

Really trying to mean



**ASSIGN
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It is no accident that the best writers tend to be amongst the most voracious and most thoughtful of readers. To be called into meaningful existence a text cannot stand by itself; that is, it cannot live outside of culture. When we say that a particular text means something, we are incorporating our own ideas as readers into what we think the author meant, ultimately producing another version of what the text really means. This is a significant delineation that brings forth the notion of reading, writing, and interpretation in the realm of discourse.

Worlds collide in the act of interiorizing alphabetic literacy. Truth and meaning become contingent upon the heterogeneity of thought that is necessary to determine how a text relates to the reality of the reader. In Ong's words, "The text has no meaning until someone reads it, and to make sense it must be interpreted, which is to say related to the reader's world." Following this lead we can say that we create meaning but we are not the original creator because the reading from which we base our conceptions has been in existence since before Socrates himself.

To build from this past, Jaspers locates the reality and the implications of historical thought when he writes, "It is impossible not to form an image of the historic Socrates. What is more, some image of Socrates is indispensable to our philosophical thinking." We have an indispensable point of reference to discourse in the image of Socrates in our reading of Socrates so that 'today no philosophical thought is possible unless Socrates is present, if only as a pale shadow.' "

The import of this type of reading, a reading with a historical point of reference to the current reality, is in the veins of Western thought going back to Socrates while at the making Socrates present in today's dialogue, if only as a pale shadow. Jaspers and Ong are alluding to the notion of a certain kind of synthesis, as Taylor will help to flesh out. Taylor questions what this all ultimately means to philosophy and to our lives, "What is the real significance of Socrates in the history of [Western] thought? [Simply put, he] created the intellectual and moral tradition by which [Western civilization] has ever since lived. The role of Socrates is, as Ong and Jaspers also believe, is a never ending presence in the paradigm of Western civilization. Socrates is therefore still very much alive in philosophy today. His image alone represents the ongoing debates taking place at conferences, in mid-terms, and in the public dialogue. The reality of his death defies the fact that he maintains a presence today. Speaking of letters and reading between the lines of history will allow us to create another reality than the one of alarm clocks, lunch breaks, and taxes - a debate that resonates all the way back to before Socrates drank the hemlock.