



Once and for All? A Philological Project On (and Off) the Clock

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Once and for All? A Philological Project On (and Off) the Clock¹

You're only now finished? We wanted to have it done in 15 years, and would have managed it, too, if you'd only kept going the way we did.

Die göttliche Thesauruskomödie (1936): in a satirical scene, a *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* lexicographer from 1900 addresses a counterpart from the future [2000s].²

It was never supposed to take so long.

The most comprehensive dictionary of Latinity ever attempted was to have been completed – so the official plan – in two decades.³ The preparations, and even some

¹ Much of the archival work for this paper was conducted in Munich at the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, and I am indebted to the scholars there, especially Manfred Flieger and Adam Gitner. In addition, two anonymous reviewers with considerable expertise on the *Thesaurus* delivered patient, careful readings and many valuable suggestions that are incorporated throughout. The larger historiographic and conceptual framework for the paper emerged in dialogue with audiences and collaborators at a 2018 History of Science Society panel entitled 'Timing Knowledge' and a 2020 online workshop of the same name: my thinking evolved in collaboration with colleagues in those settings, especially Laetitia Lenel, Anna-Maria Meister, Richard Spiegel and Janina Wellmann. I have insisted on holding together here two interests – one more oriented to the history of the *Thesaurus*, one more to the history of science – and am of course responsible for any readerly infelicities that result. For notes on content and publication, I am grateful to Frederic Clark and Anthony Grafton.

² *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* Archive, Munich (hereafter, TLLA), Typescript: 'Die göttliche Thesauruskomödie', 17 July 1936, p. 7: 'Jetzt erst fertig? Wir wollten ihn in 15 Jahren fertighaben und hätten es auch geschafft, hätten Sie nur so weitergemacht wie wir.'

³ 'Plan zur Begründung eines Thesaurus linguae latinae ... (1893)', in *Wie die Blätter am Baum, so wechseln die Wörter. 100 Jahre Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, ed. D. Krömer (hereafter, *WBB*), Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1995, pp. 187–90 (190).

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of the results, depending on who was talking and when, were meant to last for all time. By the time the epigraph above was composed, and indeed far earlier, perhaps even before the project began, it was clear how fraught both notions – speed and durability – were. Time, at the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, a lexicon that aims to write the history of each word in the Latin language from a singularly complete collection of millions of example citations, has never been easy to reckon. Begun in the 1890s as an instance of the German-speaking world's philological might, the project's twenty-year timeline dissolved in the turbulence of what one *Thesaurus* historian, in an elegant resumé of the project's first hundred years, called simply 'a hard century'.⁴ Two decades have become nearly thirteen, and an international band of scholars remains to this day at work on the lexicon in Munich. They have roughly a quarter of the work still ahead of them, including words of vast scope – particles and negations for which tens of thousands of example citations will have to be sifted.⁵ In 2009 one of the Thesaurists occupied with such a word, the particle *nam* ('for'), glossed the challenge with a (darkly) humorous motto: 'I still have nightmares from when I was in *nam*.'⁶

External vicissitudes had their role in delivering *nam* to the twenty-first century. But much of the story to be told here plays out before the Great War gripped Europe, at which point, indeed, the *Thesaurus* had already abandoned its original timeline. That the danger of sprawl existed had not been lost on the project's organizers. The nineteenth-century philologist was a stranger neither to ambitious designs nor a propensity for protraction. When production on the *Thesaurus* began, the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, initiated in 1838 under the Brothers Grimm, had been underway for more than a half-century (it reached the end of the alphabet in 1960/1).⁷ The new edition of the *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (*RE*), shouldered by Georg Wissowa in 1890, was already behind its production pace and not itself immune to overly long articles (work would continue through the 1970s).⁸ The organizers of the *Thesaurus* were aware of such cases and professedly keen to avoid a similar lack of proportion.⁹ That sprawl ensued nevertheless, and practically from the outset, is all the more interesting. Indeed, I wish

⁴ D. Krömer, 'Ein schwieriges Jahrhundert', in *WBB*, pp. 13–28.

⁵ Work is underway on the letters 'N' and 'R'. On the size of words ahead, see M. Hillen, 'Finishing the *TLL* in the Digital Age: Opportunities, Challenges, Risks', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 137.2, 2007, pp. 491–5 (493).

⁶ Nigel Holmes, interview with author, Munich, July, 2009.

⁷ See W. Pfeifer, 'Das Deutsche Wörterbuch', in *Jacob Grimm. Zur 100. Wiederkehr seines Todestages*, ed. W. Fraenger and W. Steinitz, Berlin, 1963, pp. 190–213. A further task – the re-working of the letters 'A' through 'F' – would proceed well into the twenty-first century: see, e.g. M. Scheider, 'Die Neubearbeitung des "Deutschen Wörterbuchs" (DWB) von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, n.s., 11.3, 2001, pp. 600–607.

⁸ See, e.g. reviews of the *RE* by M. Hertz, *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, 14.24, 1894, cols 737–43 (741); 15.13, 1895, cols 400–405 (401–3); F. Harder, *Wochenschrift für klassische Philologie*, 13.2, 1896, cols 33–5 (33–4); 17.4, 1900, cols 89–92.

⁹ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (hereafter, BSB), Vollmeriana I, Diels, 19, Hermann Diels to Friedrich Vollmer, 1 January 1904, citing specifically the undesirable 'disproportion' of Wissowa, Grimm, and W. H. Roscher's *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, 6 vols, Leipzig, 1884–1937.

to take the protraction itself as a problem in the historicization of time, its multi-fold perception and its management – an evergreen theme that has drawn enough attention from scholars in recent years to spur talk of ‘time studies’ and a ‘temporal turn’.¹⁰

Others have surveyed the wealth of scholarly contributions to the study of temporality across multiple fields, and this article will not look to repeat their work.¹¹ Nor can it contribute much in some of the precincts where the ‘turn’ has been active: one thinks, for example, of the studies in the last half-decade alone that have specifically explored the implication of temporalities with various forms of political organization and control.¹² I aim rather to engage with a specific investigative thread that examines how questions of temporal manipulation and time-frames big and small – one is inclined to speak with Deborah R. Coen of temporal ‘scaling’ – affect the work of knowledge production: in the observatory, in the laboratory, in the field, and as it happens, in the study as well.¹³ My concern is with a very particular difficulty – that of establishing and inhabiting the right time-frame for a scientific or scholarly project, and how it becomes tied up with a multiplicity of temporal perspectives on the part of planners and producers. Historians of science are intimately familiar with the importance to their actors of *where* knowledge is made.¹⁴ The point here is to put the focus on the issue of *when* it is made: that is, how knowers locate themselves in

¹⁰ R. Hassan, ‘Globalization and the “Temporal Turn”’: Recent Trends and Issues in Time Studies’, *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies*, 25.2, 2010, pp. 83–102; A. C. T. Geppert and T. Kössler, ‘Zeit-Geschichte als Aufgabe’, in *Obsession der Gegenwart. Zeit im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. A. C. T. Geppert and T. Kössler, Göttingen, 2015, pp. 7–36; J. Burges and A. J. Elias, ‘Introduction: Time Studies Today’, in *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present*, ed. J. Burges and A. J. Elias, New York, 2016, pp. 1–32.

¹¹ See, e.g. ‘Time Studies: A Bibliographical Reading List’, in *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present*, ed. J. Burges and A. J. Elias, New York, 2016, pp. 345–54; Geppert and Kössler, ‘Zeit-Geschichte als Aufgabe’ (n. 10 above), pp. 19–31; D. Edelstein, S. Geroulanos and N. Wheatley, ‘Chronocenos: An Introduction to Power and Time’, in *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*, ed. D. Edelstein, S. Geroulanos and N. Wheatley, Chicago, 2020, pp. 1–49.

¹² See the essays in ‘Fascist Temporalities’, ed. F. Esposito, *Journal of Modern European History*, 13.1, 2015; P. J. Kosmin, *Time and its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, Cambridge, 2018; C. Clark, *Time and Power: Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich*, Princeton, 2019; *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*, ed. D. Edelstein, S. Geroulanos and N. Wheatley, Chicago, 2020.

¹³ So, e.g. S. Schaffer, ‘Astronomers Mark Time: Discipline and the Personal Equation’, *Science in Context*, 2.1, 1988, pp. 115–45; J. Canales, *A Tenth of a Second: A History*, Chicago, 2009; H. Landecker, ‘Living Differently in Time: Plasticity, Temporality and Cellular Biotechnologies’, in *Technologized Images, Technologized Bodies*, ed. J. Edwards, P. Harvey and P. Wade, New York, 2010; S. Roosth, ‘Life, Not Itself: Inanimacy and the Limits of Biology’, *Grey Room*, 57, 2014, pp. 56–81; *Science in the Archives: Pasts, Presents, Futures*, ed. L. Daston, Chicago, 2017; J. Radin, *Life on Ice: A History of New Uses for Cold Blood*, Chicago, 2017. On ‘scaling’ in a context bearing inter alia on temporality, see D. R. Coen, ‘Big is a Thing of the Past: Climate Change and Methodology in the History of Ideas’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 77.2, 2016, pp. 305–21 (311–14).

¹⁴ Classically S. Shapin, ‘The House of Experiment in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Isis*, 79.3, 1988, pp. 373–404.

or between a variety of available ‘times’, with implications for their practices and personae, and for the form – and duration – of what they produce.

This is an issue that can be examined in many ways: the temporal ‘pose’ adopted vis à vis the research object has, for instance, been a subject of productive meta-disciplinary reflection for anthropologists, historians and classicists.¹⁵ But in the case at issue, the operative friction is occasioned less by how philologists positioned themselves *as against* the ancient languages they studied and more by how they chose to dimension their own presents and futures. Time at the *Thesaurus* was so hard to master, I wish to suggest, not merely for the banal reason that there was a lot to do, but also because there sat at the lexicon’s core not one but multiple notions of what time was and how it should be handled and inhabited. This layering led to an array of conceptual tensions and countervailing ironies that should become clear in what follows. The treatment will take the form of a brief characterization of three distinct modes of temporal orientation on display in the history of the *Thesaurus*: in each case, I will gesture at certain instabilities internal to the mode in question. I will close with discussion of the difficulties of mediating among them – difficulties that, in fact, may pose a set of constitutive challenges relevant not just to the *Thesaurus*, but to scholarly work in general.¹⁶

Mode I: *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* (SSA) Time

For some feats the moment is too shabby a frame. The output of the great historian Theodor Mommsen was this sort of phenomenon – at least that is how a well-wisher put it on the fiftieth anniversary of the elder scholar’s doctorate. ‘History will immortalize your works, *fama* will tell [of them] even in old age, and for such fame even the most eloquent expression of a contemporary has no meaning’, he wrote – hoping a few admiring words would please ‘for a moment’ nevertheless.¹⁷ The overture, a salute from one philologist to another, presents in condensed form one version of the *ne plus ultra* of academic attainment: a body of work that sat outside

¹⁵ J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, New York, 2002; C. Fasolt, *The Limits of History*, Chicago, 2004; S. Butler, ‘Introduction: On the Origin of “Deep Classics”’, in *Deep Classics: Rethinking Classical Reception*, ed. S. Butler, London, 2016, pp. 1–19 (‘pose’ at pp. 14 and 18; see also Butler’s contribution, ‘Homer’s Deep’, pp. 21–48, esp. 43); The Postclassicism Collective, ‘Untimeliness’, in *Postclassicism*, Chicago, 2020, pp. 161–81. Discussion around the possibility of a vantage ‘commensurable’ to the Anthropocene deserves mention here as well; see D. Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’, *Critical Inquiry*, 35.2, 2009, pp. 197–222; Coen, ‘Big is a Thing of the Past’ (n. 13 above).

¹⁶ See the recent discussion of *inter-temporal* negotiation – playing on ecological models of interaction and competition – developed in Edelstein, Geroulanos and Wheatley, ‘Chronocenosis’ (n. 11 above).

¹⁷ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter, StBB-PK), NL Mommsen I: Bücheler, Franz Bücheler to Theodor Mommsen, 3 November 1893, fol. 57^{r-v} (57^r): ‘Ihre Arbeiten wird in der That die Geschichte verewigen, *fama loquetur anus*, u[nd] für solchen Ruhm hat auch die beredteste Ausführung eines Zeitgenossen keine Bedeutung; aber dem Menschen möge auch der bescheidene Zoll von dankbarer Verehrung, aus warmem Herzen gerne dargebracht, gefallen, u[nd] einen Moment wohl thun!’ On Mommsen, see especially the works of Stefan Rebenich, e.g. *Theodor Mommsen und Adolf Harnack: Wissenschaft und Politik im Berlin des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1997.

the eroding influence of time, a stature that outstripped the present. It was the target of a kind of scholarly aspiration founded on a particular idiom and a particular orientation, one less concerned with staid timelines than eternal sweep, which I will gather under the heading *sub specie aeternitatis* (SSA). What is meant here is not exclusively that which invokes immortality, but more generally that which resists chronological mensuration. One understands, for instance, exhaustiveness in this line: that which aspires never to be done again, never to be supplemented nor supplanted, thus closed *in perpetuum*, for all time. Likewise, that which resolves precisely to resist closure, belonging therefore to the gentle, *longue durée* extension towards the infinite and unforeseen.

Long before its realization, the *Thesaurus* carried an SSA strain. Like contemporary collectors of inscriptions and cartographers of the sky, to say nothing of those charged decades later with freezing blood samples for future study or devising and labelling nuclear waste containment sites, some nineteenth-century lexicographers were deeply invested in doing work that *lasted*.¹⁸ The primary mover of the *Thesaurus* project, the Swiss-born philologist Eduard Wölfflin (1831–1908), who was called to the chair of Latin at Munich in 1880, left little doubt on this point.¹⁹ A leitmotif of his early scholarship was the SSA contention that exhaustive assessments of lexical evidence could offer *permanent* solutions to certain philological questions. ‘How many useless debates would be spared thereby?’ he asked, touting the need for an exhaustive lexicon of Livy. ‘Debates which together take up more space than if one simply worked the issue out *once and for all* through complete collection of the lexical material.’²⁰ Elsewhere Wölfflin spoke of a ‘mathematical certainty’ in linguistic investigation that could put an end to ‘Sisyphus and Penelope’ efforts, that is, those in constant need of redoing, and of a type of operation in philological inquiry that would last ‘for all time’.²¹ Similar concerns with making certain products of human investigation permanent were voiced by contemporaries and are surely, as Lorraine Daston has argued, the flipside of a period insecurity about the speed with which scientific findings seemed to be outmoded and displaced.²² There is no doubt,

¹⁸ On inscriptions and celestial maps, see L. Daston, ‘The Immortal Archive: Nineteenth-Century Science Imagines the Future’, in *Science in the Archives* (n. 13 above), pp. 159–82; on freezing, Radin, *Life on Ice* (n. 13 above); on nuclear waste, Peter Galison, ‘The Future of Scenarios: State Science Fiction’, in *The Subject of Rosi Braidotti: Politics and Concepts*, ed. B. Blaagaard and I. van der Tuin, London, 2014, pp. 38–46.

¹⁹ See O. Hey, ‘Eduard Wölfflin’, *Biographisches Jahrbuch für die Altertumswissenschaft*, 34, 1911, 103–36.

²⁰ Eduard Wölfflin, *Livianische Kritik und livianischer Sprachgebrauch*, Berlin, 1864, [p. 4]: ‘Wie viele unnütze Debatten würden dadurch erspart? Debatten, die zusammen mehr Raum einnehmen, als wenn man gleich durch vollständige Sammlung des sprachlichen Materiales die Sache für ein- und allemal in’s Reine brächte.’ Emphasis mine.

²¹ Sisyphus: Eduard Wölfflin, *Antiochos von Syrakus und Coelius Antipater*, Winterthur, 1872, p. VI; ‘für alle Zeiten’: id., ‘Die Geminatio im Lateinischen’, *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philologischen und historischen Classe der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1882, I, pp. 422–91 (424).

²² Daston, ‘The Immortal Archive’ (n. 18 above). That the ‘findings’ in question encompass work in both the ‘natural sciences’ and ‘humanities’ is nicely highlighted by Wölfflin’s propensity to draw parallels between philological work and, inter alia, natural observation; see further, C. Flow, ‘Philological Observation’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 19.1, 2022, 187–216.

too, that they indexed a nationalist interest in delivering durable scholarly monuments: a Wölfflin proposal for a lexicographic project, for instance, sold it as a ‘work of the German nation for the benefit of all civilized nations (*Kulturvölker*) ... presumably accomplished forever.’²³

The SSA mode went hand-in-hand with the totalizing pitch of Wölfflin’s developing lexical ideas: the *once and for all* solution was a ‘complete’ solution, one that drew from all the available lexical evidence and thus would not be outmoded by the later need for further collection. There was, in short, a willingness to play on aspirations of exhaustiveness, an inclination with parallels, as Markus Krajewski has shown, in everything from the increasing integration of the nineteenth-century transportation network to historical collections: in the philological arena, particular attention has been paid to Mommsen’s own involvement with enterprises like the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (*CIL*), which projected a thoroughgoing collection of Latin inscriptions.²⁴ In practice, Wölfflin knew, comprehensiveness demanded collaboration. In 1883, looking to establish the viability of the *Thesaurus* project, he organized a journal, the *Archiv für lateinische Lexikographie*, around the concept of joint collection: over two hundred scholars were recruited to harvest, each from their own assigned portion of Latin literature, all examples of certain words and constructions (the search terms were to be established on a semesterly basis by Wölfflin).²⁵ The citations, recorded by each contributor on paper slips and mailed to Wölfflin’s Munich home, would be the foundation for test articles as proof-of-concept for an eventual *Thesaurus*. The new, unstintingly comprehensive measures were calibrated for durability: ‘Nowhere is the saying that “the half is more than the whole” less apt than here: The task is rather to bring together everything once, but *also once and for all*.’²⁶ The goal of his journal, Wölfflin wrote, was to deliver preparations that ‘would never be lost and could be of use to all later works’.²⁷ In effect, if Wölfflin could not lay claim to an immortal reputation by the 1890s, he had at least been looking for a way to produce eternal results.

The *Archiv*’s exhaustive orientation was a precursor to the much grander collections for the *Thesaurus* itself, which yielded an archive of paper slips over four-million strong by the turn of the century, designed to log every appearance of every Latin word through

²³ TLLA, Typescript copy: Antrag auf Unterstützung des Archivs ... , p. III: ‘Das Werk würde ein Werk der d[eu]tschen Nation sein zum Nutzen aller Kulturvölker ... voraussichtlich vollendet für immer.’

²⁴ M. Krajewski, *World Projects: Global Information before World War I*, transl. C. Marcum II, Minneapolis, 2014. For the *CIL*, see, e.g. S. Rebenich, ‘Berlin und die antike Epigraphik’, in *Öffentlichkeit—Monument—Text*, ed. W. Eck et al., Berlin, 2014, pp. 7–75; Daston, ‘The Immortal Archive’ (n. 18 above); T. Kahlert, ‘Unternehmungen großen Stils’. *Wissenschaftsorganisation, Objektivität und Historismus im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 2017, pp. 53–184.

²⁵ The plan of the *Archiv* is articulated in Eduard Wölfflin, ‘Vorwort’ and ‘Organisation der Arbeit’, *Archiv für lateinische Lexikographie* (= *ALL*) 1, 1884, pp. 1–15.

²⁶ TLLA, Eduard Wölfflin, MS draft of introduction to *ALL* 1, p. 8: ‘Nirgends passt der Spruch, daß die Hälfte mehr sei als das Ganze, weniger als hier; vielmehr besteht die Aufgabe darin, das Ganze einmal, aber *auch für ein und allemal* zusammenzutragen, und diese Arbeit in passender Weise zu organisieren.’ Emphasis mine.

²⁷ Wölfflin, ‘Vorwort’ (n. 25 above), p. 6: ‘Nicht darum handelt es sich, das Werk, welches viel grösser ist, als man gewöhnlich glaubt, gleich in Angriff zu nehmen, sondern etwas zu leisten, was nie verloren wäre und allen späteren Arbeiten von Nutzen sein könnte.’

the second century AD (most subsequent texts, through the sixth century, were only excerpted).²⁸ *SSA Time* took up a great deal of space (see Fig. 1). And it was unwieldy in other ways as well. Not the least of these was that it mapped very badly onto experience and observation. It was painfully clear that a single manual error, a single slip mislaid, could undermine any claims to a *once and for all* treatment.²⁹ And it was also clear that a dictionary-entry written from the vast material represented a contingent selection by an individual lexicographer at a given place and time.³⁰ In a perfect example of what Daston has called the ‘chastened’ outlook of *fin de siècle* knowledge production, the solution was to adapt the *SSA* claim: where Wölfflin had once spoken of fixed research conclusions that would endure in perpetuity, the later tack was to emphasize not the conclusions but the slip archive – the references – on which they were based.³¹ The published lexicon was a kind of snapshot ‘according to the present state of knowledge’; but the archive of lexical slips would be ‘for all time the centre for the study of the Latin language’.³² An American reviewer expressed a similar idea: insofar as the lexicon aimed simply to present the contents of the slip archive – and not authorial comment – it secured its longevity. ‘Scholarship becomes antiquated – fortunately. But references do not – even though they may tell a different story to a different generation – and the references are all here.’³³

The difficulty was that, sooner or later, the references did, in fact, become antiquated. ‘Since our slips age very fast, one must always stay current’, noted Wölfflin a decade after the inception of his journal, recounting his consultation of a citation archived ten years earlier for a word that up-to-date critical advice revealed to stand only in lesser manuscripts of a late Latin text. ‘I’ve encountered the same sort of thing already a dozen times.’³⁴ Even at the archival level, as a later *Thesaurus* editor wrote, *SSA* needed to be dynamic: ‘this [*Thesaurus* slip-]archive can also in the

²⁸ The figure was 4.5 million slips according to the report of the 1899 meeting of the *Thesaurus* Commission, TLLA.

²⁹ F. Vollmer, ‘Vom Thesaurus Linguae Latinae’, *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur und für Pädagogik*, 13, 1904, pp. 46–56 (50). A notorious example of such an oversight is posed by an instance of the word *aelurus*: see P. Flury, ‘Vom Tintenfaß zum Computer’, in *WBB*, pp. 29–56 (49–50); also J. Schrickx, ‘Housman und die Katze’, *Parerga: Lateinische Lexikographie*, 30 April 2018, <https://parerga.hypotheses.org/134> (accessed 10 August 2022).

³⁰ So the preface in *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, I, Leipzig, 1900, pp. [III]–IV (IV), where the resolution is to move the work over time closer to a perfect form ‘provided we seem at present to have attained in some measure [the form] conceivable for the knowledge and abilities of our own time’ (‘modo ad praesens pro huius saeculi sapientia ac viribus nostris conceptam [speciem] mediocriter videamur esse adsecuti’).

³¹ L. Daston, ‘When Science Went Modern’, *Hedgehog Review*, 18.3, 2016, pp. 18–32 (27); see also ead., ‘The Immortal Archive’ (n. 18 above).

³² TLLA, ‘Denkschrift über den Thesaurus linguae Latinae’, 29 November 1913, p. 2: ‘Während das erscheinende Werk selbstverständlich nur eine nach dem gegenwärtigen Stande des Wissens und den heute geltenden wissenschaftlichen Gesichtspunkten gestaltete Auswahl und komprimierte Darstellung geben kann, wird das Archiv für alle Zeit das Zentrum der lateinischen Sprachstudien sein.’

³³ K. F. Smith, review of *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, *American Journal of Philology*, 22.2, 1901, pp. 203–10 (208).

³⁴ TLLA, Wölfflin memorandum, ‘Die Form der Lexikonartikel’, 23 May 1896, pp. 24–5: ‘Da ferner unsere Zettel rasch veralten, muss man immer auf dem Laufenden bleiben. Als ich einen vor 10 Jahren geschriebenen Zettel zu accomitor in der Lex. Wisigoth. fand (ein ἄπαξ εἶρ.) welches in allen Lexicis fehlte, schlug ich die beste Ausgabe nach, wandte mich an Prof. Konr. Maurer, welcher mich weiter an

future easily be extended ... so that it comes ever closer to the ideal of a complete *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*'.³⁵ Like the *CIL* of Mommsen, who in time would argue that the way for the work to preserve its monumentality was for the Prussian government to support its continual elaboration and extension – 'a finished building, for which nothing further happens, rapidly goes to ruins' – the *Thesaurus* incorporated some of the perpetual work-in-progress into its identity.³⁶ The situation carried a note of irony: the *Thesaurus* was to remain immune from the times precisely by changing with them. Permanence lay in the capacity to permanently adapt.

Mode II: Planning Time

SSA Time played out against the horizon's infinitude. A second mode, which I will call simply Planning Time, was carefully bounded, measured at precisely the point where earth appeared to meet sky. It was the budget-maker's time, the domain of fixed phases and itemized deliverables. Where SSA shied from containment on a timeline and celebrated perpetuity, Planning Time had an opposite tendency. It was the finite orientation of the finisher, the type of timing invoked when the immortal Mommsen noted that 'finishing is also a component of proficiency' and spoke disapprovingly of projects that failed due to 'limitlessness'.³⁷ The coincidence in the person of Mommsen is crucial: the same figure who could evoke eternity and motivate projects like the *CIL* – 'unify[ing] all Latin inscriptions in a collection' – with the language of exhaustiveness, could and did also speak sharply about knowing when to say when.³⁸ Sometimes, in fact, in almost the same breath. Specifying the need for on-site inspection of inscriptions for the eventual *CIL*, Mommsen clarified that the researcher so deployed must:

Footnote 34 (continued)

Prof. Zeumer in Berlin verwies. Endlich stand fest, dass die besten Hdschr. nur comitor haben, erst jüngere des X. XI. Jahrh. accomitor. ... Dergleichen ist mir aber schon dutzendmal passiert.'

³⁵ E. Lommatzsch, 'Vom Thesaurus linguae Latinae', *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft Kunst und Technik*, 3, 1909, cols 211–18 (214): 'Dieses Archiv wird auch künftig leicht erweitert werden können ... so daß es sich immer mehr dem Ideal eines vollständigen Thesaurus linguae Latinae nähert'.

³⁶ *Theodor Mommsen und Friedrich Althoff. Briefwechsel 1882–1903*, ed. S. Rebenich and G. Franke, Munich, 2012, pp. 128–34 (134): 'Ein fertiges Gebäude, für das nichts weiter geschieht, wird rasch Ruine'.

³⁷ 'Das Fertigmachen ist auch ein Teil der Tüchtigkeit', cited in S. Rebenich, "'Mommsen ist er niemals näher getreten". Theodor Mommsen und Hermann Diels', in *Hermann Diels (1848–1922) et la science de l'antiquité*, ed. W. M Calder III and J. Mansfeld, Geneva, 1999, pp. 85–142 (118). Further, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter, GSA-PK) I. HA Rep. 76 V_C Sekt. 1 Tit. XI Teil VD Nr. 12 Bd. 1, Mommsen to Gustav von Gossler (Abschrift), 2 May 1887 (concerning preparations for the *Vocabularium Iurisprudentiae Romanae*, on which, see D. Simon, 'Zeithorizonte. Versuch über verschwendetes Leben', *Rechtsgeschichte*, 4, 2004, pp. 84–113): 'Sehr viel weiter gehende Wünsche haben wir abgelehnt, damit nicht auch dies Unternehmen wie so manches oft an der Grenzenlosigkeit scheitere'.

³⁸ See T. Mommsen, 'Über Plan und Ausführung eines Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum' (1847), in Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, II, Berlin, 1900, pp. 522–40 (523): 'Zweck des C. I. L. ist, die sämtlichen lateinischen Inschriften in eine Sammlung zu vereinigen ...'. Italics removed.



Fig. 1 ‘SSA Time took up a great deal of space.’ Archive of slip-boxes, each of which contains hundreds of example citations, at the Thesaurus linguae Latinae, Munich.

never forget, that he is collecting for the *CIL*. He who wishes to research a district so thoroughly that he himself visits every little place where there is even the prospect of old inscriptions, [so thoroughly] that he stays in every old place until he himself has seen all the stones that tend to be strewn for several miles in the vicinity, does good and useful work But for a *CIL* one cannot travel that way, for the simple reason even that then ten years would not be enough to travel through Italy; the *CIL* should not go out after inscriptions in places that are to this point epigraphically uncharted, and certainly not make travels aimed at discovery, but only collect, sift, check that which is already found and generally known.³⁹

The split temporal identification corresponded – and responded – to a concrete institutional configuration. The *CIL* was a leading example of a particular form of academy-organized work: the long-term, collaborative *Unternehmung* overseen by a select ‘commission’, and oriented to such time intensive ends as source collection

³⁹ Ibid., p. 527: ‘Aber auch da, wo eine epigraphische Reise wirklich Bedürfniss ist, darf der Reisende nie vergessen, dass er für das C. I. sammelt. Wer einen Distrikt so durchforschen will, dass er jedes Örtchen selbst besucht, wo nur irgend Aussicht auf alte Inschriften ist, dass er sich an jedem alten Orte so lange aufhält, bis er die in der Nachbarschaft gewöhnlich in einem Umkreis von mehreren Miglien zerstreuten Steine sämtlich selbst gesehen hat, der thut ein gutes und nützlich Werk, und möchten sich nur viele Reisende zu einer solchen aufopfernden Beschäftigung verstehen! Aber für ein C. I. L. kann nicht so gereist werden, schon darum nicht, weil dann zehn Jahre nicht ausreichen zur Bereisung Italiens; das C. I. soll nicht nach Inschriften an bisher epigraphisch unvertretenen Orten ausgehen, überhaupt keine Entdeckungsreisen machen, sondern nur das schon Gefundene und im Allgemeinen Bekannte sammeln, sichten, kontrollieren.’

and cataloguing (on the order of lexica, inscriptions, prosopography) and the publication of extensive textual corpora.⁴⁰ Gaining in profile over the course of the nineteenth century, the *Unternehmung* – of which the Berlin Academy had over twenty by century's end – was part of a recalibration of the academy's position and responsibility in the German scholarly landscape.⁴¹ The arrangement was given canonical articulation by Mommsen in 1874: there was work, in essence, that demanded too much time and effort for the individual, or even for a private association, which though collective was vulnerable to circumstance, failing to provide 'the necessary guarantee, one that extends beyond the life of individuals'.⁴² Here state and academy had their role to play. As he put it: 'The state must take upon itself all the scholarly tasks which exceed the energies of the individual and of the viable association – this goes especially for the everywhere fundamental work of collecting and sifting the scholarly apparatus But [the state] needs a mediator, and for this mediation the proper organ of the state is the academy.'⁴³ That Mommsen took the *Thesaurus*, begun two decades later, to be precisely this kind of task is clear in his assessment of an early proposal for the project.⁴⁴ Such a lexicon, he wrote, could be done 'only through state organized work' – it 'outstrip[ped] by far the work-capacity even of the most active individual and [could] not be linked to the whim of a single person's lifespan'.⁴⁵ In the end, the *Thesaurus* would be erected as a first of its kind inter-academy *Unternehmung*, supported principally by a half-million marks of state

⁴⁰ On the *akademische Unternehmung* and its development in the Berlin Academy, see P. Hoffmann, *Weibliche Arbeitswelten in der Wissenschaft. Frauen an der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin 1890–1945*, Bielefeld, 2011, pp. 55–73; Rebenich, *Theodor Mommsen und Adolf Harnack* (n. 17 above), pp. 55–94; further, id., 'Die Altertumswissenschaften und die Kirchenväterkommission an der Akademie. Theodor Mommsen und Adolf Harnack', and R. Hohlfeld, J. Kocka and P. T. Walter, 'Vorgeschichte, Struktur, wissenschaftliche und politische Bedeutung der Berliner Akademie im Kaiserreich', both in *Die Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin im Kaiserreich*, ed. J. Kocka et al., Berlin, 1999, pp. 199–233 and 400–463 (438–40). The 'classic' account is to be found throughout Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, I.2, Berlin, 1900: see, e.g. the overview of 'Unternehmungen und Arbeiten' at pp. 1020–43.

⁴¹ Count at Harnack, *Geschichte* (n. 40 above), I.2, p. 1021: there is play in the number depending on what parameters one uses to specify an *Unternehmung*. See further the appendices at Hoffmann, *Weibliche Arbeitswelten* (n. 40 above), pp. 395–8, and Rebenich, 'Die Altertumswissenschaften' (n. 40 above), pp. 224–33.

⁴² Cited in Harnack, *Geschichte* (n. 40 above), I.2, p. 1003: 'Auch aus anderen Gründen genügt die Association nicht: sie bietet nicht die erforderliche über das Leben der Individuen hinausreichende Garantie, nicht die Möglichkeit, bei eintretendem Verfall sich aus sich selbst zu regenerieren'.

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 'Alle die wissenschaftlichen Aufgaben, welche die Kräfte des einzelnen Mannes und der lebensfähigen Association übersteigen, vor allem die überall grundlegende Arbeit der Sammlung und Sichtung des wissenschaftlichen Apparates muss der Staat auf sich nehmen Dazu aber bedarf er eines Vermittlers, und das rechte Organ des Staates für diese Vermittelung ist die Akademie.' Emphasis in original.

⁴⁴ See Mommsen in 'Gutachten über das Unternehmen eines lateinischen Wörterbuchs (1891)', in *WBB*, pp. 139–44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140: 'Darüber kann keine Frage sein, dass dieses Werk nur durch staatlich organisierte Arbeit herbeigeführt werden kann. Es übersteigt weitaus die Arbeitskraft auch des thatkräftigsten Individuums und darf nicht an die zufällige Lebensdauer einer einzelnen Persönlichkeit geknüpft werden.'

funding pledged to the five participating academies – Berlin and Munich among them – over a period of two decades.⁴⁶

There is a way in which the very conceptualization of the *Unternehmung* was an expression of the fusion between SSA and Planning Time. Guaranteeing the academy and its associated projects was the state, figured as providing a kind of supra-temporal guarantee for long-term work and bolstered in turn by the SSA claims around the efforts. But the close interlacing of state, academy and *Unternehmung* also meant the incursion of the robust Planning apparatus according to which states order their affairs. Timelines, budgets and reporting procedures were part of the equation. The typical rhythm of an *Unternehmung* – this was certainly the case with the *Thesaurus* – included a yearly meeting of the academy representatives that constituted the steering commission, and a report (in the case of the Berlin Academy, for instance, this was published publicly) on the project's progress.⁴⁷ And there were officials inclined to look at the numbers: a fine example is the cool reception of the Prussian Finance Ministry to a petition from the Ministry of Culture for budgetary allocation for the *Thesaurus*.⁴⁸ There were doubts about the accuracy of the Ministry of Culture's estimate of what was needed. Beyond that, the Finance Ministry noted, the Ministry of Culture already had an allotment for support of such projects, and they would do better to support their priorities on that allowance, instead of asking for new draws on the state budget. Even an enterprise of purportedly eternal import, in short, did not mean a blank check.

An ability to think in multiple registers was therefore required. Like the medieval subject able to square the bounded corporeal form of the king's physical body with a simultaneous faith in its collective and timeless dimensions, a nineteenth-century projector like Mommsen could profess both SSA expansiveness and Planning limits, elevating both at once or now one, now the other, according to time, circumstance and inclination. In Wölfflin's case, it is possible to trace a kind of conversion in which an exuberant SSA rhetoric that he maintained into the 1880s largely gave way thereafter to a Planning idiom that tracked the pressures of accountability to academies, government, publisher and subscribers. '[W]e must above all break ourselves of the *ur*-German thoroughness and deal with what is possible', Wölfflin wrote to the *Thesaurus*'s first editor, Friedrich Vollmer, in 1899. If this made a second edition of the *Thesaurus* necessary, he wrote, so be it: 'We have to budget time

⁴⁶ An account of what it took to align the academies for this joint undertaking is at M. Gierl, *Geschichte und Organisation. Institutionalisierung als Kommunikationsprozess am Beispiel der Wissenschaftsakademien um 1900*, Göttingen, 2004, pp. 215–63. Financing and timeline at 'Plan zur Begründung' (n. 3 above), p. 190.

⁴⁷ For representative annual reports on the *Thesaurus* in the proceedings of the Berlin Academy, see *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (hereafter, SPAW) 1895, p. 48, SPAW 1896, pp. 63–4.

⁴⁸ See GSA-PK I. HA Rep. 76 V_c Sekt. 1 Tit. XI Teil VD Nr. 8 Bd. 1 for the correspondence of Minister of Culture Robert Bosse to Finance's Johannes Miquel, 20 August 1894, and from the Finance Ministry to Bosse of 14 October and 3 December 1894.

just like money, for our task is not to achieve an ideal *Thesaurus* but one for 500,000 marks in twenty years, of which six have already gone by.’⁴⁹ What mattered, in other words, was publishing soon, not perduring *in perpetuum*. Eternal designs had given way to practical plans. The horizon was bounded.

Or was it? In fact, Planning Time proved every bit as unwieldy as its SSA counterpart. In 1899, the task of actually compiling the *Thesaurus* was put in the hands of Vollmer and a new ‘bureau’ in Munich that consisted by January 1900 of a secretary and eight ‘assistants’ (*Mitarbeiter* in current *Thesaurus* parlance) – philologists paid to serve as lexicographers, turning paper evidence slips (see Fig. 2) into printed dictionary entries. The commission overseeing the *Thesaurus* had settled on a timeline that allowed fifteen further years for production; but from the very outset, speed was an issue. In a resumé of the first months of work, the editor Vollmer was already expressing concerns about pacing: he doubted, he said, that the staff was equal to delivering the planned quantity of manuscript each week.⁵⁰ By February of 1901, Wölfflin, now administering the project from a perch on the commission, noted that the *Thesaurus* could take twenty-five years instead of fifteen: he had heard from informants inside the bureau that best-case production targets were hovering at about sixty per cent of the desired rates.⁵¹ Vollmer delivered figures in the fall of 1902 that contoured the problem. The average monthly production of a *Thesaurus* assistant was a little over three pages; to finish in the specified time, the figure had to climb above six. Hitting a number like that, Vollmer wrote, was out of the question.⁵²

Bringing the reality of what was unfolding in Munich into better alignment with planned trajectories was no easy task. For one, it was difficult to determine precisely the size of the problem. Because reporting procedures were not fixed, numerical updates to the commission showed inconsistencies. Wölfflin noted with dismay that the severity of annual shortfalls was muddled because pages had been mistakenly counted twice (e.g. as ‘finished’ in one year and ‘printed’ in the next).⁵³ Even with crisp page quantities, there was no fail-safe formula for converting numbers into a projected finishing date, nor any way to eliminate doubts about representativeness: were time and space overages in letter ‘A’ a blip, or were they reliable indicators of general protraction?⁵⁴ Beyond that, there was disagreement about how time and

⁴⁹ BSB Vollmeriana I, Wölfflin, 8, Wölfflin to Vollmer, 10 June 1899: ‘Aber dann müssen wir uns vor Allem die urdeutsche Gründlichkeit abgewöhnen und mit dem Möglichen rechnen Wir müssen uns wie mit dem Gelde, so mit der Zeit eintheilen: denn wir haben nicht den Auftrag einen idealen Thesaurus zu schaffen, sondern einen zu 500000 M in 20 Jahren, von welchen 6 verstrichen sind.’

⁵⁰ TLLA, Geschäftsführung I, 146, Vollmer, Bericht, 30 March 1900: ‘Ob das Bureau jetzt schon die Krafterleistung von 2 Bogen die Woche erledigen kann, bezweifle ich; das Tempo fast aller Arbeiter ist noch nicht auf der Höhe’.

⁵¹ TLLA, Geschäftsführung I, 249, Wölfflin to Bücheler, 23 February 1901.

⁵² TLLA, Geschäftsführung II, 2c, Vollmer, Bericht, 6 October 1902.

⁵³ TLLA, Wölfflin memorandum, ‘Erweitertes Votum zum Redactionsberichte p. 1 October 1903’, 25 January 1904, pp. 4–5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3 calculates the time-deficit in three different ways to argue its undeniability; 9–10 discuss formulas for norming the size of the *Thesaurus* against a prior lexicon. See also Vollmer’s response, TLLA, Geschäftsführung II, 33, ‘Entgegnung auf das “erweiterte Votum zum Redactionsberichte p.1 October 1903” des Herrn G. R. v. Wölfflin’, 3 February 1904.

space were related (did writing shorter articles save time or demand more of it?).⁵⁵ Attempted remedies were risky and had side effects. Wölfflin himself had endorsed a monetary device – honoraria pegged to page or line production – as a way to encourage swifter work, or at least to minimize the *Thesaurus*'s financial exposure if things went slowly.⁵⁶ With the *Thesaurus* underway, he expressed concern that those very honoraria incentivized long-winded (hence lucrative) treatments.⁵⁷ Stern directives, meanwhile, risked alienating staff and thus exacerbating the *Thesaurus*'s problems. The bureau could be sensitive: in July of 1904, three *Thesaurus* assistants wrote to the commission to object to a characterization of the slowdown in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* that seemed to implicate them.⁵⁸

Wherever the blame lay, by the time the *Thesaurus* entered its fifth year of production one thing was clear: time was out of joint, and that was going to be expensive. In a memorandum to the commission in early 1904, Wölfflin sounded the alarm. At that point the work, by his calculations, was on pace to take as many as thirty-three years instead of the projected fifteen, a shortfall that would push the project's costs towards double its original budget. 'I'll leave here two empty lines', he wrote, after delivering the grim diagnosis, 'so that the readers may use the pause to get their breath back.'⁵⁹ He would be dead less than five years later, long before earth met sky on the work he championed. The hardest part of a hard century was still ahead.

Mode III: Quotidian Time

Eternal dreams and earthly budgets, *SSA* and Planning Time, are modes of macro-scale. But the *Thesaurus* was produced by individuals, working one day at a time. The final temporal mode I will sketch is theirs. It is time from the vantage of the *Thesaurus* bureau itself – plotted on the timeline provided by a single day or in terms of an imprint on a single career, a single lifespan. We find Quotidian Time in

⁵⁵ Wölfflin's suggestion was that more time (e.g. for the word *bellum*) made for a longer article: see his 'Erweitertes Votum' (n. 53 above), 15–16; the opposite assertion (i.e. more time is required to make an article shorter) is presented at Vollmer, 'Entgegnung' (n. 54 above), p. 2, and upheld, according to a reviewer, by actual praxis at the *Thesaurus*.

⁵⁶ Wölfflin, 'Zwei Gutachten über das Unternehmen eines lateinischen Wörterbuches (1892)', in *WBB*, pp. 145–56 (155–6).

⁵⁷ See *Thesaurus-Geschichten*, ed. D. Krömer and M. Flieger, Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996, p. 60 n. 1.

⁵⁸ TLLA, Geschäftsführung II, 59, Diehl, Münscher, Plenkens to the *Thesaurus* Commission, 3 July 1904.

⁵⁹ Wölfflin, 'Erweitertes Votum' (n. 53 above), p. 3: 'Ich lasse hier 2 Zeilen freien Raum, damit die Leser die Pause zum Athemschöpfen benützen mögen.' The examples of infelicitous, if painstaking, attempts to calculate progress and completion date could be multiplied; to quote an anonymous reviewer: 'Every new Generalredaktor has calculated progress as conscientiously as the Denkschrift [n. 32 above] did, and ultimately failed.'

the thirty-five hours weekly that turn-of-the-century directions prescribed to *The-saurus* assistants.⁶⁰ Likewise in Wölfflin's characterization of Vollmer's assumption of the editorship as 'in a certain sense "le grand oui" for a whole life' – a decision that stood to put the balance of his working years in service of the dictionary.⁶¹ Quotidian Time was not free of the opposed elements of SSA and Planning Time; on the contrary, it was an alembic where the sublime ambitions of the one and the bureaucratic tabulations of the other were transmuted into flesh and blood. The reaction was hardly straightforward. The practising philologist was faced with an SSA ideal that marginalized the clock by doing nothing mean enough for it to measure, and a Planning Time ideal that embraced it, building in time with its orderly stroke. What would be the reality of the Quotidian moment? Would the clock set the scholar, or the scholar dismiss the clock?

This question throws the Quotidian's conflicted nature into full relief. On the one hand, there was no shortage of scholarly vitriol for tightly controlled quotidian regimes. Opening his palaeography lectures in 1896, Wölfflin found time to scorn the quondam *Reglementerei* of the French gymnasia, where, he said, the minister had only to look at his watch to know exactly what was being read in every classroom. This was, in Wölfflin's estimation, a highly undesirable scenario: 'God save us from this kind of conditioning (*Dressur*) and maintain for universities the intellectual freedom without which every course of study collapses into nothing.'⁶² Calibration to the clock was once again an object of disdain in Wölfflin's response to demands that his son, the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, teach more weekly hours at the University of Basel. 'They pay laborers by the hour, too', he wrote, exasperated. 'This is a perverse idea, which should at least be resisted. One shouldn't handle a budding instructor like that; it's like demanding a child from a young woman every ten months'.⁶³

If time discipline could harm the scholarly enterprise inside the university, did it not pose threats to knowledge in an institution like the *Thesaurus*? Wölfflin conceded that it could. In times of doubt, he wrote to Vollmer, he liked to read *How I Made My Dictionary* by the French lexicographer Emil Littré, who had completed a historical lexicon of French in the 1870s.⁶⁴ Littré's account included description of a twenty-four hour *règlement* that he had followed for years: the particularly strict version adopted at his country residence included rising at eight, proofs from nine

⁶⁰ See 'Instruction für die Secretäre und Assistenten des Thesaurus linguae latinae', in *Thesaurus-Geschichten* (n. 57 above), [p. 222].

⁶¹ BSB Vollmeriana I, Wölfflin, 1, Wölfflin to Vollmer, 25 August 1898.

⁶² Universitätsbibliothek Basel NL 93, 49a, Wölfflin MS, 'Paläographie. Hermeneutik + Kritik. Sommer 1896': 'Diese Reglementerei hat früher auf den franz. Gymnasien gelastet, in dem Grade, daß ein Unterrichtsmeister einmal die Uhr aus der Tasche zog + selbstbefriedigt sagte: Montag, 2 Uhr. Jetzt wird in allen Collèges von ganz Frankreich Sallust Catil. Kap. 1 gelesen. Gott bewahre uns von dieser Dressur und erhalte den Hochschulen die geistige Freiheit, ohne welche jedes Studium in nichts zusammensinkt.'

⁶³ Universitätsbibliothek Basel NL 95, Nachtrag (1973) IX, 2a, 13, Wölfflin to M. Bernays, 8 May 1893: 'Für den Sommer ist Heinrich nur mit 5 Stunden wöchentlich belastet; für den Winter fochten die Basler die Zahl 6-8 an und verlangten 8-10. Man bezahlt ja die Arbeiter auch nach der Stunde. Das ist eine verkehrte Auffassung, gegen die man mindestens ankämpfen muss. Einen angehenden Docenten sollte man nicht so behandeln; es ist als ob man von einer jungen Frau alle 10 Monate ein Kind verlangt'.

⁶⁴ BSB Vollmeriana I, Wölfflin, 8, Wölfflin to Vollmer, 10 June 1898.

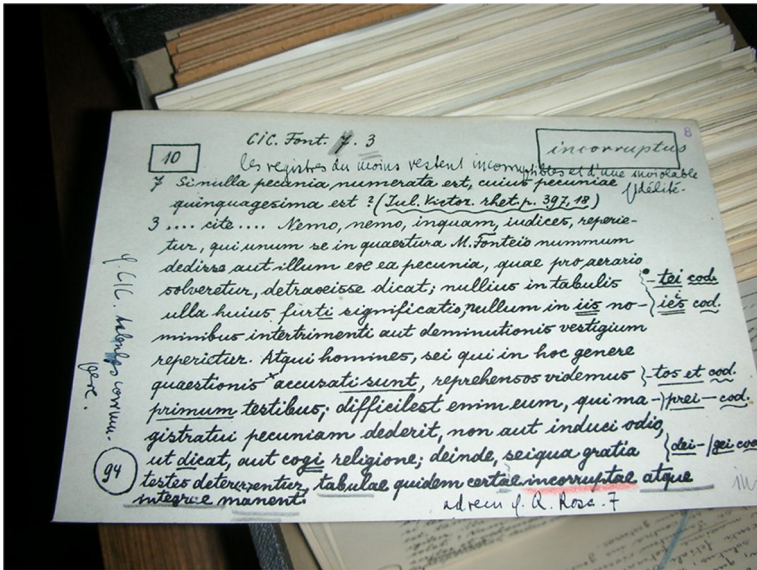


Fig. 2 Lexicographical evidence. Written on a slip, an example citation for *in corruptus* from the *Thesaurus* archive

to lunch, more dictionary from three to six and, finally, two post-dinner shifts beginning at seven and lasting until three in the morning – or longer, if he had not finished his daily pensum.⁶⁵ The work proceeded according to a regular work-unit – a fifteen-page instalment of the earlier *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* constituted the task of fifteen days. The disciplined scheduling, Littré said, allowed him to forecast exactly how long the project would take.⁶⁶ Littré was known, in short, to have made his dictionary ‘by the clock’ (*nach der Uhr*) – and this regime, according to Wölfflin, ‘we do not wish to imitate’.⁶⁷ Failure to meet timing benchmarks could, he allowed, be the cost of quality – of tolerating slower work, ‘because we do not want any day labourer or disorderly work’.⁶⁸

And yet not heeding the hour at all, even to promote scholarly results, promised to bring *SSA* too resolutely into a project that had, for better or worse, pledged itself to deadlines. Mommsen had encountered this in the Quotidian habits of Otto Gradenwitz, an early editor of a legal lexicon, who ‘exaggerate[d] the exactitude of the work and the proofing of one scholar by the other in such a way that the work

⁶⁵ E. Littré, *Comment j'ai fait mon dictionnaire de la langue française*, Paris, 1897, pp. 25–7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁷ TLLA, Wölfflin memorandum, ‘März 1904’, p. 10: ‘Littré hat sein grosses Wörterbuch bekanntlich nach der Uhr gemacht, was wir nicht nachahmen wollen’.

⁶⁸ Wölfflin, ‘Erweitertes Votum’ (n. 53 above), p. 6: ‘Welches aber auch immer die Summe sein mag: sie ist der Preis dafür, dass wir langsamer arbeiten lassen, weil wir keine Tagelöhner- oder Sudelarbeit wünschen’.

itself bec[a]me thereby infinite. All his excellent characteristics [were] nullified by the fact that this path has no end'.⁶⁹ Gradenwitz had too lofty an idea of a lexicon's aim: in such cases, so Mommsen, 'the goal of efficiency is often more hindered than advanced by the *Wissenschaftlichkeit* to which one is aspiring'.⁷⁰ Katharina Manteufel has shown how Adolf Harnack, in many ways Mommsen's successor as a master-organizer of monumental projects, issued time-management advice to mentees precisely meant to combat such excesses: *SSA*-tinged talk of 'the most thorough detail work' and 'the widest horizon' were 'translated' – leavened by Planning in the Quotidian frame – 'into realistic work habits of "making headway" and pragmatic compromises as to what was "good enough"'.⁷¹ And for all his reservations about the time discipline of the French, Wölfflin, an avowed fan of Littré's 'splendid little book', seemed in many *Thesaurus* matters not to shy from the clock at all. He was quite ready to tabulate time, in fact, to demonstrate his belief that the article *bellum*, to which a *Thesaurus* assistant had reportedly devoted five months, could have been completed in 160 fewer hours.⁷² He was a staunch proponent of tables tracking each assistant's annual production and demanded in 1904 compilations displaying the trend in each lexicographer's productivity over time.⁷³ Regarding the invigilation of daily work hours in the *Thesaurus* bureau, he took an uncompromising tone: it was crucial, and one should 'norm' (*normieren*) even the hours of the editor Vollmer, so that he would be there to supervise.⁷⁴ 'Whether we start 10 or 20 (25) minutes after the stroke [of the hour] means for us sums of tens of thousands of marks', he warned Vollmer, emphasizing the need for oversight.⁷⁵

Vollmer recoiled. 'To give in to a regimentation and strict surveillance, of the sort that [Wölfflin] seems to favour', he wrote, 'seems to me to offend in the most despicable fashion against the scholarly spirit of the whole institution'.⁷⁶ Were the work to

⁶⁹ *Theodor Mommsen und Friedrich Althoff*, ed. Rebenich and Franke (n. 36 above), p. 766: '[Gradenwitz] übertreibt die Genauigkeit der Arbeit und die gegenseitige Kontrolle der verschiedenen Arbeiter in einer solchen Weise, daß dadurch die Arbeit selbst grenzenlos wird. Alle seine vortrefflichen Eigenschaften werden dadurch annulliert, daß dieser Weg kein Ende hat'.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: 'Herr Gradenwitz steckt überhaupt das Ziel eines solchen Special-Wörterbuches viel zu hoch; wissenschaftlich kann ein Wörterbuch, beschränkt auf ein einzelnes technisches Werk, niemals genügen, und der Zweck der Arbeitsleistung wird durch die angestrebte Wissenschaftlichkeit häufig mehr gehindert als gefördert'.

⁷¹ K. Manteufel, 'A Three-Story House: Adolf von Harnack and Practices of Academic Mentoring around 1900', *History of Humanities*, 1.2, 2016, pp. 355–70 (360).

⁷² Wölfflin, 'März 1904' (n. 67 above), pp. 10–11. Wölfflin's estimate proceeded from the postulates that a *Thesaurus* assistant could process 25 lexical examples (slips) in an hour and that the subsequent write-up could be done in 160 (rather than 320) hours.

⁷³ Wölfflin, 'Erweitertes Votum' (n. 53 above), p. 23; further, pp. 5–6, and 'Marz 1904' (n. 67 above), pp. 3–4.

⁷⁴ Stadtarchiv und Stadthistorische Bibliothek, Bonn (hereafter, SSB), SN 43, 994, Wölfflin to Bücheler, 24 April 1899.

⁷⁵ BSB Vollmeriana I, Wölfflin, 4, Wölfflin to Vollmer, 8 May 1899: 'Es ist absolut nötig, die Arbeiten der Assistenten streng zu überwachen, + am Allermeisten im ersten Jahre Ob 10 oder 20 (25) Minuten nach Schlag angefangen wird, bedeutet für uns Summen von 10000 Mark'.

⁷⁶ SSB, SN 43, Vollmer to Bücheler, 10 May 1899: 'Einer reglementier[un]g und scharfer überwach[un]g, wie sie herr v. W[ölfflin] zu befürworten scheint, stattzugeben, scheint mir denn doch gegen den wissenschaftlichen geist der ganzen anstalt aufs schnödeste zu verstossen. Ja, wenn die arbeit nur in der zusammenschmeissung der specialindices zu einem index totius latininitatis quatenus coacta et

consist only in ‘throwing together’ a Latin index, he continued, gymnasium students could be marshalled to the task. As it was, a less blunt approach was in order. ‘Flatly to dictate to the editor every day his six hours of office-air and to want to monitor them if possible, I consider nonsense. That has to be left to him; without trust this position is impossible’.⁷⁷ Vollmer ‘rebel[led]’, he said, ‘with all [his] energy against the commercial and servile spirit’ threatening the enterprise. ‘It won’t work like that; if one kills the scholarly spirit of the thing, then one can expect only workmanlike results’.⁷⁸ At the Quotidian level, the difficult balance between SSA infinitude and Planning mensuration became a tug of war between scholarly freedom to dispose the hours as and when one wished, and the stultifying routine of accountability to a planned template.

What eventuated for the early *Thesaurus* assistant was a sort of hybrid that left room for free disposition amidst planning restrictions. The young Theodor Bögel, who arrived at the *Thesaurus* in November of 1901, at the beginning of the third year of production, recalled that of the thirty-five required weekly hours, thirty were done in a daily 8AM–1PM shift Monday through Saturday, but the remaining five were to be added on two afternoons, ‘the days and hours of which one was allowed to determine for oneself’.⁷⁹ ‘There was’, he wrote ‘no manner of mechanized check. The compliance with the work time regulated itself’. Deterrents to slowness included the honorarium pegged to production amounts and the sense of responsibility not to hold up the rest of the bureau.⁸⁰ Adopted from the university was the timing of vacation, taken during the breaks dividing the academic semesters.⁸¹ And there was also a further relic of university life, what Bogel called ‘a remnant of academic freedom’, which, however limited, allowed a ‘spontaneous abbreviation of the workday’, for example, for a group trip to a breakfast locale (the prelude to an evening of beers at a *Thesaurus* assistant’s home) or to view a dirigible airship.⁸²

That the margins of the Quotidian regime were indeed a point of negotiation is suggested by the theme’s recurrence in what remains to us of bureau humour. Bögel recalled a joke aimed at a colleague that ‘praised him as a man of punctuality

Footnote 76 (continued)

excerpta est bestände, dann könnte man überhaupt abwechselnd monatlich die Primen sämtlicher gymnasien dazu commandieren’.

⁷⁷ Ibid.: ‘Vollends dem redactor jeden tag seine 6 stunden bureauluft zu dictieren und womöglich kontrollieren zu wollen, halte ich für nonsens. Das muss man ihm überlassen; ohne vertrauen ist diese stell[un]denkbar’.

⁷⁸ Ibid.: ‘Sie sehen ..., dass ich mich nun mit allen kräften gegen den kaufmännischen und subalternen geist aufbäume, den man der sache einblasen will. So geht es nicht; tötet man den wissenschaftlichen geist der sache, dann hat man nur handwerksarbeit zu erwarten’.

⁷⁹ T. Bögel, ‘Beiträge zu einer Historia Thesauri linguae Latinae’, in *Thesaurus-Geschichten* (n. 57 above), p. 54: ‘Es war üblich, daß man täglich von 8 bis 1 Dienst tat und die fehlenden 5 Stunden an zwei Nachmittagen zufügte, deren Tage und Tagesstunden man selbst bestimmen durfte. Eine irgendwie mechanisierte Kontrolle fand nicht statt. Die Einhaltung der Arbeitszeit kontrollierte sich selbst’.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 65. See further, ‘Instruction’ (n. 60 above).

⁸² Bögel, ‘Beiträge’ (n. 79 above), pp. 64 (‘ein Gemisch aus Ferien, Feiertagen und einem Rest akademischer Freiheit’), 66–7 (‘in spontaner Arbeitskürzung im Anschluß an die übliche Arbeitspause. ...’).

who represented the standpoint that if one could not always come punctually [to the office], one must at least punctually leave'.⁸³ For representatives of such 'punctuality', a satirical *Thesaurus* publication from 1910 had just the thing: a send-up of an advertisement from the office furniture firm 'Punctual and Late' touted a desk chair pledging to show 'to the minute' how long it had been used. Firms plagued by unreliability could get a special model that increased accuracy by applying pins to the backside of the user.⁸⁴ Whether Wölfflin's 'tens of thousands of marks' in missed minutes could have been saved by such a device is doubtful, but clearly the utility of supervisory tracking was not lost on those familiar with the bureau. In 1905, with a change of leadership in the offing, the *Thesaurus* commission's Berlin representative wrote to Vollmer that he foresaw 'a heavy decrease in the production of the bureau if the responsible leader is not there from morning to evening'. 'In the first year', he wrote, 'when there was enthusiasm, much was different. Now, where the whole thing runs office style, it doesn't work without the personal spur of the leading elements'.⁸⁵ Flexibility was good for the intellectual *Arbeitsklima*. But sometimes a pin to the backside was just the thing.

Frictions: 'You Do Non'

The *Thesaurus* was conceived in SSA Time, implemented and budgeted using Planning Time. It was assembled, piece by piece, in Quotidian Time. But in the sketches above, I have already begun to suggest the way these different modes were contested. They competed, rotated through each other, engendered discomfort both practical and cognitive. Like pure oxygen, the SSA mode could suffocate a project. One vulnerable point, as Wölfflin suggested, was budgetary: how indeed does one delimit – *plan* – the expenditure on a project meant for all time? In an early proposal for the *CIL*, Mommsen had warned tellingly that he expected the project's results to last for centuries and that therefore 'frugality' (the *Sparsamkeitspunkt*), while not to be ignored, could not be prioritized.⁸⁶ Applied to the right ministerial ears, this sort of talk could serve to relax the purse strings. But in situations where 'frugality' was not negotiable, the scholar fixed in an SSA frame could count on conflict.

Still more difficulties emerged from an SSA inclination to inertia. Writing of the temporal protraction made possible by cold storage technologies, Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal have pointed to a resulting quandary for the here and now: namely

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 81: 'Da er [Heinrich Oertel] aus diesem Grunde den Dienst meist zeitig schloß, zog ihn [Karl] Prinz auf, indem er ihn als Mann der Pünktlichkeit lobte, der den Standpunkt habe, wenn man schon nicht immer pünktlich kommen könne, müsse man wenigstens pünktlich gehen'.

⁸⁴ TLLA, 'Für Bureaux', in 'B.Z. ex auctoritate et consilio academicorum ...' (1910), p. 40.

⁸⁵ TLLA, Binder entitled *Thesaurica*, H. Diels to Vollmer, 30 March 1905: 'Ich sehe wohl ein, dass es sehr schwierig ist die Leitungsfragen zu ordnen und ich darf Ihnen nicht verhehlen, dass ich eine schwere Verminderung der Leistungen des Bureaus darin erblicke, wenn der verantwortliche Leiter nicht von morgens bis abends anwesend ist. Im ersten Jahre, wo der Enthusiasmus wirkte, war vieles anders. Jetzt, wo diese ganze Sache bureaumäßig verläuft, geht es ohne persönliche Anspornung der leitenden Kräfte nicht ab'.

⁸⁶ Mommsen, 'Über Plan und Ausführung' (n. 38 above), p. 538.

a tendency for deferral – an ‘abdication of responsibility for action in the present’ with an eye towards ‘the promise of an ever-receding ... horizon of future salvation’.⁸⁷ The dynamic is not unfamiliar: hostile to the moment, the protracted SSA mode primes scholars precisely to reject a given time and circumstance (including their own) as an apt starting point, should it appear unfavourable to launching an extra-temporal project.⁸⁸ This picky concern with the ‘right time’ for a monumental work is attested in several ways in the history of the *Thesaurus*. It is there in Wölfflin’s measure of relief that efforts to launch a definitive Latin lexicon a generation earlier had not gained traction, because they were unripe and would have precluded his own – and in his compulsion to weigh whether his own plan was not similarly premature.⁸⁹ Similarly in the suggestion of a counterpart on the commission that, in fact, it was: the *Thesaurus* was ‘premature’ – a sort of *hysteron proteron* that would have been best pursued following the completion of a comparably complete Greek lexicon, for which, by the way, ‘the time [had] not yet come’, and would not come for more than a generation.⁹⁰ The headaches caused by such stances for a purveyor of Planning Time, looking to realize a printed *Thesaurus* that would deliver results on time, at present and on a budget, are obvious.

The antagonism went in more than one direction: Wölfflin’s ‘conversion’ from eternalist to hard-line planner evinces the acidic effect that the Planning mode could exercise on the ideals of SSA. And the Quotidian mode, as we noted above, was by its very nature a playground for inter-modal interference, of a sort that went well beyond mere rhetoric. Wölfflin complained bitterly, for instance, of an over-long *Thesaurus* article on *Augustus* that the author, the *Thesaurus* assistant Walter F. Otto, had reportedly meant as a Habilitation, a prerequisite for a university career. This represented ‘a mixing of interests’ – *Thesaurus* planning and university career desires – that, according to Wölfflin, ‘can only be harmful. Otto brings now his scholarly investigation to an end, and we pay fifteen months’ worth of salary for it and must deliver maybe 30 columns [for a single article]!’⁹¹ Otto’s Quotidian

⁸⁷ J. Radin and E. Kowal, ‘Introduction: The Politics of Low Temperature’, in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, ed. J. Radin and E. Kowal, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 3–25 (9).

⁸⁸ See, e.g. Mommsen’s warning that it would be better to postpone a *CIL* altogether than to start it with ‘half-means and half-confidence’, quoted in L. Daston, ‘Authenticity, Autopsia, and Theodor Mommsen’s *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*’, in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton*, ed. A. Blair and A.-S. Goeing, Leiden, 2016, pp. 955–73 (955).

⁸⁹ Wölfflin, ‘Vorwort’ (n. 25 above), pp. 2–3; ‘Zwei Gutachten’ (n. 56 above), pp. 153–4.

⁹⁰ H. Diels, *Elementum. Eine Vorarbeit zum griechischen und lateinischen Thesaurus*, Leipzig, 1899, pp. VII (‘verfrüht’), VIII (‘Hysteron Proteron’), IX (‘Ich habe stets darauf geantwortet, dass die Zeit zu solchem Werke noch nicht gekommen sei’), X (‘Man kann gewiss noch ein bis zwei Menschenalter angestrengtester Arbeit rechnen, bis auch nur für die klassische Literatur der Hellenen ein zu lexikalischer Bearbeitung geeignetes Substrat beschafft sein wird’).

⁹¹ StBB-PK, Sammlung Darmstaedter 2b 1875, Wölfflin, Wölfflin to Diels, undated [16 January 1904?]: ‘Ursprünglich sollte der Artikel *Augustus* die Habilitationsschrift für Otto werden: eine Verquickung der Interessen, welche nur schaden kann. Otto führte nun seine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung zu Ende + wir zahlen die 15 Monatsgehälter + müssen vielleicht 30 Columnen liefern!!’ In the end, Otto’s Habilitation would concern Juno; see W. F. Otto, ‘Juno. Beiträge zum Verständnis der ältesten und wichtigsten Tatsachen ihres Kultes’, *Philologus*, 64.2, 1905, pp. 161–223.

disposition was, in short, more in tune with the ‘limitlessness’ of a Gradenwitz than the Planning priorities of the lexicon, and the results showed on the page.

Such disparities could tell on the body as well: overexposure to the restrictive demands of Planning or to the boundless desires of SSA could spell very real Quotidian dangers of both the physical and emotional variety. The fragility of the body in the face of the unusual or unrelenting time regimen was a recurring point of concern. In 1935, the co-editor of volume E, Ida Kapp, wrote indignantly of overtime work that went ‘to the limits of physical and mental capacity’—a burden not relieved by slashed editorial bonuses; she would rather, Kapp wrote bitterly, lay down the editorial position entirely, which would have the benefit of allowing her to write only her own articles and ‘finally to introduce for myself again a regulated work time’.⁹² A version of this concern is still evident in Munich, where in 2009 a *Thesaurus* editor contemplating the 44,000 slips waiting for the lexicographer assigned to treat the negation *non* explained the challenges: ‘It’s not only the ability, philological ability, it’s the personal ability to work years on one word – and not on an interesting word *qua* usage or contents; it’s this particle *non*. So, you should be a very stable individual’. In short, the concrete instantiation of SSA designs on exhaustiveness – mounds of paper slips – could be difficult to reconcile with the quotidian confines of a single life: ‘You see what the problem is: if you say, “you do *non*”, you’d better ask, “are you willing to do that?” You take a decision about many, or some, years of a life of a person, and this is what we are worrying about’.⁹³ *Le grand oui* remains no small matter.

Conclusion: ‘Timing’ Knowledge

But the thing that differentiates scientists is purely an artistic ability to discern what is a good idea, what is a beautiful idea, *what is worth spending time on*, and most importantly what is a problem that is sufficiently interesting yet sufficiently difficult that it hasn’t yet been solved, *but the time for solving it has come now*.

(Savas Dimopoulos, Stanford University)⁹⁴

The history of scientific practice has made apparent the complex of skill and equipment necessary to render an object of investigation into a temporal frame susceptible to inquiry. Scholars have explored to great effect ‘temporal prostheses’ like the archive and the freezer – tools capable of delivering data, specimens, documents to

⁹² Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Ast. TLL, Nr. 15, Kapp to Johannes Stroux, 22 July 1935.

⁹³ Michael Hillen, interview with author, Munich, July, 2009.

⁹⁴ Delivered in documentary film: ‘Particle Fever’, directed by Mark Levinson, Sausalito, CA, Ro*Co Films, 2013, at 8:55. Transcription and emphasis mine.

observers in otherwise unreachable futures – along with the manipulative and material ballet that ensues around them.⁹⁵ Dimopolous's words above put the focus on a different type of ballet: that required of scientific practitioners as they seek to render *themselves* for inquiry. They make a primary criterion of success for particle physicists the ability to constitute themselves adroitly at the intersection of two temporal planes: the one tracking the concrete time-to-solution of the potential problem, the other the elevated timeline of scientific development on which a problem's 'timeliness' is situated. I have sought to anatomize here, on the basis of the rich *Thesaurus* case, an analogous problem for the philologist, of how to situate the self individually and institutionally between multiple temporal dimensions.

The picture that emerges is one of unevenness. Even in the age of 'the immortal archive', SSA was not always the ticket. One had to be able to rotate between registers: perpetuity to spice the swashbuckling designs of the ambitious early career scholar, to sweet-talk a senior scholar, to press the nationalist keys of the right minister; a more grounded attitude when husbanding government funding or under pressure in the bureau or advising a student how to finish a job. A balancing act, to be sure, and one not invulnerable to the 'constitutive contradictions and ambivalences' that work on the scholarly persona tends to turn up.⁹⁶ To a character in the world but not of the world, cooperative and yet competitive, a charismatic creative in a bureaucratic frame, we might add a creature both on and off the clock, working somehow at once – to speak with Weber – to become obsolete *and* to achieve the feeling: 'here I've contributed something that will last'.⁹⁷ Whether scholars aim to deliver bronze monuments to perpetuity or planned artefacts of our own age, whether we budget and write for today or tomorrow, whether the university is meant to transmit a putatively timeless canon or cater to the moment: these are questions, it strikes me, that have aged quite well.

Every bit as well as the paradox of the *Thesaurus*: an institution that, amid the Quotidian business of producing a lexicon, manages to maintain some degree of fluency in both the Planning and the SSA idiom. There is (as ever) a projected finishing date – 2050 – one that will demand hard, practical planning about pace and style of production. And *Thesaurus* practitioners are aware (as ever) that the research they produce in each article represents a contingent solution to a problem of endless complexity: give five Thesaurists the same word, they say, and five different articles, each with different, not fully synthesizable strengths, will emerge.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ The term 'temporal prostheses' is Radin's at, e.g. *Life on Ice* (n. 13 above), p. 4; for examples already cited, see Landecker, 'Living Differently in Time' (n. 13 above); Daston, *Science in the Archives* (n. 13 above); Radin and Kowal, *Cryopolitics* (n. 87 above).

⁹⁶ See particularly the works of Gadi Algazi, e.g. 'Exemplum and Wundertier: Three Concepts of the Scholarly Persona', *Low Countries Historical Review*, 131.4, 2016, pp. 8–32, with the quoted phrasing at p. 30; now further, e.g. *How to be a Historian: Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies, 1800–2000*, ed. H. Paul, Manchester, 2019. Influential for my framing has been W. Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University*, Chicago, 2006.

⁹⁷ Max Weber, 'Wissenschaft als Beruf', in *Wissenschaft als Beruf. Politik als Beruf*, ed. W. J. Mommsen and W. Schluchter, Max Weber Gesamtausgabe I.17, Tübingen, 1992, pp. 71–111 (85): 'jede wissenschaftliche "Erfüllung" bedeutet neue "Fragen" und will "überboten" werden und veralten', and (80): 'hier habe ich etwas geleistet, was dauern wird'.

⁹⁸ Flury, 'Vom Tintenfaß zum Computer' (n. 29 above), 36.

And yet, on the right occasions, the hard Planning reality is still allowed to ring with a note of mystique – or rather, *SSA*. The *Thesaurus*'s goal, in one recent journalistic portrayal? ‘We want to say about a word everything that one can say about it’.⁹⁹ On the product? ‘You only have to make it once and then you’ve got it’.¹⁰⁰ The statements, delivered in a public relations register by the *Thesaurus*' Executive Secretary, evince a constructive, a characteristic, an inter-modal ambiguity – one rooted in the work's very origins. Everything one *Mitarbeiter* can say ... *for now*, so the sober Planning chorus. Everything one *could say ever*, so the *SSA* echo: once made, that is, *and for all*.

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⁹⁹ C. Doyle, ‘Verzettelt’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 May 2017: “‘Wir wollen über ein Wort alles sagen, was man darüber sagen kann’.” <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/sprache-verzettelt-1.3518461>. Accessed 6 September 2022.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: “‘Man muss es ja nur einmal machen ... und dann hat man es’.”