasp.

8. Would it not be simpler just not to deal with affect-phrases? This appears to be easy since they are silences, and silence implies consent. Let's simply shirk feeling to its mutation: 'You were too emotional, you didn't know what you were saying (or: you didn't know what to say); pull yourself together.' - We can neglect a particular feeling to the point of forgetting it. To this strategy of forgetting it is often objected that the feeling will come back. But how can we know that it is the same affect-phrase which returns, given that it cannot, unarticulated as it is, furnish any signs allowing it to be recognised? Could it be claimed that we can recognise a certain quality of melancholy or jubilation that we have experienced previously and elsewhere? This can be said, certainly, but it is not attestable. A question of 'private language', but also of time.

And why would a forgotten (repressed) feeling necessarily have to come back? Is it necessary to admit the hypothesis, hazy even in the eyes of Freud, of a repetition compulsion? Of an eternal return of the same?

9. The time of feeling is now. An actual feeling - joyful, nostalgic, a mixture of both - could come to be associated with the articulated phrase which refers to a joyful past. How are we to establish that the joyful present, for example, is the same as that which was experienced before? The feeling cannot be identified with itself by itself. It can only be experienced, as we say: it signals itself, it is tautologous in the moment that it occurs. In order to be recognised as identical to itself through time, it must be chronologically localised. Chronology is one of the nominal systems necessary for the recognition that establishes the reality of a referent. Dated, the feeling is fixed as a reference of cognitive phrases: 'Do you remember the emotion that we experienced, on that particular day, when we first found this shore?' We can recall this emotion. That is not to say that we experience it again. We can actually experience an emotion in evoking

a past emotion. We could say that a feeling appears and disappears as a whole in an instant; that it is ageless.

10. We read in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: 'Just as the act of sight appears to be perfect [perfect, finite, teleia] at any moment... this also appears to be the case with pleasure. It is, so to speak, entire [complete, holon t] and in no moment of its duration can one find a pleasure whose proper being [eidos] could be rendered more perfect [more final] by a prolongation of time' (X, 4, 1). And further on: 'It is the eidos of pleasure to be finished, perfect at any moment [. . .]. It comes under that which is entire [complete] and final [. . .]. In contrast to movement, which cannot be conceived outside of time, pleasure owes nothing to duration. Because what is in the now is, so to speak, entire [complete]' (X, 4, 4). An analogous observation drawn from the clinic: the hysterical attack (phobic phrasing, for example) is each time brand new. 'Brand new each time' means: at each time the jouissance, pleasure and pain, what it is and what it signals, is complete. It awaits nothing.

11. We have to be careful about the 'each' of 'each time'. It is not within the remit of that which belongs only to the now. The 'each' demands memory and counted time, thus articulation. Aristotle writes of the pleasure-phrase that it is 'in the now'. We ought to say that it is now. It is the same for the 'in as it is for the 'each'. If there is an inside of the now, there is also an outside, i.e. the before and the after, the hysteron and proteron of the *Physics*. I am not saying that there is not. There are clocks. But even the now framed by the no longer and the not yet of the temporising consciousness must not be confused with the now of pleasure: the former is relative, it is a differential measure; the latter is absolute, a 'one' without two. - Such is the difficulty: to think the affect-phrase not outside of time, but outside of diachrony. *Pathêmatia* do not know anything of the dia-

12. How can you say that the affect-phrase is a phrase, considering that it is not articulated and does not present a phrase universe? - The ancient grammarians, who reserved the 'articulated voice' (phóne énarthros) for humans, conceded to animals a 'mixed (or confused) voice' (phóne sunkékluménê). This employment has its source in the *Politics* of Aristotle: 'Alone amongst the animals, only man has discourse (logos). Without doubt, the voice (phóne) is the sign of pain and of pleasure; thus it belongs to the other animals' (1253 a 10). All animals, man included, have the aisthesis of pain and pleasure, and the phóne by which they signal this aisthesis to one another (sémétain én allélôi). The logos, reserved to human animals, which Aristotle also names dialektos, appears heterogeneous to the phóne: to it belongs the capacity to render manifest the useful and the harmful, and as a result of this the just and the unjust, and other similar things' (1253 a 15). It notably follows that a properly political community, where what is at stake is not only the signalling of pleasure and pain but also deliberating and deciding upon the useful and the just, requires this phóne énarthros, this articulated phrase, that is the logos.
13. There is, nevertheless, a communicability of pleasure and pain, of the pathématas, without the mediation of the logos, by the 'confused voice' alone. Animals 'signal their feelings to one another', says Aristotle. Certain ones, like birds, even divide the unarticulated voice into distinct sonorities, which make ‘a sort of dialectos’ (History of Animals, 5335 a 27–8; I follow here the argument of Jean-Louis Labarrière in ‘Imagination humaine et imagination animale chez Aristote’, Phronésis 29, 1, 1984). — We know what stakes will come to be attached, in Kant, to this sentimental communication. We can call it mute if we recall that the root μυον connotes the closed lips indicating that one remains silent or emitting a mute sound. From this root come μυποτος, μυτος, μυξη, mystery and the late Latin mutum which has given us the French word, mot. This mute communication is made up of non-discrete inspirations and expirations of air: growlings, pantings, sighs. It spreads over the face and it spreads through the whole body which thus 'signals' like a face. The presence of the face considered negatively (referred to by an actually articulated phrase) is that its lips are mute. Thus it will be necessary to extend the phônê as far as the gesture.

14. Yet, even with birds and dolphins a continuous transition between phônê and logos cannot be found. It is written at the beginning of De Interpretatione: ‘Even when inarticulate sounds (a grammatos feosphonê), such as the noises of the beasts, manifest something (δελουστα αυτος), none of them constitutes a name (ευνοα)’ (2, 16 a 27–9). The name belongs to the voice that is divided into elements devoid of entirely conventional signification. It is this arbitrary sign that Aristotle calls the symbol. In contrast to the phônê, it has lost all immediate affective value.

15. Leaving the theory of language, which is not our concern, we follow rather the destiny of phrases. What happens to the phônê, the unarticulated phrase, when the logos, the articulated phrase, is at work? It is banished from human language. Barbara Cassin shows that, from Aristotle to K. O. Apel, the logos excludes a priori (transcendently) all phrases and all genres of discourse which are not argumentative or, at least, arguable. The exclusion of the phônê, of the affect-phrase, is the threshold of this exclusion: the phônê is not only unarguable, it is unarticulated. — Classically the process of exclusion is that of the dilemma: if the phônê belongs to language, it is articulable; if it claims not to be articulable (‘my feeling is unsayable’), it at least argues this claim (just about what we are doing here), and thus places itself under the rule of the dialectos.

16. I will illustrate this procedure. Take the example of articulation that I have named the axis of destination. The affect-phrase is said to be non-destined. What would it be to respect its mutism with regard to its address? At the very least it would be to lend it one's ear. This is, notably, the Freudian rule of 'free-floating attention', sometimes spoken of as that of the 'third ear'. 'Why aren't you saying anything to me?' In asking why this mutism is addressed to the person questioning it, the question articulates the silence by presupposing that it is at least addressed to the present interlocutor, the questioner. We call this presupposition of address a request. The questioner asks: 'Why are you addressing your affect to me, without saying a word to me?' The questioner's request requires the mutism of the question to be addressed. Here the affect-phrase is transcribed into the pragmatic scheme. This, however, demands that phrases be articulated.

17. This transcription appears to be inevitable. It is called transference. The affect can present itself only by situating itself in the universe presented by an actual phrase. If it is not to remain the unattestable referent of a solely cognitive discourse, it must be actualised in the addressing [la mise en adresse] of what phrases itself now — But, it will be asked, how is it possible to know that this present, transferential, address is indeed that of the affect? Is it not imaginary? 'You claim to love me or hate me, but your feelings are addressed to someone else'. Following the direction thus indicated, one would attempt to go back as far as a reputedly initial phrase universe, where the affect is supposed to arise along with its genuine address. Hence Freud searched for the 'primal scene'. He will renounce this. It is not only that one never stops passing through screen-memories (of imaginary addresses and referents); it is rather that the presupposition itself is false: the affect-phrase is not originarily sent to somebody. The capacity to feel pleasure and pain, affectivity, aisthesis, is independent of its possible articulation. It does not await it (it is the logos which declares that it awaits it), it has no need of it in order to perfect itself (this is what Aristotle says). It is perhaps indifferent to articulation. This is why the latter wrongs it.

18. The phônê and the logos can only meet each other, and not link onto each other. This meeting gives rise to a differend. For the human animal at least this differend cannot be treated by litigation. Certainly, the human being is born, like all animals, well endowed with aisthesis and phônê. But in contrast to other animals, excepting the domestic kind, it is born right in the middle of thousands of discourses, into the world of articulated phrases, and in contrast to domestic animals, it is granted to him to phrase in an articulate manner, after a certain time. This time before the logos is called infantia. It is the time of a phônê that only signifies affections, pathèmatas, the pleasures and the pains of the moment, without relating them to an object taken as referent, nor to the couple addressor-addressee. Pleasure and pain are signalled with vocalisations (and I would add: with gestures — The Differend, §110) provoked by objects that are not objects of thought, under the regime of a 'narcissism' prior to all ego. This is what Freud has described under the two headings of polymorphous perversion and primary narcissism. — But this description (here mine, often that of Freud) remains anthropological. One would have to elaborate the transcendental status of infantia.

19. There is a body only as the referent of one or several cognitive phrases, attested to by the procedures for the establishment of reality. There are many sorts of body, according to the nature of the knowledge sought. Bodies, like existence, suppose the logos. Only the logical animal has a body. — The phônê does not have
a body since it is not referential. The pleasures and the pains experienced in the
adventure of the *infans* are only attributed to the excitement of this or that
corporal zone by the articulated discourse of adults, which takes the organism
as its reference. – It is necessary to elaborate the status of the world or of the incor-
poreal chaos associated with the affect, the status of the Thing. And since it is not
referential, the *phône* is not addressed, from which point one might conclude that
the concourse of voices, their sharing, does not make up a community properly
speaking (which requires addressees and addressees) but a sort of communicabil-
ity or transitivity of affects without expectation of a return. Freud might have
persisted in wanting to name this infantile affectivity *sexuality*, yet it is certain that
it is completely ignorant of the polarisation linked to sexual difference.

20. The infantile *phône* is innocent not because it has not committed an error
or been seduced, but because the question of what is just and unjust is unknown
to it given that this question demands the *logos*. This question is only posed with
phrases that can present referents, addressers and addressees – that is, every
instance necessary to the thought of distribution, equality, and the communi-
cability of proper names on the instances of destination, which permit debate
and argumentation. Childhood, like Adam, does not know that it is naked. And
inasmuch as the *logos* conceals the *phône* (covers or dresses it) rather than either
suppressing or even domesticating it, this shameless innocence can always arise
in the course of articulated phrases, in an impromptu manner. – But then one
would make it ashamed of its nakedness. The impudence of the affect would be
culpable. Innocence and culpability arrive together, under the name of anxiety.

Notes

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the Differend Itself’ during the colloquium ‘Rhetoric and Argumentation’, organised by
the European Centre for the Study of Argumentation. A first version of this text was
published in the same year in the imprint of the University of Brussels, in a collection
entitled *Rhetorical Figures and Conflicts*, edited by Michel Meyer and Alain Lempereur.
The title chosen here corresponds to the name which Lyotard most recently gave this
text.

1. Translator’s note (TN): we have used G. Van Den Abbeele’s translation for all
quotations from *The Differend*.


3. TN: for all quotations from Aristotle we have consulted the translations given in
the bilingual Loeb Classical Library. We have, however, modified the translations in
accordance with Lyotard’s French where appropriate.