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Derrida's Conception of Logocentrism
and Counterview of 'Différance'

By
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A thesis submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies and Research of the
University of Ottawa in partial fulfillment
for the requirements of the Master's
degree in Philosophy



Kevin Sullivan, Ottawa, Canada, 1985.



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the thesis is to describe, clarify, and critically examine Jacques Derrida's conception of logocentrism and counterview of différance. For Derrida, logocentrism is the underlying theme or plot structure of Western metaphysics, while différance is that counter-process which creates and displaces the theme. It is a movement that can never be fully captured by philosophical systems.

I attempt to articulate Derrida's conception of logocentrism by looking at the idea of the transcendental signified, the method of deconstruction, and the notion of presence. The different modes of logocentrism both in philosophy and in ordinary and literary discourse are also outlined.

Next I examine the tactics of logocentrism in terms of its use of figurative or metaphorical language. The exchange between Ricoeur and Derrida on the issue of metaphor is discussed, along with its importance for philosophy in general.

I then attempt to place Derrida's thought in a historical context by introducing Nietzsche's, Heidegger's, and Levinas' view of the history of Western metaphysics. Nietzsche's idea of Platonism, Heidegger's idea of ontotheology, and Levinas' idea of totality are introduced and compared with Derrida's idea of logocentrism. Derrida's criticisms of each of these thinkers is then presented.

Following this I offer two critical perspectives on Derrida's conception of logocentrism; criticisms of his method of arriving at his view of logocentrism; and criticisms of the specific content of the view itself. The latter illustrates how Derrida's metahistory of philosophy is too simplistic, abstract, and essentialistic. Possible philosophical viewpoints that do not perhaps fit into Derrida's interpretive scheme, such as mysticism, voluntarism, nominalism, and contextualism, are briefly dealt with.

Lastly, I disclose Derrida's tacit conception of freedom which consists of a liberation from repressive theoretical structures and an affirmation of creative play, and demonstrate how it is central to his whole deconstruction project.

In sum, the basic point of the thesis is to show the philosophical relevance of Derrida's thought, and to open it up for rational discussion.

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Table of Contents

	Page
PREFACE.....	i
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter	
I The Meaning of Logocentrism	
I Conceptual Prerequisites to Understand Logocentrism.....	11
II The Concept of Logocentrism.....	26
III Logocentrism in Ordinary and Literary Discourse.....	51
II The Metaphorical Nature of Metaphysical Discourse	
I Metaphor and Metaphysics.....	57
II Ricoeur and Derrida on the Issue of Metaphor.....	65
III Three Antecedent Ideas to Derrida's Conception of Logocentrism	
I Nietzsche's Idea of Platonism.....	74
II Heidegger's Idea of Ontotheology.....	81
III Levinas' Idea of Totality.....	93
IV Two Critical Perspectives on Derrida's Conception of Logocentrism	
I Criticisms of the Method.....	108
II Criticisms of the Content.....	110

	Page
V The Counterview of 'Différance'	
I Saussure's Relational Theory of Meaning.....	135
II Différance and Derrida's Implicit Theory of Meaning.....	139
III Freeplay.....	145
A Speculative Conclusion: Derrida's Tacit Conception of Freedom	
APPENDIX.....	168
NOTES.....	183
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	208

i

PREFACE

To classify and analyze the thought of Jacques Derrida is a difficult task given that there are really two Derridas; one seen in the context of French philosophy, the other through the eyes of Anglo-Saxon literary theorists.

The "French" Derrida has a definite history. He was born in 1930 in Algeria of Sephardic Jewish parents. During World War II Derrida suffered from the anti-semitic laws emanating from the Vichy government in France, and at one point was expelled from school along with all other Jewish students. (His connection to the Hebraic tradition remains apparent through his interest in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas.) At the age of nineteen Derrida came to France and studied philosophy and literature at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. (This placed him a full generation apart from Sartre and company.) He now teaches the History of Philosophy at the same institution.

Derrida has written dozens of articles and books, the important ones having been translated into English. His work can be divided into three major periods, each with its own specific orientation.¹

From 1950 to 1962, Derrida was mainly concerned with understanding and criticizing the works of other thinkers. (He would not have become so well known if he continued only

this.) The tradition Derrida was investigating at this time was principally German, something obviously difficult for a post-war Jew. He was particularly preoccupied with the thought of Edmund Husserl and transcendental phenomenology. His Master's thesis, written in the early 1950's, dealt with the problem of genesis in the phenomenology of Husserl, while in 1957 he registered for, though did not complete, a doctoral dissertation entitled "The Ideality of the Literary Object". His first book, L'Origine de la géométrie (The Origins of Geometry) was published in 1962, and consisted of a translation of Husserl's Origin of Geometry, with a long, critical introduction.

The second period of Derrida's published writings cover the years between 1967 and 1972. During this time Derrida became a thinker in his own right and presented his ideas of logocentrism, différance, and deconstruction. 2

In 1967, three of Derrida's books were published which caused a stir on the French intellectual scene. These were La voix et le phénomène (Speech and Phenomena), L'Écriture et la différence (Writing and Difference) and De la grammatologie (Of Grammatology).

Speech and Phenomena is a critique of Husserl's theory of signs (meaning), with an emphasis on the Husserlian concepts of voice and presence. Writing and Difference is a collection of essays on various philosophers and artists and is where Derrida first introduces his counterview of

différance. Of Grammatology is Derrida's best known work. In it he introduces the concept of logocentrism and describes how those who write about language (e.g. Ferdinand de Saussure, Jean-Jacques Rousseau) have always privileged speech over writing. ³

Three more of Derrida's books were published in 1972. Marges de la philosophie (Margins of Philosophy) is a collection of ten essays ranging over a variety of thinkers (Hegel, Freud), and issues (humanism, metaphor). La Dissémination (Dissemination) contains three long essays dealing with the idea of the literary, and the productivity of language. Positions is a different text in that it consists of three interviews conducted by Henri Ronse, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Louis Houdebine, and Guy Scarpetta. In the interviews Derrida elaborates on his notions of logocentrism, différance, and deconstruction. This book has proven to be an extremely lucid introduction to Derrida's thoughts and writings of the 1967 - 1972 period.

Although there is little doubt that the first two periods of Derrida's published writings belong to philosophical reflection, there is greater uncertainty regarding the third period. This period lasts from 1974 to 1980 and is primarily concerned with specific problems in textual interpretation, authorship, and literature. The rather poetic and rhapsodic style of these later works make them appear more literary than philosophic.

Glas, published in 1974, is an unusual text on Hegel and Jean Genet. On the left-hand column of each page Derrida analyses Hegel's concept of the family, while on the right-hand column he discusses, and quotes from, the work of Genet.

The year 1976 saw the publication of L'Archéologie de la Frivole (Archeology of the Frivolous), an introduction to Condillac's Essai sur l'origine de la connaissance humaine (Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge), and Eperon, Les Styles de Nietzsche (Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles), a critique of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche through a discussion of women and style.

In 1978 Derrida's La Vérité en peinture (The Truth of Art) was published. It brought together a number of Derrida's essays on art such as "Economimesis", a critique of Kantian and Romantic aesthetic theory.

Derrida's last book so far has been La Carte Postale: de Socrates à Freud et au-delà (The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud), published in 1980. It is a collection of essays written in a more literary, whimsical style, like Glas, and deals with Freud, Lacan, and the idea of authorship or origin.

The "Anglo-Saxon" Derrida has also taken on a definite history. Derrida has spent some time in the United States, first on a Harvard Scholarship in 1956 - 57, then as a visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University, and now at

Yale. He first became known to American academics in 1966 when he participated in an international symposium called "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" held at Johns Hopkins. There he presented a paper entitled "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in which he criticized structuralism, and in particular, Lévi-Strauss. 4

It is important to note that Derrida's work has been approached differently in the Anglo-Saxon world, especially in the United States, compared to Europe. In Europe, where the line between philosophy and literature is thin indeed, Derrida is considered more as a philosopher. While in the United States, where Derrida has been mainly appropriated by literary theorists and critics who have used his method of deconstruction to analyse literary texts only, he is seen more in the context of literary theory. Chief among these theorists and critics is the group at Yale which includes Paul de Man 5, J. Hillis Miller 6, Geoffery Hartman 7 and Harold Bloom 8. What these scholars see in Derrida's work is a way of showing the uniqueness of literary texts. Every text, literary or non-literary, is a construction, but literary texts alone draw attention to the fictive nature of these structures. They accomplish this by essentially deconstructing themselves or illustrating how language in the text plays against and subverts its own meaning.

The translation, however, of a seemingly innocent, continental philosophical problematic into an American literary idiom has altered the significance of the whole Derridean enterprise. Deconstruction exists today as a specifically American or Anglo-Saxon phenomenon which has been reduced to a series of predictable techniques for analysing texts. The original philosophical relevance concerning the notions of logocentrism and différance seems to have been missed, and needs to be reinstated.

INTRODUCTION

I

Ever since Immanuel Kant rung the death knell of speculative reason, metaphysics has come under increasing attack. There have been those who have viewed the subject as a moribund discipline whose methods and assertions are notoriously unclear, (e.g. Logical Positivists), and others who have attempted to disclose the internal logic regulating the tradition as a whole (e.g. Heidegger). One of the most recent and forceful critiques of metaphysical thinking from the second point of view has come from Post-structuralism, and in particular, from Jacques Derrida. Derrida's provocative account of the persistence in Western philosophy of what he calls "logocentrism" or the "metaphysics of presence", together with his specific deconstructive readings of certain philosophical texts, has precipitated much discussion and definitely warrants further investigation.

To fully understand Derrida's thought it is necessary to become acquainted with the intellectual background from which it emerges. In post-war France three schools of thought came to dominate philosophical discussion at the Universities and in the academic journals: phenomenology, existentialism, and Marxism.

Derrida first versed himself in Husserl's transcendental phenomenology but later began to question the idea of the intentionality of consciousness because of its Hegelian overtones of teleology along with its emphasis on time and subjective presence. ¹

The next philosopher Derrida confronted was Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980), whose brand of existentialism held sway in French intellectual circles in the 1940's and 50's and who had a tremendous impact on Derrida's own thinking. ² Derrida, however, came to reject Sartre's humanism because in his view it remained too metaphysical. Sartre's thought concentrated on human reality (phenomenological ontology), and assumed that the totality of Being, as composed of the in-itself (things) and the for-itself (consciousness), appears to itself in human reality as consciousness-for-self. ³

Derrida's relation to Marxism, as compared to his relation to phenomenology and existentialism, was quite different. He was never a disciple of Marxism as he was of the other two, and defended himself against it intellectually when it was in vogue during the 1950's and 60's. He rejected Marxism's adherence to determinism and teleology and even criticized its more humanistic variants (e.g. Sartre's existential Marxism) because of its reliance on a philosophical anthropology. ⁴

What these three schools of thought had in common was a post-war romanticism reacting against positivistic rationalism. Their adherence to a philosophy of the human subject and freedom, however, was challenged by a more positivistic system of thought known as structuralism.

Structuralism swept through France in the 1960's, its main proponents being Claude Lévi-Strauss⁵, Jacques Lacan⁶, Louis Althusser⁷, Roland Barthes⁸, and the early Michel Foucault⁹. In contrast to the previous philosophies, structuralism assigns intelligibility exclusively to an anonymous, rational structure (the synchronic), not to consciousness or the historical process (the diachronic), and eliminates subjectivity from the scientific model. Any element has meaning as part of the overall structure which entails wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation. Language is the paradigm case of a structure for it consists of a system of signs. All structuralists have accepted Ferdinand de Saussure's analysis of the sign as consisting of both a sound component which he called the signifier and a conceptual component which is called a signified. They also accept his view that linguistic meaning results from the internal differences between words, and does not depend for its significance on some external object (reference) or speaking subject (intention, consciousness). The true nature of things lies not in the things themselves, but in the rational relationships between them, the finite system of which is precisely the structure.

Post-structuralism is a more recent force in France which has arisen from certain criticisms levelled against some aspects of structuralist thought. The main thinkers behind this force include the late Foucault ¹⁰, Gilles Deleuze ¹¹, and of course Jacques Derrida. These thinkers retain structuralism's emphasis on form but criticize the structuralist idea of structure and the sign.

Post-structuralists have shifted attention away from the problematics of the subject to the concept of representation. Derrida, for instance, in his article "Force and Signification" asserts that structuralism has failed to put the very idea of structure and sign under question, and as such, has betrayed the founding principle that meaning is open and relational ¹². Conceiving structure as a totality encourages a teleological or hierarchical view of the relation between the elements and the whole for the whole is taken to be a unified centre exempt from the differential play of its parts. The structuralist emphasis on form leads to the possibility of taking the form itself as an object, so ignoring differential value. Similarly, the sign in structuralist thought risks being reduced to a metaphysical object (instead of a relation) because of the separation of the signified from the signifier. The latter can be regarded a substitute for the former in the same way that the sign was seen as a substitute for something in medieval thought.

This also opens up the possibility of the signified existing independently of the signifier, something classical structuralism would not endorse.

Thus Post-structuralism, and Derrida in particular, uses the central ideas of structuralism to deconstruct it from within, and to show how it fails to live up to its own relational or differential theory of meaning. Structuralism, in short, turns out to be another instance of logocentrism in Western thought.

II

For Derrida, the different theories and positions in metaphysics have just been variations on the single theme of logocentrism. All metaphysical positions allude to an extra-linguistic authority, presence, or meaning which is taken to be the ultimate foundation of all value and truth. This inexorable yearning for an independent absolute which explains and justifies everything, for a "transcendental signified", is at the heart of logocentrism (or metaphysical thinking), and is completely inescapable. What Derrida sets out to do is first identify the restrictive conditions of thought which logocentrism imposes onto the tradition, and then deconstruct the tradition from within by showing how its fundamental presuppositions result in contradictions.

Most English studies of Derrida's writings have focused on his spectacular deconstruction of assorted texts. Not many have sought to undertake an analysis of his conception of logocentrism (metaphysical thinking) or examine his enigmatic notion of différance or freeplay. This line of inquiry is important however because one must know precisely what Derrida means by metaphysics (logocentrism) before embarking on an appraisal of his critique of metaphysical discourse, or, understand his counterview of the tradition. In this thesis, then, I specifically aim to do the following: Chapter one will describe and clarify what Derrida means by logocentrism. This task will include delineating Derrida's idea of the transcendental signified and the method of deconstruction, looking at the idea of the transcendental signified in idealist, empiricist, and materialist philosophies, analysing the concept of presence in its different modes, and examining logocentrism in ordinary and literary discourse. Numerous examples of Derrida's readings of various philosophers such as Plato and Rousseau will be given to illustrate the idea of logocentrism. I will not be concerned here with whether Derrida's interpretations are plausible or not. I am not sufficiently versed in the current scholarly debates surrounding these philosopher's writings, and will stick to disclosing what Derrida actually means by logocentrism.

The second chapter will outline Derrida's view

concerning the figurative or metaphorical expressions inherent in metaphysical discourse. This will involve looking at the predominant metaphors used in philosophical texts, as well as the exchange between Derrida and Paul Ricoeur on the issue of metaphor in philosophy.

The third chapter will examine the major philosophic influences on Derrida's conception of logocentrism, namely Nietzsche's idea of Platonism, Heidegger's notion of ontotheology and Levinas' view of totality. I will concentrate mainly on the latter two (and deal more briefly with Nietzsche) since their influence, especially Levinas', has not been as well recognized or understood as Nietzsche's.

The fourth chapter will offer two possible criticisms of Derrida's thematic view of the history of Western philosophy (logocentrism). Is he right in claiming that logocentrism is the single, underlying theme running throughout the metaphysical tradition? I will attempt to criticize the method used for arriving at his view along with the content of the view itself.

The fifth chapter will present his counterview of différance or freeplay which is supposedly at odds with a metaphysics of presence. I will first present Saussure's relational theory of meaning and then reveal and castigate Derrida's implicit theory of meaning, showing how it forms the basis of his entire critique of Western logocentrism. I will also discuss and criticize his idea of freeplay.

And finally, I will conclude the thesis by disclosing Derrida's tacit conception of freedom which I feel lies at the heart of his whole deconstruction project. This will be a more speculative conclusion since I hope to connect Derrida's thought to certain pertinent aspects of Zen Buddhism and the literary genre of comedy.

A few words should be said about the methodology used in the thesis. The method of this investigation will primarily be descriptive, critical, and in parts, comparative. The descriptive part will seek to clarify Derrida's thoughts concerning logocentrism and différance by examining his own texts (mainly in English translation) along with some important secondary material. The strategy will be to isolate those passages where Derrida talks about logocentrism and différance, and bring them to bear on my own discussion by extracting a general, coherent meaning from them. I have chosen to concentrate more on certain primary texts, from the 1967 - 1972 period, which includes, among others, Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference, Speech and Phenomena, Margins of Philosophy, Dissemination, and particularly Positions. I believe these texts present Derrida's view of logocentrism and différance in a more intelligible manner than say Glas or The Post Card which are extremely difficult texts to follow. In fact, the latter really bring to an extreme stylistic conclusion the central positions in the other texts and do not change

or contradict what their saying in any way. As such, I have decided to stick with Derrida's more substantive and coherent material.

Other sections of the thesis will take a more critical approach. I intend to explicate the weaknesses in the method of arriving at his theme of logocentrism together with the specific substance of the theme itself. Other criticisms of Derrida will focus on his implicit theory of meaning and idea of freeplay. Though these do not represent all the criticisms that could possibly be levelled against Derrida's thought, they do at least express enough of the important ones which may call into question the entire deconstructive enterprise.

The comparative facets of the thesis will look at the similarities and differences between Derrida's conception of logocentrism and other thinkers' interpretation of the Western metaphysical tradition (Nietzsche, Heidegger and Levinas). A later comparison will focus on the possible differences between the idea of logocentrism and other systems of thought such as mysticism, voluntarism, nominalism, and contextualism that may in fact escape it.

I do not claim to have fully understood Derrida since his writings are exceedingly complex and multi-faceted. I only wish to present a plausible and critical account of his view of the Western metaphysical tradition along with his idea of différance or freeplay. It is my belief that

Derrida has done philosophers a great service in making them more aware of the general thematic and restrictive contours of their tradition, and for demonstrating how powerful and ineluctable the desire for presence - a "nostalgia for the absolute" - really is.

CHAPTER I

The Meaning of Logocentrism

I Conceptual Prerequisites to Understand Logocentrism

a) The Transcendental Signified

According to Derrida, the single- underlying theme running throughout the history of Western metaphysics is what he terms "logocentrism". All metaphysical systems, whether idealist, materialist or dualist are logocentric, meaning they are all centered on some absolute presence (logos) which exists outside of any system of signs but to which the signs themselves refer and derive their meaning.

"The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix...is the determination of Being as presence in all the senses of this word." 1

In other words, the majority of philosophers in the West have been preoccupied with the idea of an absolute reality, with some primordial ground or ultimate referent which lies anterior to discourse and acts as the foundation

for knowledge. Metaphysics can thus be construed as the reflective search for a perfectly self-present, self-grounded meaning which Derrida calls the "transcendental signified".

"(a) it must pass through the difficult deconstruction of the entire history of metaphysics which imposed, and never will cease to impose upon semiological science in its entirety this fundamental quest for a "transcendental signified" and a concept independent of language;" 2

Derrida relates the idea of the transcendental signified to the meaning of the term "transcendental" as it is conceived in medieval thought.

"the "transcendental" signified ("transcendental" in a certain sense as in the Middle Ages the transcendental - ens, unum, verum, bonum - was said to be the "primum cognitum")." 3

The transcendentals are those properties (e.g. being, unity, truth, good) that go beyond any genus and species, and apply to everything that is. They are, in other words, attributes of being qua being. All beings are things with unity, true in relation to what they are, and tend towards their own ends or goals. The transcendentals constitute the core of reality and are given when being is given, in the mind's first apprehension. This primary datum of experience where

the mind is immediately aware of the transcendental properties of reality is the primum cognitum. In being both transcendental and universal the transcendental properties are in all things though they are not reducible to any one thing.

Derrida gives a linguistic twist to this medieval conception of the transcendental by substituting linguistic signifiers for things.

"The transcendental signified... implied by all categories or all determined significations, by all lexicons and all linguistic signifiers, though not to be identified with any one of those signifiers, allowing itself to be precomprehended through each of them, remaining irreducible to all the epochal determinations that it nonetheless makes possible..." 4

By linking his notion of the transcendental signified to the medieval denotation, Derrida is attempting to show how it acts as the privileged ground or terminating point for all other signifieds. It is this that prevents the chain of signifiers from going on ad infinitum. M.H. Abrams catches the gist of what Derrida means when he says:

"By 'presence' - or in alternative terms, a 'transcendental signified' or 'ultimate referent' - he (Derrida) designates what I call an absolute; that is, a foundation outside the play of language itself which is immediately and simply present to us as something ultimate, terminal, self-certifying, and thus adequate to 'center'"

the structure of the linguistic system
and to guarantee the determinate meaning
of an utterance within that system." 5

In this sense, Derrida's conception of the transcendental signified is not unlike what Paul Tillich means by "ultimate concern" 6 or what John Hutchison calls "ultimate valuation" 7. In all three ideas there is something that is unconditional, absolute, and unqualified which constitutes the final ground of meaning. Any way of thinking that postulates such a ground, such a transcendental signified, is for Derrida inherently logocentric. Logocentrism, then, simply means being centred on - or preoccupied with - a transcendental signified.

"We have identified logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence as the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a signified." 8

b) The Method of Deconstruction

What Derrida attempts to do in his writings is pinpoint and expose the various expressions of logocentrism through the reading of different philosophical and literary texts. This approach somewhat resembles that of a judge (Derrida) to an accused (the text). But Derrida is not concerned with demonstrating the flaws or weaknesses of a text or with isolating its essential meaning. His task is

to reveal how the text unknowingly conspires in the vast metaphysical plot of presence. Armed with a systematic suspicion, Derrida endeavors to find clues that may betray the text's complicity in the crime of logocentrism.

This suspicious reading takes the form of a critical practice or strategy known as deconstruction. For Derrida, the strategy of deconstruction consists of two main phases which he calls reversal and displacement, or in short, the "double science".

"Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an overturning of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system". 9

The first phase involves uncovering the metaphysical (logocentric) presuppositions lying within certain texts, and disclosing their internal, concealed contradictions. In other words, deconstruction begins by locating a contradiction in the text which, like a geological fault revealing the stratified layers underlying the entire region, gives access to the laws, structure or textuality of the text. 10 The metaphysical presuppositions relate to thinking in terms of hierarchical oppositions where one of the terms (e.g. speech, good) is seen to be temporally and qualitatively superior to the other term (e.g. writing,

evil). Derrida then reverses the hierarchy by showing how the lower term is actually superior and prior to the higher one. Thus speech is really a form of writing, good a form of evil, and so on.

The possibility of reversing the established hierarchy results in an inherent contradiction since what was first thought to be the superior and prior term turns out to be really inferior and derivative. Derrida, however, is not trying to replace the previous superior term with the subordinate one and make it supreme. He is attempting to show how all binary terms are interconnected and depend on one another for their meaning. Good, for example, cannot be conceived without evil, or reality without appearance. Following Saussure, Derrida believes meaning to be a result of differences and not identity. Unfortunately, the majority of philosophers in the West have favoured identity and unity over difference thereby repressing or leaving unthought the essential interdependence of all opposing terms. It is by undoing key metaphysical terms or assumptions, and elaborating the contradictory structure and arguments they conceal, that Derrida is able to reveal the repression of difference in assorted texts.

Derrida employs two major analytic techniques to unveil the blind spots in the text and reverse the oppositions. The first technique is isolating certain key words such as "pharmakon" in Plato, "supplement" in Rousseau, "hymen" in

Mallarmé, or "parergon" in Kant. Derrida sets out to establish how these words both figure in oppositions that are crucial to a text's argument while at the same time function to undermine the value-laden oppositions. The second technique consists of paying close attention to the marginal features of a text (like the use of metaphor) for these offer clues into what is really important.

Generally speaking, the first phase of deconstruction (reversal), can be characterized as a form of critique. It does not seek to examine faulty reasoning or improve a theoretical system, but to reveal the conditions that make any theoretical system possible.

"To "deconstruct" philosophy, thus would be to think - in the most faithful, interior way - the structured genealogy of philosophy's concepts, but at the same time to determine - from a certain exterior that is unqualifiable or unnameable by philosophy - what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid, making itself into a history by means of this somewhere motivated repression." 11

A critique, then, starts with what seems natural and obvious in a text and proceeds to show how this is really a cultural construct with its own concealed history and reason for being.

Another way of putting this is to say that deconstruction resembles more of a de-sedimentation process than a dismantling of parts. As Josué Harari explains it:

"Derridean deconstruction which consists more of the tracing of a path among textual strata in order to stir up and expose forgotten and dormant sediments of meaning which have accumulated and settled into the text's fabric...Thus, deconstruction is really more of a technique of de-sedimentation (the word was first used by Derrida in Of Grammatology and later abandoned), a technique of de-sedimenting the text in order to allow what was already inscribed in its texture to resurface." 12

It is this attempt to problematize, to de-stabilize or to put under erasure any a priori concept taken to be substantial and essential that lies at the base of the deconstructive enterprise.

The second phase of the Derridean strategy of deconstruction is displacement. Here one attempts to enact a transformation in the meaning of a term so as to prevent the re-establishment of the original hierarchy.

"By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new "concept", a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime." 13

The aim of this second stage is to radically alter the conceptual field by resituating or displacing the entire system of values expressed by the classical opposition. This involves trying to transform a text without merely endorsing the wider framework of meaning to which its terms belong.

One can observe the two phases of deconstruction at work in Derrida's concept of "writing". First, Derrida demonstrates how speech is contingent on writing, and not the reverse, since the features normally attributed to writing are exactly the same used to characterize speech. Thus both written and spoken words are repeatable (or what Derrida calls "iterable"), arbitrary or institutional, understandable, and are subject to a system of differences.

"If 'writing' means inscription and especially the durable instituting of signs (and this is the only irreducible kernel of the concept writing), then writing in general covers the entire domain of linguistic signs...The very idea of institution, hence of the arbitrariness of the sign, is unthinkable prior to or outside the horizon of writing." 14

In the second phase Derrida gives a new meaning to the term "writing" so that it cannot be subsumed by the old hierarchical pattern. The new term is "arch-writing".

"I would wish rather to suggest that the alleged derivatives of writing, however real and massive, was possible only on one condition: that the 'original', 'natural', etc. language had never existed, never been intact and untouched by writing, that it had itself always been a writing. An arch-writing whose necessity and new concept I wish to indicate and outline here; and which I continue to call writing only because it essentially communicates with the vulgar concept of writing." 15

This arch-writing is an "undecidable" concept like many other Derridean terms like "différance", "dissemination", and "supplement". These concepts are undecidable because they cannot be interpreted from the point of view of any single, self-identical meaning. Their purpose is to upset the established logocentric pattern thereby releasing the freeplay of difference.

In sum, a deconstructive reading is one which undertakes a double task: it first digs up the latent metaphysical premises in texts, and then redefines certain concepts such as writing which challenge the consistency of the logocentric system. Deconstruction, however, should not be confused with traditional skepticism. It is more like a contemporary version of sophism¹⁶ since it exposes the rhetorical nature of philosophic arguments as well as the close connection between reason and language in the search of an authenticating truth.

There are a few important implications of Derridean deconstruction that should be mentioned here. First there is the view that writers of philosophical and literary texts have certain blind spots, that is, they are not aware of the unavoidable contradictions their metaphysical premises lead to.

"The writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting

himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language he uses." 17

But if the author's blindness to the contradiction within his own text is unavoidable, what attitude should the critic adopt towards the text? Derrida's own response varies. He seems to treat some writers like Heidegger, Husserl, and Saussure with more respect than others like Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss whom he often criticizes. For example, Derrida often pays tribute to Heidegger (e.g. "What I have attempted to do would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger's question." 18), whereas he severely castigates Lévi-Strauss, ("Lévi-Strauss is never suspicious of the value of such a distinction. This allows him to consider the passage from speech to writing as a leap." 19). There are perhaps, degrees of logocentrism that a writer is subject to, Heidegger being less logocentric than Lévi-Strauss.²⁰ In this way Derrida gives a new twist to the Orwellian adage: "All texts are logocentric but some texts are more logocentric than others."

The second implication follows from the first. If Derrida is claiming that writers are really unaware of what is going on in their texts, then he must know more than they

do and have closer access to the "truth". But what is the exact criterion of truth Derrida is working with? It is not made clear in anything he writes. His superiority, if anything, is probably more a matter of ingenious rhetoric than genuine logic. Indeed, his standpoint is not a logical one but genealogical in the sense of dealing with hidden interests.

The third and final implication of Derridean deconstruction I wish to mention is its possible relativism. If the desire for a transcendental signified, a primal and final unity, is mere wish fulfillment, and if nothing is ever really present, just "différance", then there is no sense in limiting the interpretation to one absolute meaning in a text for there is a plurality of possible meanings. In other words, meaning is something that is not discovered; it is a construct, a fiction made by the force of our desire. Meaning, then, is always relative, never absolute. Whether this is an accurate depiction of deconstruction is too large a topic to adequately deal with in this thesis. Suffice it to say that the fear of relativism belongs to the system Derrida is attacking.

Not only does Derrida read; he writes. And his writing does not often conform to the dictates of conventional, discursive prose. For example, he does not argue in a logical manner, from stated premises to conclusions, and rarely uses logical connectors (e.g. therefore, conclude) of

any kind. His style is more whimsical and artistic than rigorous or scientific. This has proven rather disquieting to a number of Derrida's readers who continue to slog away at his texts. But it is not without purpose. It is my opinion that Derrida deliberately adopts a non-discursive writing style in order to disclose and upset the logocentric biases inherent within both our own writing and reading habits. These biases include a tendency to discover a single, essential meaning or truth in a text, to link this meaning to the author's intention, and to believe that a systematic method leads to the true meaning. Derrida's writing attempts to deconstruct the either/or logic of non-contradiction that lies at the base of Western metaphysical thinking, and to suggest the possibility of a non-binary "logic". It is not surprising, then, that his writing often leaves the reader puzzled and dismayed for that is exactly what it is supposed to do.

Derrida utilizes a vast array of textual tactics to elaborate this non-binary logic, and subvert logocentrism. Following David Wood ²¹ we can list these tactics as graphic, lexical, structural, methodological, and self-reflexive.

Under graphic tactics can be listed the techniques for crossing out words (e.g. especially about the subject, or "The outside ~~X~~ the inside.") in order to show the condemnation of

the concept, as well as the use of brackets (which can go on for pages), long sentences and quotations, rampant ambiguity, needless punctuation (not unlike in the poems of Mallarmé), italics, and square notes. All these aid in decentering the text.

The lexical tactic involves the taking up and modifying of certain words which actually give rise to neologisms. Derrida's modification of the word "différance" into "différance" is the prime example here. These neologisms are marshalled against the nostalgia for an origin or centre.

Structural tactics cover the surface of texts themselves. Occasionally in Derrida's writings there will be a creative outburst on the page usually in the form of a parallel writing pattern. His book Glas is a good example of this technique where Derrida writes in two columns on each page - one involving a text on Hegel, the other on Genet. This tactic puts in question the linearity of writing and the supposedly essential relationship between the author and the text.

The methodological techniques primarily relate to both phases of the deconstructive enterprise: the disclosure of internal contradictions within a text, the reversal of the established oppositional terms, and the redefinition of the old subordinate term in order to prevent the re-emergence of the previous hierarchy.

Finally, the self-reflexive tactic is where Derrida explicitly voices his concerns about writing the text, devising techniques to combat logocentrism, and his debt to other thinkers. All these reflective musings work against the lower pre-reflective level of awareness which is necessarily imbued (even in Derrida) with logocentric assumptions.

Although Derrida attempts to upset the inherent biases of logocentrism, he knows it is really inescapable. For one must adopt the same sort of terms and procedures that are placed in question. As Derrida describes it:

"I try to keep myself at the limit of philosophical discourse. I say limit and not death, for I do not at all believe in what today is so easily called the death of philosophy." 22

Why write or read at all then? Part of the reason is sheer pleasure.

"By means of this simultaneously faithful and violent circulation between the inside and the outside of philosophy - that is of the West - there is produced a certain textual work that gives great pleasure." 23

But the major reason, not unrelated to the first, is the affirmation of freeplay.

"...the Nietzschean affirmation, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation. This affirmation then determines the noncenter otherwise than as loss of centre. And it plays without security. For there is a sure play: that which is limited to the substitute of given and existing, present pieces." 24

In sum, Derrida's method of deconstructive reading and unconventional writing style helps him map out the textual terrain of logocentrism, and determine its important characteristics.

II The Concept of Logocentrism

a) The Modes of Logocentrism

The notion of a "transcendental signified" (object), and of logocentrism (desire) in general, has expressed itself in numerous ways throughout the Western philosophical tradition. For Derrida, "logocentrism is, fundamentally, an idealism. It is the matrix of idealism". 25 By this he means that whether it be Plato's eidos, Descartes' cogito, or Hegel's Geist, there is always a plenitude of meaning thought to exist behind and prior to any actual meanings which calls to be interpreted. In being both anterior and basic, this plenitude of meaning is also more transparent to thought or immediately self-present.

The ~~importance~~ of this idea becomes clearer when we remember that metaphysics is the search for something immediately present. The possible materiality of the transcendental signified, therefore, is downplayed in order to centre truth entirely in an intelligible form of presence, the logos.

"The history of (the only) metaphysics which has, in spite of all differences, not only from Plato to Hegel (even including Leibniz) but also, beyond these apparent limits, from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger, always assigned the origin of truth in general to the logos." 26

An example from the history of philosophy will illustrate what Derrida means here. According to Derrida, Platonism is the logocentric philosophy par excellence. It has "set up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality". 27 For Plato, the world is bifurcated into a realm of changing individual phenomena, and a realm of immutable, universal Forms or Ideas. The former realm is merely an appearance consisting of transient material bodies. It is known through sense perception and yields only opinion (doxa), never true knowledge (episteme). By contrast, the realm of the Forms is the ultimate reality since it exists separately from matter and is eternally perfect. It is the model of which the sensible world is

only a degenerate copy. The Forms come to be known mainly through the logos, that is, through the reasoning process (e.g. dialectic, recollection), which at its highest stage of perfect intelligence is able to apprehend the forms directly. The result of this is true knowledge or episteme.

"This reality, then, that gives their truth to the objects of knowledge and the power of knowing to the knower, you must say is the idea of good, and you must conceive it as being the cause of knowledge, and truth in so far as known." 28

Both truth and meaning are for Plato grounded in the intelligible world of the Forms, and true knowledge resides in the ability to give an account (logos) of this ultimate reality.

Another idealist element in logocentrism is its tendency to structure things in terms of hierarchical oppositions or dichotomies such as good vs. evil, reality vs. appearance, or mind vs. matter. In this way of thinking the first term of the pair is given priority over the second term both in a temporal and qualitative sense. Thus good is prior to and more important than evil - reality is superior to appearance, and so on. There is a particular hierarchical dichotomy, however, that Derrida claims forms the basis of logocentrism; namely, the primacy of speech over writing. This "phonocentrism", as Derrida calls it, has always privileged the spoken word over and above the written word because as Barbara Johnson notes:

"...the speaker and listener are both present to the utterance simultaneously. There is no temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech, and listener, since the speaker hears himself speak at the same moment the listener does. This immediacy seems to guarantee the notion that in the spoken word we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said. Whether or not perfect understanding always occur in fact, this image of perfectly self-present meaning is, according to Derrida, the underlying ideal of Western culture." 29

Writing on the other hand is considered to be greatly inferior because it is only an imperfect and parasitic representation of speech. In writing there is a distance between the thoughts of the author and the physical marks put down on paper. These marks are not only divorced from thought, they are also able to function in the absence either of a speaker or of a listener. It is this inclusion of difference, distance, and death that allows writing to corrupt the immediate and perfect self-presence of oral meaning, and explains why writing has been placed in a position inferior to speech. }

Derrida has discovered numerous examples of phonocentrism in the history of Western philosophy. One of the first and most important examples can be found in Plato's dialogue, the Phaedrus. In his article, "Plato's Pharmacy", Derrida shows how Plato privileges speech over

writing in the Phaedrus, and how this leads to truth being thought to originate in the immediate self-presence of the Forms. Having first discussed the art of discourse (logos), Socrates turns his attention to the status of writing (graphein). He relates the myth of how the Egyptian demi-god Theuth invented writing, and how the King of the gods condemned writing as a poison since it introduces forgetfulness into people's souls causing them to completely forget the truth of things. There is a kind of fall into the materiality of script which estranges the soul from its own inwardness, that is, from its own origin in speech and self-presence.

"And so it is that you, by reason of your tender regard for the writing that is your offspring, have declared the very opposite of its true effect. If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks." 30

Direct speech, so Socrates notes, is the proper vehicle for dialectics and truth, for unlike writing, speech represents the eternal Forms accurately and directly. In speech the soul is in immediate contact with meaning; words issue from the speaker as the spontaneous and nearly transparent sign of his present thoughts. Writing on the

other hand, is much more mediate because it is twice removed from the Forms; writing represents speech, and speech in turn represents the Forms. Moreover, by expressing itself in an external, material medium writing is also removed from the living subject or logos.

Derrida sees this privileging of speech over writing as a replay of the privileging of the Forms (reality) over the phenomena (appearances). In other words, the subordination of writing to speech mirrors on a smaller scale the traditional metaphysical primacy of transcendent spirituality over fallen materiality. According to Derrida, this attempt to offer the internal voice as the model for self-present meaning is at the root of all logocentric thinking, and has been reproduced throughout every major metaphysical system since Plato.

"We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight of eidos)..." 31

Another example of phonocentrism is found in Rousseau's view of language and culture. In Rousseau's Essay on the Origin of Languages, two related hierarchical oppositions can be discerned; speech vs. writing and nature vs.

culture. Rousseau, along with the rest of the Western metaphysical tradition, privileges speech over writing. Speech is seen as the natural, good, and original condition of language because while speaking the self is most immediately present to itself. Writing on the other hand, is seen as artificial, evil, and derivative for it is only a representation of direct speech and so less immediate and present. Consequently, speech for Rousseau constitutes the origin of language, while writing is akin to a parasitic growth. As Derrida expresses it:

"We have set foot again upon a Rousseauist ground that we hardly left: a classical ideology according to which writing takes the status of a tragic fatality come to prey upon natural innocence, interrupting the golden age of the present and full speech." 32

This opposition between the naturalness of speech and the artificiality of writing inflates into the more general opposition between nature and culture. Culture, argues Rousseau, debases nature and actually represents a fall away from it. Rousseau constructs an elaborate mythology based on the difference between what he calls the "southern culture" where the voice remains close to its origin in emotional utterance, and the "northern culture" where certain conventions and rules dominate over the innocent passions. In other words, the South is part of that

superior chain of natural terms which include liberty, accent, and vowel, whereas the North is that supplementary chain of cultural terms made up of servitude, articulation, and consonant which are associated with masturbation, evil, and history. In this way both speech and nature are prior and superior to writing and culture. Again, Derrida's words:

"From this point of view, it appears that life, energy, desire, etc., are of the South. The northern language is less alive, less animated, less songlike, colder...Writing is at the North: cold, necessitous, reasoning, turned toward death, to be sure, but by that tour de force, by that detour de force which forces it to hold on to life." 33

Thus by saying that logocentrism is fundamentally an idealism, Derrida is really claiming that most philosophers have conceived of the transcendental signified (or presence) as something wholly intelligible and suprasensible. And they have frequently used the self-presence associated with speech as the model for this kind of suprasensible presence.

The result of phonocentrism or any kind of hierarchical opposition, idealist or otherwise, is the exclusion and subordination of one term vis-à-vis another term. Because of this, logocentrism is really a discourse based on repression. But not only is logocentric discourse repressive; discourse concerning the dynamics of repression can also be repressive.

For Derrida this latter type of repression is evident in such contemporary thinkers as Michel Foucault. In the last twenty five years there has emerged on the European continent a philosophical force that can be characterized as anti-humanist, meta-theoretical, and critical. This trend of thought has reacted negatively to the rationalism of Descartes, the subjectivism of Husserl, and the anthropologism of Sartre. Foucault, in being part of this continental force, has attempted to subvert the influence of the past masters (e.g. Descartes) as well as to trace the concealed power of interests lying behind various kinds of discourse.

Like Derrida, Foucault attempts to make visible what is customarily invisible in a text, namely, the various rules and mysteries of its own construction. Foucault goes further than Derrida, however, in linking the origin of a text not simply to the text's own internal play, but to an external network of power consisting of an impersonal and highly institutionalized mode of discourse. What the text ultimately represses is its origins in discursive power. It becomes a locus for the different powers of discourse, and at the same time obscures this power through its own textuality.

"I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain

number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality." 34

The job of the critic, or what Foucault calls the "archaeologist", is to act as a "countermemory", to dig down and reveal the network of discursive power lying behind and within the text.

Derrida argues that this kind of countermemory, of giving a rational voice to that which is nonrational and silent, is inherently logocentric. It only ends up repressing its own reliance on a metaphysics of presence. This is most evident in Foucault's analysis of madness in Madness and Civilization. In this book Foucault attempts to write a history of madness from the standpoint of madness itself, and not from the standpoint of reason. Put differently, the concepts and vocabulary of the social and psychological sciences are put into question and carefully avoided. Madness, through the archaeological method, is to be rescued from the fate of silence which the "age of reason" has committed it to.

"Foucault wanted to write a history of madness itself, that is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason, the language of psychiatry on madness." 35

For Derrida this "projected archaeology of silence" is problematic. By writing a history of madness Foucault is inevitably taking the perspective of reason since writing a history, any history, entails a rational project of inquiry and the use of concepts that will be readily understood.

"But, first of all, is there a history of silence? Further, is not an archaeology, even of silence, a logic, that is, an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a work? Would not the archaeology of silence be the most efficacious and subtle restoration, the repetition, in the most irreducibly ambiguous meaning of the word, of the act perpetrated against madness - and be so at the very moment when this act is denounced?" 36

According to Foucault, a division occurred in the Seventeenth century when reason and madness split off into two separate soliloquies. There was no longer, as in the Middle Ages, a kind of dialogue between the two. But as Derrida notes:

"A history, that is, an archaeology against reason doubtless cannot be written, for, despite all appearances to the contrary, the concept of history has always been a rational one. It is the meaning of "history" or *archia* that should have been questioned first, perhaps. A writing that exceeds, by

questioning them, the values "origin", "reasons", and "history" could not be contained within the metaphysical closure of an archaeology." 37

In order to have remained faithful to his stated aims, Foucault would have had to either remain completely silent or "follow the madman down the road of his exile". Since he does neither one, can only conclude that his is merely a more sophisticated rational discourse on madness, and as such is just another reconstitution of the Cartesian cogito. 38 In this way, Derrida identifies Foucault's project with the rationalist - idealist enterprise in general which claims that a system of thought can lead to meaning.

Although Derrida conceives of logocentrism along the lines of an idealism, he also states that, "logocentrism is a wider concept than idealism for which it serves as a kind of overflowing foundation." 39 And he further claims that, "Realism or sensualism - empiricism - are modifications of logocentrism", 40 as well as "metaphysical materialism". 41 What these remarks suggest is a concept of idealism much broader than the usual one where it is seen merely as an alternative to materialism. In Derrida's view, idealism (logocentrism) "constitutes a system of predicates, certain of which can always be found in the philosophies that call themselves nonidealist, that is, anti-idealist". 42

The most important of these predicates are presence, identity, and foundation. All logocentric philosophies, idealist or otherwise, posit a full, self-identical presence which is taken to be the ground of all substantial truth and meaning.

This idea of logocentrism can be clearly observed in the case of empiricist philosophies. These philosophies rest on the important ideas of experience and representation which are both permeated with the "logocentric" values of presence, identity, and foundation. Empiricism states that experience is the ultimate source of all our knowledge, and so functions as a foundation. In addition, experience, whether seen in terms of Locke's "sensations", Hume's "impressions", or Ayer's "sense-data", involves something that is simply present. And if something is experienced, it must be experienced as something, so a degree of identity is also essential to experience. Derrida sums up the situation as follows:

"There is one law there: the notion of experience, even when one would like to use it to destroy metaphysics or speculation, continues to be in one or another point of its functioning, fundamentally inscribed within ontotheology: at least by the value of presence, whose implication it can never reduce by itself. Experience is always the relationship with a plenitude, whether it be sensory simplicity or the infinite presence of God." 43

The idea of representation is also closely linked with empiricism, and so with a metaphysics of presence. This is apparent in the empiricist epistemological theory of representative realism. On this view, the mind does not apprehend external objects directly, but only through the mediation of ideas which represent them. These ideas in turn are expressed through language so that the meaning of a word or an idea is what it represents. For instance, the idea of a brown table results from first receiving an impression or sensation of something, and then connecting this impression to the linguistic sign "brown table". The source of the idea lies outside the representation. Realism is a logocentric philosophy because it rests on the idea of representation which, as we have seen, is invariably committed to a self-identical presence (e.g. experience) standing anterior to discourse.

"Not only do the signifier and the signified seem to unite, but also, in this confusion, the signifier seems to erase itself or to become transparent, in order to allow the concept to present itself as what it is, referring to nothing other than its presence. The exteriority of the signifier seems reduced. Naturally this experience is a lure, but a lure whose necessity has organized an entire structure, or an entire epoch; and on the grounds of this epoch a semiology has been constituted whose concepts and fundamental presuppositions are quite precisely discernible from Plato to Husserl, passing through Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Etc." 44

Derrida's analysis of the logocentric elements within empiricism resembles in some ways the recent Anglo-American criticisms of what is called "epistemological foundationalism". Thinkers such as Michael Williams ⁴⁵ and Richard Rorty ⁴⁶ believe that the majority of epistemologies in the Western philosophical tradition have been foundationalist. That is to say, they have all sought an indubitable ground for belief and have attempted to answer the radical skeptic who claims that one is never justified in believing anything, so that knowledge is impossible. The foundationalist thinks he can justify his beliefs by showing how some of them ultimately rest on far more basic ones which are self-evident. The self-evident beliefs are assumed to be absolutely certain, and to require no further justification. Thus a sort of epistemological order in pyramid form results, with the basic beliefs filling out the ground level, and the non-basic beliefs on top; hence the name, "epistemological foundationalism".

These self-evident, basic beliefs refer, I think, to a kind of presence in the form of consciousness, sensation, sense-data and the like. Each of these is seen as being given in experience and represented in some way. They further act as the primordial foundation of other beliefs. Thus foundationalism could possibly be viewed as the epistemological correlate of logocentric metaphysics,

and concretely illustrates how Derrida's analysis of logocentrism touches on problems presently being discussed in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy.

The logocentric values of presence, identity, and foundation can also be observed in "metaphysical materialism". Derrida mentions that the concept of matter can be reinvested with "logocentric values" and become just another "transcendental signified";

"In sort, the signifier "matter" appears to me problematical only at the moment when its reinscription cannot avoid making of it a new fundamental principle which, by means of theoretical regression, would be reconstituted into a "transcendental signified". 47

He goes on to suggest, rather gingerly, that Lenin's analysis of matter may be interpreted in this way, though he fails to elaborate further. One might suspect he meant that Lenin's view of the primacy of matter over mind, where matter is taken to be the ultimate reality from which ideas derive and mind a mere epiphenomenon, could be seen as fulfilling the same role in philosophy as Plato's eidos or Aquina's God; namely, to act as an objective referent and ground for true knowledge. In other words, matter is a form of presence, "the property of being an objective reality", from which the truth and meaning of things are derived and accounted for.

"It is not only idealism in the narrow sense that falls back upon the transcendental signified. It can always come to reassure a metaphysical materialism. It then becomes an ultimate referent, or it becomes an "objective reality" absolutely anterior to any work of the mark, the semantic content of a form of presence which guarantees the movement of the text in general from the outside." 48

What is common, then, to idealist, empiricist, and materialist philosophies is the assertion of a transcendental signified that whether called eidos, experience or matter, relates to what is strictly present, fundamental and identical, and excludes what is absent, derivative and different. It is this profound commitment to presence that makes each of these philosophies logocentric.

"It could be shown that all names related to fundamentals, to principles or to the center have always designated an invariable presence - eidos, arch, telos, energeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject), aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth." 49

Since the idea of presence is central to Derrida's entire thematic characterization of Western metaphysics, it must be examined more closely.

c) The Idea of Presence

In his article "Différance", Derrida describes presence as "the ontology of beings and beingness".⁵⁰ This suggests that presence is a plenum of being with a kind of spatial and/or temporal dimension.⁵¹ The spatial aspect refers to the full, capacious existence of an entity (or some equivalent), while the temporal aspect concerns the disclosure of an entity in the present moment.

The spatial form of presence can be further subdivided into an objective and a subjective mode. Some philosophers like Aristotle emphasize the objective side, while others like Descartes stress the subjective angle. Derrida describes the whole shift from the objective to the subjective form of presence as follows:

"Between the overture and the philosophical accomplishment of phonologism (or logocentrism), the motif of presence was decisively articulated. It underwent an internal modification whose most conspicuous index was the moment of certitude in the Cartesian cogito. Before that, the identity of presence offered to the mastery of repetition was constituted under the "objective" form of the ideality of the eidos or the substantiality of ousia. Thereafter, this objectivity takes the form of representation, of the idea as the modification of a self-present substance, conscious and certain of itself at the moment of its relationship to itself." ⁵²

An example of the "objective" mode of presence is discernible in Aristotle's conception of substance. Derrida remarks that substance (ousia) is a type of presence, "presence as substance/essence/existence (ousia)."⁵³ In Aristotle's thought, the term substance is used in a variety of ways. It can mean: 1) the concrete individual thing consisting of the form and matter (primary substance);⁵⁴ 2) the genera and species to which the individual thing belongs (secondary substance);⁵⁵ 3) that which is capable of independent existence;⁵⁶ 4) that which underlies all attributes and is the foundation of things (substratum);⁵⁷ 5) the logical subject of predication.⁵⁸ For Aristotle, all these meanings denote an objectively existing presence. A concrete individual thing like a man is surely present in some way as are his accidental qualities (e.g. colour of hair) and essential qualities (e.g. rationality). Even if all his attributes were removed, there would still be something present, the independently existing substratum. It is this all-pervasive, invariable sense of presence which makes substance for Aristotle the subject matter of metaphysics, and hence the ultimate reality.

Descartes' cogito represents a clear instance of presence in its subjective mode. Here presence is interpreted in terms of a subject being present to itself in the immediacy of a conscious act. By systematically doubting everything, Descartes eventually arrived at something he could not doubt, namely, his own thinking (doubting). The cogito presented itself to the mind is such

an immediately clear and distinct fashion that doubting it would have been completely impossible. For Descartes, the presence of consciousness to itself becomes the starting point of all knowledge, and the first principle of philosophy.

"I am certain that I am a thinking thing; but do I not therefore likewise know what is required to render me certain of a truth? In this first knowledge, doubtless, there is nothing that gives me assurance of its truth except the clear and distinct perception of what I affirm, which would not indeed be sufficient to give me the assurance that what I say is true, if it would ever happen that anything I thus clearly and distinctly perceived should prove false; and accordingly it seems to me that I may now take as a general rule, that all that is very clearly and distinctly apprehended (conceived) is true." 59

In both the objective and subjective examples of presence, then, there is something immediately given in experience (e.g. being, thought) which serves as the foundation for truth and meaning.

The temporal aspect of presence can also be subdivided into two parts: presence as present moment, and presence as telos. Derrida agrees with Heidegger that the "temporal presence as point (stigma) of the now or of the moment (nun)" is one of the "determinations of the being of the entity as presence". 60 This kind of temporal presence has always been at the forefront of philosophers' queries about

time; "from Parmenides to Husserl, the privileged position of the present has never been questioned".⁶¹

Derrida examines the idea of temporal presence in Husserl's theory of signs. In the Logical Investigations, Husserl makes a crucial distinction between two sorts of signs, indicative and expressive.⁶² Indication includes both natural and conventional signs which are totally arbitrary, external, and superficial. For this reason they cannot serve as the foundation for an ideal science. Expressions on the other hand are foundational for they are context free, and have a direct temporal acquaintance with what they mean. An example of an expressive sign would be the inner experience of uttering words to oneself silently. Here the expression is present to consciousness at the present moment, and is seen to be ideal because it has no intrinsic connection to empirical existence. The ideal meaning is given to consciousness through intuition prior to linguistic formulation. This intuition is capable of giving us necessary truth or evidence on which certain knowledge must be based. Husserl thus brackets the empirical or external aspect of signification, and concentrates only on the pure, ideational aspect which is intrinsically present to a pure consciousness for inspection. It is this attempt to base certain knowledge on the immediate self-presence of consciousness which makes Husserlian phenomenology, or more specifically, Husserl's theory of expressive signs, inherently logocentric.

"The Living Present. (lebendige Gegenwart) is the universal and absolute form of transcendental experience to which Husserl refers us. In the descriptions of the movements of temporalization, all that does not torment the simplicity and the domination of that form seems to indicate to us how much transcendental phenomenology belongs to metaphysics." 63

Another aspect of the temporal form of presence is its possible teleological pattern. Not only does presence act as an origin (arché) from which the truth and multiplicity of things can be deduced; it can also sometimes function as a final reference point from which the world can be accounted for and given meaning. Derrida sees himself struggling against this idea of telos in the following way:

"I have attempted to systematize a deconstructive critique precisely at the authority of meaning as the transcendental signified or as telos; in other words, history determined in the last analysis as the history of meaning..." 64

It is Hegel's philosophy that represents for Derrida the epitome of teleological thinking. More specifically, "Hegel, as in all metaphysics, indissociably coordinates teleology with an eschatology, a theology and an ontology". 65 This coordination can be observed in Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute (Geist). For Hegel, the Absolute moves

dialectically through the stages of the Logical Idea, Nature, and Spirit (Subjective, Objective, Absolute), in order to reach the final end of total self-consciousness. The whole process of reality is thus moving in a particular direction, towards the goal of self-thinking thought. The end, however, is immanent within the process and so is present through all the stages of development. It is the Absolute's teleological goal of coming to be conscious of itself which gives meaning to the universe as a whole, and acts as the final reference point for certain knowledge. 66.

For Derrida, then, presence is any full, unmediated plenum which expresses itself either objectively (as in the form of substance), subjectively (as in the form of consciousness), and/or temporally (as in the present moment or in telós).

But Derrida further describes presence as "that which is not subject to the process of "différance"." 67 "Différance" is a Derridean neologism combining the two senses of the french verb "différer", meaning "to differ" and "to defer or postpone". It is a noun designating active non-self-presence both in space and time.

"Différance is the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the spacing (espacement) by which elements refer to one another. This spacing is the production, both active and passive (the 'a' of différence indicates this indecision in relation to activity and passivity, indicates that which cannot be governed

and organized by that opposition), of intervals without which the "full" terms could not signify, could not function." 68

So by différance, Derrida means a process which is basically fragmentary, decentered, and differentiated, as opposed to presence which is a plenum involving unity, centeredness and identity. Any transcendental signified such as God excludes all that is different and absent, and includes all that is identical and present; for only in this way can it possess the self-same completion and singularity of a whole which is a necessary condition for all grounding principles.

The idea of a self-identical presence which denies or reappropriates différance is evident in "infinitist theologies." For Derrida,

"Only infinite being can reduce the difference in presence. In that sense, the name of God, at least as it is pronounced within classical rationalism, is the name of indifference itself." 69

In other words, the concept of God in rationalist thought involves the notion of an infinite being who is the locus of synthesis and unity, and is completely self-identical.

The metaphysical systems of Spinoza and Hegel represent, in Derrida's mind, two outstanding examples of "infinitist theologies". In Spinoza's writings self-identical presence takes the form of a pantheism where

God and the world are one and the same infinite substance.⁷⁰

This leads Derrida to say of Spinoza:

"Infinitist theologies are always logocentrisms, whether they are creationisms or not. Spinoza himself said of the understanding - or logos - that it was the immediate infinite mode of the divine substance even calling it its eternal son in the Short Treatise." ⁷¹

In Hegel's system, presence is construed in terms of the Absolute which is not one static substance (as in Spinoza), but a dynamic process consisting of parts all united into a complex system. In the form of Absolute Spirit, the Absolute synthesizes the previous stages of Objective and Subjective Spirit, and brings together everything into its own absolute knowledge of itself. All difference is reappropriated (Aufhebung) into the self-same presence of the Absolute. ⁷² This leads Derrida to suggest that:

"Hegel was already caught up in this game. On the one hand, he undoubtedly summed up the entire philosophy of the logos. He determined ontology as absolute logic; he assembled all the delimitations of philosophy as presence; he assigned to presence the eschatology of parousia, of the self-proximity of infinite subjectivity. And for the same reason he had to debase and subordinate writing." ⁷³

Both Spinoza's and Hegel's "infinitist theologies", therefore, posit an absolute self-identical presence which either denies or reappropriates différance.

"The subordination of the trace to the full presence summed up in the logos, the humbling of writing beneath a speech dreaming its plenitude, such are the gestures required by an ontotheology determining the archeological and eschatological meaning of being as presence, as parousia, as life without différance: another name for death, historical metonymy where God's name holds death in check. That is why, if this movement begins its era in the form of Platonism, it ends in infinitist metaphysics." 74

The foregoing discussion of presence has shown it to be a multi-faceted concept in Derrida's thought. It basically points to an absolute plenum which has a spatial sense in terms of an objective or subjective mode, and a temporal sense in regards to being immediately present or teleological. Any system of thought which posits such a plenum in any of its diverse forms can be characterized as being logocentric.

III Logocentrism in Ordinary and Literary Discourse

The idea of presence (transcendental signified) is not only prevalent in metaphysical thinking; it is also evident

in ordinary and literary discourse. In Positions, Derrida mentions that, "everyday language is not innocent or neutral. It is the language of metaphysics...knotted into a system".⁷⁵ Ordinary, everyday thinking often assumes certain concepts which are essentially metaphysical by nature. One of the most basic assumptions embedded within ordinary language is the distinction between words and things. A word such as "cat" is generally thought to refer to some particular object in the world. For Derrida this view is inherently logocentric since it assumes that the meaning of a word is primarily what it refers to externally, and is not something derived from its internal relation to other words within the linguistic system. Meaning and truth are tied to something outside of language, to a transcendental signified.

"The maintenance of the rigorous distinction - and essential and juridical distinction - between the signatum, the equation of the signatum and the concept, inherently leaves open the possibility of thinking a concept signified in and of itself, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of relationship to a system of signifier." ⁷⁶

Derrida is particularly critical of literary discourse, or more precisely, of the discourse surrounding literary criticism.⁷⁷ Like philosophy and ordinary language, literary criticism harbours a number of presuppositions

which invariably commit it to a metaphysics of presence. One of the most important of these presuppositions is the idea of a unified text. It is often assumed by critics that a literary text embodies a unity or theme which gives the work significance and determination. Without this theme or unity the text would just be an incoherent jumble of words and sentences, signifying nothing. The theme acts as the foundation for truth and meaning in the text, and as such resembles a transcendental signified. As Manfred Frank, expresses it, the text,

"represents something approaching a transcendental signified (signifié) or an expression-founding, originary sense which as the independent organizational basis of the entire construct, serves like a magnet to hold together the field of all meaning in a coherent order." 78

Now Derrida is very skeptical of the whole idea of thematic criticism.

"What we will thus be concerned with here is the very possibility of thematic criticism, at work where-ever one tries to determine a meaning through a text, to pronounce a decision upon it, to decide that this or that is a meaning and that it is meaningful, to say that this meaning is posed, posable, or transposable as such: a theme." 79

In his article, "The Double Session", Derrida critically discusses J.P. Richard's book, Mallarmé's Imaginary Universe, a study which seeks to reduce Mallarmé's poetic texts to certain "signified themes" such as the "blank" and the "fold". For Derrida, this thematic criticism of Richard's does an injustice to Mallarmé's texts. It completely fails to take account of the differences within each of the works.

"Thematicism necessarily leaves out of account the formal, phonic or graphic "affinities" that do not have the shape of a word, the calm unity of the verbal sign. Thematicism as such necessarily ignores the play that takes the word apart, cutting it up and putting the pieces to work "on the basis of some contingency." 80

The result of this thematicism is an "impoverished" reading which is blind to the textuality (différance) of writing, and is only concerned with discovering a total meaning in the text.

"If there is thus no thematic unity or overall meaning to reappropriate beyond the textual instances, no total message located in some imaginary order, intentionality, or lived experience, then the text is no longer the expression or representation (felicitous or otherwise) of any truth that would come to diffract or assemble itself in the polysemy concept of literature. It is this hermeneutic concept of polysemy that must be replaced by dissemination." 81

Another "logocentric" assumption operating in literary criticism involves the question of the ultimate source of textual meaning and order. Most critics believe some kind of presence acts as the ground for thematic unity, though they disagree on whether this presence is ultimately objective or subjective by nature. Erich Auerbach, for instance, believes that the source of textual meaning is the objective presence of reality, that is, the natural and social world. 82 Literary texts mirror or represent this reality through their various plots, characterizations, settings, and styles. It is the extra-linguistic reality that gives texts their integral meaning and unity, a meaning which exists both prior to and independent of any linguistic representation.

On the subjective side, E.D. Hirsch argues that the presence of the author's intention, that is, his or her thoughts, purposes and plans, ultimately determines the meaning of the text, so that the goal of interpretation should be to discover the author's intended meaning, and not some objective reality. 82 By discovering the intended meaning, one unlocks the true significance of the entire work. The author's intention exists before the actual written expression and gives the latter its determinate meaning in the same way that the meaning of an utterance is what is present to the speaker's consciousness, to what he or she has in mind at the moment of speaking. For Derrida, this view is hopelessly logocentric:

"Thus, the notion of an idea or "interior design" as simply anterior to a work which would supposedly be the expression of it, is a prejudice: a prejudice of the traditional criticism called idealist." 84

Both ordinary language and literary criticism, therefore, are riddled with logocentric assumptions and permeated by a metaphysics of presence since they presuppose a transcendental signified which exists behind language, and acts as the source of meaning and truth.

The upshot of Derrida's deconstructive readings of a variety of philosophical and literary texts is to show how metaphysics (logocentrism) is still very much alive. Philosophy has fooled itself into thinking metaphysics has disappeared but it has only flourished under different names like empiricism and humanism. As such, it remains inescapable.

CHAPTER II

The Metaphorical Nature of Metaphysical Discourse

I Metaphor and Metaphysics

If logocentrism represents the thematic or strategic aspect of metaphysical thinking, then figurative (metaphorical) language represents its content or tactics.

As Derrida puts it:

"The history of metaphysics like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies." ¹

Derrida establishes this claim by arguing that no distinction exists between literal language and figurative language. All discourse rests on rhetorical structures for its articulation so that metaphoricity is completely inescapable. This is especially true for philosophical texts which rely heavily on an assortment of figurative devices, metaphor being the main one. Plato's Republic, for instance, favourably compares the idea of the Good to the blazing sun, and Henri Bergson, in his Creative Evolution, describes the "élan vital" in terms of a living, thriving organism. In these and other cases a key metaphysical concept such as Being is expressed by means of metaphorical language.

Derrida coins the term "white mythology" to characterize metaphysics. He claims metaphysical concepts are really nothing but worn out metaphors in disguise whose metaphoricity has been both forgotten and suppressed. They have become bleached to the point of being almost unrecognizable, and so remain virtually undetected by the uncritical mind.

"What is metaphysics? A white mythology which assembles and reflects Western Culture." ²

and conversely:

"What is White mythology? It is metaphysics which has effaced in itself that fabulous scene which brought it into being and yet remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, and invisible drawing covered over in palimpsest." ³

The wear and tear of metaphors result from their repetitive use. As they fade or turn stale, metaphysical concepts arise which attempt to capture, in a static way, the truth of things. It is these concepts, and not the metaphors they rest upon, which have monopolized philosophical discourse through the ages.

The two predominant metaphors Derrida sees operating throughout the history of Western metaphysics are the

metaphors of the sun and the home. The metaphor of the sun brings with it a number of other images associated with light such as visibility and seeing. These images figure preeminently in metaphysical texts and usually stand for knowledge or Being (reality). For example, in the Republic Plato describes how the cave with its shadows represents the sensible world of appearances, whereas the light outside the cave, especially in its source the sun, represents the intelligible world of reality. Real being resides in the Idea of the Good (eidos) which is compared to the sun for it illuminates all things and is the source of visibility. Truth, then, involves the correct seeing of the forms.

Heidegger also makes prolific use of light images such as clearing, illumination and brilliance to describe the disclosure event of Being (Ereignis). He further utilizes the metaphor of the home to express the proximity of Being and time (Daŕein). According to Heidegger, the event of appropriation resembles that of a homecoming. It allows both Being and Dasein to become present to their own proper characters or to their own essence. Being comes to its own proper character by revealing itself in Dasein through language, and Dasein comes to its own proper character by opening itself up to Being. In short, Being is the process of presencing, while Dasein is the location where the presencing occurs. This inseparable proximity of Being and Dasein, the mutual appropriation of the event, is what

constitutes the homecoming and establishes the foundation of truth as the disclosure of Being.

The metaphors of light and home point towards the idea of presence in both its originary and teleological senses. Plato's sun, in representing the Idea of the Good, is synonymous with originary presence since it is the single principal Form from which all others are ultimately derived. It is also akin to teleological presence in that the Idea of the Good is able to account for the world and give it meaning.

The metaphor of home or homecoming plays a similar role in the thought of Hegel. Reality, for Hegel, is the Absolute Idea which is present in itself as logic, for itself as nature, and in and for itself as spirit. The originary and teleological senses of presence are brought together by the circuitious journey of the Absolute Idea which starts with itself (logic), precedes away from itself (nature), and then returns to itself on a higher, self-conscious level (spirit). The journey is described by Hegel as a homecoming.

"This being-at-home-with-itself or coming-to-self of mind may be described as its complete and highest end: it is this alone that it desires and nothing else. Everything that from eternity has happened in heaven and earth, the life of God, and all the deeds of time simply are the struggles for mind to know itself, to find itself, be for itself, and finally

unite itself to itself: it is alienated
and divided, but only so as to be able
thus to find itself and return to itself. 4

The Absolute Idea becomes reintegrated with itself in the same way that a weary traveller returns home to be reunited with his family. The end is the beginning, and the beginning, the end. The Absolute Idea is present both as an originary principle from which the plurality of existence can be deduced, and as a final reference point from which the world can be given meaning.

According to Derrida, the majority of philosophers since Plato have been unaware of the underlying metaphorical elements embedded within philosophical discourse. They have, in other words, effaced philosophy's origins in figurative language. Metaphorical language has usually been considered a non-serious and derivative mode of expression which obstructs the philosopher's search for absolute truth. Its elegant and decorative manner has been seen more as a tool of persuasion than a legitimate method for obtaining real knowledge. This is because metaphorical language is seen to create more of a distance between words and the presence of ideas or things they supposedly represent. Flights of metaphorical fancy appear less connected to a substantial reality, and so are deemed less capable of depicting a form of presence.

The dream, however, has been to discover or construct an ideal, logical language which would eliminate the pervasive metaphoricity of words and supply philosophy with a universal and unambiguous means of expressing certain truths. Towards this end, the majority of philosophers in the West have based linguistic meaning on logic rather than on rhetoric. Both rationalists (e.g. Leibniz) and empiricists (e.g. Locke) believe language to be rooted in signs representing ideas, and view these ideas as standing in logical relation to one another. This view usually works in tandem with the correspondence theory of truth where a proposition is true if it depicts a specific state of affairs. And these propositions can only be expressed in literal language because unlike figurative language it can adequately convey the presence of ideas or things and so remain closely connected to its originating source.

The suppression of figurative language in philosophy is clearly evident in Hobbes' thought. 5. In his book Leviathan, Hobbes attempts to demonstrate how the absolute political state depends on laws expressed in an unequivocal language, and how this language or the universal meaning of words is guaranteed only by the metaphysical concept of the logos as the ground for absolute cognitive authority. There is a connection, then, between the absoluteness of proper meaning and the absoluteness of political authority. The sovereign law depends on the unambiguous proper meanings of

words. Hobbes seeks to exclude metaphor from philosophic discourse because its essential ambiguity or transference of meaning from one thing to another violates the law of identity on which all authority, political and semantic, rests. By arousing passion and playing on ambiguity, metaphorical language leads one astray and is thus analogous to political sedition. And just as sedition must be eliminated from the body politic, metaphor must be expunged from philosophic discourse. The rhetorical structures embodied within philosophical language, then, are completely denied and suppressed by Hobbes.

According to Derrida, the figurative devices such as metaphor found operating in philosophical works are what give philosophy its literary and textual characteristics. And the literary and textual characteristics of philosophical texts is what makes metaphor a part of philosophy. Philosophy is really a kind of writing which results in the establishment of a group of culturally determined texts. The meanings of these texts are derived from their internal reference to one another, their intertextuality, and not to some extra-linguistic source. In other words, the text's appearance of being directed towards some external referent is really quite an effect of language itself.

"A writing within which philosophy is
inscribed as a place within a text which

it does not command. Philosophy is, within writing, nothing but this movement of writing as effacement of the signifier and the desire of presence restored, of being, signified in its brilliance and its glory." 6

For Derrida, metaphysics basically consists of a number of written texts which share similar themes, structures and problems, and whose existence depends on certain hidden but repressed figurative-rhetorical devices.

In "White Mythology" Derrida not only describes how metaphor in philosophical texts operates, but also deconstructs his own position somewhat by claiming that all talk about metaphor in philosophy relies heavily on metaphor. In other words, we cannot discuss metaphor except by using a conceptual scheme which is itself engendered out of metaphor.

"If we wanted to conceive and classify all the metaphorical possibilities of philosophy, there would always be at least one metaphor which would be excluded and remain outside the system: that one, at least, which was needed to construct the concept of metaphor, or, to cut out the argument short, the metaphor of metaphor." 7

For example, the basic idea of wear and tear relies on the metaphor of the image of coins being erased or of adding value ("surplus-value") to something. In addition, the very idea of a "theory" of metaphor implies the notion of foundation or ground which is itself a metaphor of sorts.

"Concept is a metaphor, foundation is a metaphor, theory is a metaphor; and there is no meta-metaphor for them." 8

Thus both metaphor and a theory of metaphor in the text of philosophy are metaphoric.

II Ricoeur and Derrida on the Issue of Metaphor

An exchange of views has recently taken place between Derrida and Paul Ricoeur on the issue of metaphor in philosophy. In his paper "Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse", Ricoeur offers several criticisms of Derrida's conception of metaphor in philosophical texts. The first criticism involves what Ricoeur calls the "efficacy of dead metaphors". On Ricoeur's account, Derrida overemphasizes the supposed fecundity of "dead metaphors" in philosophical discourse. A semantic analysis, however, shows that "dead metaphors are no longer metaphors, but instead are associated with literal meaning, extending its polysemy." 9 Any metaphorical sense of a word, even its dead metaphorical sense, presupposes contact with a literal meaning. Through the process of "lexicalization" the metaphor becomes a proper word. As Ricoeur sees it, Derrida's problems result from his semiotic conception of metaphor which gives primacy

to denomination, and to the substitution of meanings. But this overlooks "the real problems" of metaphoricity, which, as we know, are related to the play of semantic pertinence and impertinence".¹⁰ Ricoeur attempts to show how metaphor relates to the semantics of the sentence and not primarily to the semantics of the word. All substitution theories of metaphor, from Aristotle to Derrida, have believed metaphor to be "an accident of denomination, a displacement in the signification of words".¹¹

In response to the above criticism, Derrida argues that Ricoeur has attributed to him certain positions which he has put into question. The first involves the notion of worn out metaphor. Ricoeur ascribes to Derrida the view that the process of metaphoricity is to be understood in regards to the concept of fading (usure). Derrida, however, claims that he puts this whole conception into question and instead focuses on another sense of usure involving the production of surplus value.

"Ricoeur then does not at all take into consideration this twist and reduces my entire statement to the assertion which I am precisely putting into question, far from assuming it: namely, that the relation of metaphor to concept, and the process of metaphoricity in general would be understood under the concept or the scheme of usure (wear and tear) as a becoming-worn or becoming-worn-out, and not as usure (usury) in another sense, as the production of surplus value (value-plus) according to laws other than those of a continuous and linearly accumulative capitalization."¹²

Moreover, Derrida questions the semiotic conception of metaphor which gives primacy to the word along with the whole dichotomy of semiotic-semantics which Ricoeur adheres to.

"The 'privilege of the name' having been indicated between parentheses, I must take advantage of it in order to emphasize that, like Paul Ricoeur, I have constantly - in 'White Mythology' and elsewhere, and with an insistence that might be judged tiresome but in any case cannot be neglected - put in question the privilege of the name and the word, like all three 'semiotic conceptions which', Ricoeur says precisely, 'impose the primacy of denomination'".¹³

Ricoeur's second major criticism involves Derrida's conception of the role of metaphor in concept formation. According to Ricoeur, Derrida incorporates Hegel's idea of Aufhebung (sublation) and uses it to interpret metaphor as a transfer of meaning from the sensible to the intelligible realm.

"Derrida bases his work here on a particularly eloquent text in Hegel's Aesthetics. It begins by stating that philosophical concepts are initially sensible meanings transposed to the spiritual order."¹⁴

As the metaphor begins to fade it is raised into a concept. This constitutes the first phase of Aufhebung. The second phase involves both suppression and preservation of the original metaphoricity of the concept. That is what Derrida calls "dead metaphor". The dead metaphor creates a proper sense in the spiritual or intelligible order out of the improper sense in the sensible order. Ricoeur likens this idea to Kant's notion of the production of the concept in its schema. And just as the concept is in no way reduced to its schema, Ricoeur believes the concept is not reducible to a dead metaphor. Thus Ricoeur challenges Derrida's claim that a concept results from the wear and tear of a metaphor, for as he states it:

"To revive dead metaphors is in no way to unmask concepts: first of all because revived metaphor functions differently than dead metaphor, but above all because revived metaphor functions differently the full genesis of the concept does not inhere in the process by which metaphor is lexicalized." 15

The idea of a transference of meaning from the visible to the invisible realm is also unwarranted because there are numerous examples, like "courage craving for peril and praise" where no such transference occurs. It is more a matter of "tenor and vehicle, focus and frame" than a process of Aufhebung. Moreover, the predominant metaphors of the sun and the home mentioned by Derrida are only

predominant to the extent that they are selected by philosophical discourse and not because they are dead metaphors hidden and embedded within that discourse. Again, it is Derrida's reliance on the substitution theory of metaphor and his privileging of metaphysical discourse which leads him to assert, according to Ricoeur, "the supposed collusion between the metaphorical pair of the proper and figurative, and the metaphysical pair of the visible and invisible". 16

Derrida responds to Ricoeur's second main criticism much like he responded to the first; by showing how Ricoeur falsely attributes to him certain views he (Derrida) has already put into question. Derrida rejects the idea that he is simply continuing and radicalizing Heidegger's claim that "the metaphorical exists only inside the metaphysical", and that there is a clear correspondence between the metaphysical transfer of the sensible to the intelligible, and the metaphorical transfer of the literal to the figurative. All these dichotomies are subject to criticism.

"This continuist assimilation or setting into filiation surprised me. For it is precisely on the subject of these couples, and particularly of the couple "visible/invisible", "sensible/intelligible", that I had marked, in my note on Heidegger, a clear and unequivocal reservation: a reservation which at least in letter, even resembles that of Ricoeur. Thus I see myself the object, after being assimilated to Heidegger, of an objection whose principle I had myself formulated previously." 17

The importance of this exchange between Ricoeur and Derrida on the issue of metaphor in philosophy cannot be overestimated, for what is at stake is no less than the status of philosophical thinking itself. Ricoeur argues for a sharp distinction between literal and figurative discourse, and places philosophy under the literal category so it may retain its serious and important role as the dispenser of reason and truth. Derrida on the other hand, following Nietzsche, is a critic of seriousness. For him there is no rigid demarcation between literary language and critical discourse. The distinction between the two that Ricoeur draws simply reiterates on a different level such logocentric distinctions as appearance/reality or mind/body. Derrida constantly refuses to grant philosophy the privileged status it has accorded itself as the "sovereign dispenser of reason". Indeed, philosophy has only been able to claim this pretentious status by ignoring or suppressing the disruptive effects of language. It is an illusion, however, to think that philosophy can disregard language and arrive at some unmediated presence or truth. And it is an additional illusion to think that only literature deals with fictions and philosophy with reality. Both are preoccupied with imaginary themes like the search for an Absolute (transcendental signified).

The "blind spots" of metaphor and other rhetorical devices can be detected in philosophy's attempt to efface its textual character. As a result, rhetorical analysis applies as equally to philosophy (or any other literal text), as it does to literature. Thus to side with either Ricoeur or Derrida on this issue will have enormous repercussions on how one sees and values philosophy.

CHAPTER III

Three Antecedent Ideas to Derrida's
Conception of Logocentrism

Derrida's ideas concerning logocentrism have not occurred in a vacuum. Other thinkers have held similar views regarding the Western metaphysical tradition. Foremost among these are Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900), Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976), and Emmanuel Levinas (1910 -). Each of these thinkers have interpreted the history of Western metaphysics in a similar fashion and have postulated a single theme underlying the entire tradition; Nietzsche called this theme "Platonism"; Heidegger termed it "ontotheology"; while Levinas labeled it "totality". I wish to compare their respective ideas of Platonism, ontotheology, and totality with Derrida's conception of logocentrism, and also explore Derrida's criticisms of their views. 1

Before proceeding any further I wish to briefly discuss a problem arising from there being any views anticipating Derrida's conception of logocentrism. Can it be maintained that Nietzsche's, Heidegger's and Levinas' position concerning the Western metaphysical tradition "influenced" Derrida's thinking given his deconstruction of logocentrism and its accompanying ideas of origin, casualty, teleology [linear history], and individual subjectivity?

This is a serious problem because being influenced by any person or text implies, among other things, a commitment to these logocentric ideas and to a continuity of opinion which Derrida rejects. But if he rejects them and is still deterministically influenced by certain texts, his position is incoherent. Can it be said then that Derrida's conception of logocentrism is really influenced by the ideas of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Levinas?

Derrida is not so much influenced in a deterministic way, I think, by a previous set of ideas. Rather, he is simply agreeing with a particular way of seeing. In other words, Derrida is not copying a series of concepts, but engaging in a particular problematic. What Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Levinas have done is help establish a certain way of looking at the history of Western metaphysics, one which Derrida has basically borrowed. He says, for instance, that Heidegger's questions set the stage for his own investigations.

"What I have attempted to do would have not been possible without the opening of Heidegger's question."²

Derrida, however, does not borrow uncritically. He points out when these theorists (mainly Heidegger and Levinas) have failed to escape the confines of logocentrism.

The idea of influence, then, designates a particular problematic or framework similar to the Nietzschean conception of genealogy where the direction of "instinct" creates a kinship between minds without the need for psychological identification.

I Nietzsche's Idea of Platonism

Although Derrida has mainly written on other people's interpretations of Nietzsche³, and little on Nietzsche's own texts, the "influence" of the German philosopher still figures predominantly in his writings. This can be seen, for instance, in Derrida's claim that Platonism has "set up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality"⁴ since Nietzsche's idea of Platonism, or the Western metaphysical tradition, anticipates Derrida's own description of the binary and repressive structure of metaphysical thinking. What then is Nietzsche's view of Platonism?

For Nietzsche, both philosophy (e.g. Platonism) and religion (e.g. Christianity - "a platonism for the people") posit a two world thesis: there is a true, eternal world of Being as opposed to a false, changing world of becoming. This otherworldliness lies at the basis of Western metaphysical thought. Indeed, the defining feature of metaphysics (Platonism) is its depreciation of life and all becoming.

"The 'other world', as illumined by these facts, as a synonym for non-being, nonliving, not wanting to live -

General insight: it is the instinct of life-weariness and not that of life, which has created the "other world".

Consequence: philosophy, religion and morality are symptoms of decadence." 5

Nietzsche suggests three ways in which this fundamental dualism seduces people into looking beyond the world of their own experience. The first is an unknown world which transcends what we know; the second is another world where things are different, perhaps even better; and the third is a true world which is opposed to the deception and flux of this world. All three, according to Nietzsche, generate the otherworldliness prevalent in Western philosophy, religion and morality, thereby repressing the temporal world of becoming.

"And behold: now the world becomes false, and precisely on account of the properties that constitute its reality: change, becoming, multiplicity, opposition, contradiction was." 6

This repression results from the fact that a changing world leads to a state of intolerable suffering and frustration, and from the constant desire then to abolish this suffering through an active forgetting. In other

words, Nietzsche offers us a genealogical explanation for the origins of the two-world thesis, namely, the deep-rooted need of humanity for self-preservation, security, and a sense of identity.

"We have projected the conditions of our preservation as predicates of being in general. Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the "real" world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being." 7

Now insofar as Nietzsche's explanation is seen to be purely psychological in character Derrida would clearly reject it. Psychological explanations refer to the conscious subject and so are entangled in that whole web of logocentric ideas. If, however, the explanation is taken in a genealogical sense, when one examines the whole process of underlying drives and passions, then Derrida would find it more convincing. Metaphysics (logocentrism) cannot be explained by surface psychological phenomenon for it is something people are not aware of. It is more of an unconscious drive or desire which sacrifices the individual for the sake of the universal.

Another way in which Nietzsche and Derrida see repression operating in metaphysical thinking is in philosophy's attempt to eclipse its basis in figurative (metaphorical) language. In The Birth of Tragedy and "On

Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", Nietzsche deals with the crucial problems arising from language's attempt to represent reality truthfully. He claims language to be inadequate to express the truth of things since reality is an undifferentiated becoming or chaos, whereas language is a system of concepts and metaphors which freezes this becoming and creates a static being. All concepts and theoretical structures are human fabrications which falsify the eternal flux of reality. Their purpose has to do more with practical human endeavors such as safeguarding the life and preservation of the species than in giving us a true account of things in the world. In fact, when Nietzsche asks "What then is truth?" he answers, "A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms". The essence of language, therefore, is to lie in an "extra-moral sense", to mask the chaotic nature of the universe by constructing a benevolent cosmic scheme which humans can come to know and derive meaning from.

For Nietzsche, language is radically metaphorical in character. The sense of metaphor he embraces is the original Greek one where metaphor is viewed as a transference or carry over of meaning. If the meaning of one word, say flower, is carried over into another word, say women, then it can be said to be metaphorical. This is a broader conception of metaphor than the Aristotelean one where metaphor is a rhetorical figure of speech which likens

one thing to another. It is thereby opposed to the common view which sees metaphorical language as a deviant mode of discourse.

In demonstrating how metaphor involves the carry over of our experience into language, Nietzsche is able to establish four different but related claims. The first is that there is no distinction between literal and figurative discourse. A literal expression is simply one that has been repeated a sufficient number of times and is taken as factual, while a figurative expression is one that has not been repeated so often and thus remains nominally fresh. The second claim is that a true idea is one enshrined as it was in the cemetery of metaphors, while a false idea, in being a deviant image, is one that is unenshrined and so is very much alive. The third claim is that, contrary to Aristotle, metaphorical language is prior to conceptual language for in transferring our nerve stimuli into images and our images into concepts we cannot help but create metaphors. And the fourth and final claim is that philosophical discourse, like all language, is inherently metaphorical since it depends on concepts which turn out to be only residues of metaphors. The Western philosophical tradition has suppressed its metaphorical origins, for this has been the only way to maintain the authority of reason over the rhetorical gambits of language. It is by effacing the metaphors that brought it into being that philosophy has

been able to direct itself to the truth of things. Nietzsche sums up the whole predicament in the context of his attack on the idea of absolute truth:

"What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins." 8

Although Derrida agrees with much of what Nietzsche says concerning metaphor and philosophic discourse, he remains somewhat sceptical of Nietzsche's claim that all language is radically metaphorical by character.

"Nietzsche stretches the limits of the metaphorical to such a point that he attributes a metaphorical power to every use of sound in speaking: for does this not involve the transfer into the time of speaking of something that has a different nature in itself." 9

The problem is that Nietzsche seems to treat "every signifier as a metaphor for the signified" and thus comes up against the classical concept of metaphor which "denotes

only the substitution of one signified for another so that the one becomes the signifier of the other". 10

Derrida thinks Nietzsche has confused one figure of speech, namely metaphor, with another figure of speech, metonymy. But they are different.

"Is not Nietzsche's procedure here precisely to extend to every element of discourse, under the name of metaphor, what classical rhetoric no less strangely considered a quite specific figure of speech, metonymy of the sign? 11

Metonymy consists in taking the sign for the thing signified. Symbolic and arbitrary signs which substitute an attribute or another suggestive word for the name of the thing meant, such as when we take the crown to suggest the Monarch's majesty or the hat to suggest the Cardinal's office, are examples of metonymical expressions.

Despite Derrida's claim, Nietzsche was well aware of the distinction between metaphor and metonymy and repeatedly discussed the rhetorical figures of speech in his Basel Lectures. He conceived of metaphor, however, in both a general sense, where it is a collective name for all rhetorical figures of speech involving a transference of meaning (e.g. synecdoche, metonymy), and in a more specific sense where it is an abbreviated simile implying "like" or "as" (e.g. Jack is an ass.). Derrida might be willing to go along with Nietzsche's position here if one substituted the general sense of metaphor for figurative language, including

synecdoche, metonymy, personification, etc., and claimed this to be the basis for all discourse.

The Nietzschean idea of Platonism bears remarkable resemblance to Derrida's notion of logocentrism as a form of idealism. Recall that for Derrida idealism structures things in terms of hierarchical oppositions where one term in an opposing pair (e.g. reality - appearance) takes precedence over the other term. The inferior term then becomes excluded and repressed in philosophical discourse.

"Is not the whole thought of Nietzsche a critique of philosophy as active indifference to difference, as a system of reduction or adaphoristic repression?" 12

Thus both Nietzsche and Derrida see the search for transcendence as the guiding theme and desire of Western metaphysics.

II Heidegger's Idea of Ontotheology

The principal "influence" on Derrida's thought regarding logocentrism has been Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger's interpretation of the Western metaphysical tradition as being essentially ontotheological laid the foundation for Derrida's own critique. Heidegger was preoccupied with the question of Being. He showed how most philosophers have only been content to ask themselves about

the Being of beings, and have remained completely oblivious to the central problem of Being itself. They have, in other words, been guilty of a forgetfulness of Being; a forgetfulness that eventually led to the birth of Western metaphysics in Plato's thought. Heidegger attempts to retrieve the thought of Being, first within the confines of metaphysics with his investigation of fundamental ontology or Dasein (human existence), and later outside the realm of metaphysical thinking with his concept of the ontological difference and Ereignis. These latter concepts, together with the method of the destruction of ontology, represents Heidegger's attempt to overcome metaphysics. By destroying ontology, that is to say, by directing one's attention to the unthought and the unsaid in philosophical discourse, one transcends the bounds of ontic metaphysics (about beings) and becomes involved with the central question of Being itself. Thus in overcoming metaphysics one is simply overcoming the fateful forgetfulness of Being.

The destruction of ontology and resultant overcoming of metaphysics is carried out by Heidegger by means of his interpretation of the Western metaphysical tradition. Heidegger describes this tradition as consisting of a number of assumptions which form the theme and structure of an ontotheology.

Metaphysics is ontology because it is concerned with the Being of beings in its utmost generality as the first and most universal ground common to all beings.

"When metaphysics thinks of beings with respect to the ground that is common to all beings as such then it is logic as ontologic." 13

Metaphysics is also theology in the sense that it thinks Being as the highest ground above all beings, and as the foundation of itself (causa sui) which explains the ensemble of beings in their totality.

"When metaphysics thinks of beings as such as a whole; that is, with respect to the highest being which accounts for everything, then it is logic as theo-logic." 14

And metaphysics is logic because it is concerned with the Being of beings in the form of logos (a gathering together and laying down as a unity), which is really a thinking preoccupied with finding ultimate reasons, causes, principles, or grounds.

"We now understand the name logic... as the name for that kind of thinking which everywhere provides and accounts for the ground of beings as such within the whole in terms of Being as the Ground." 15

In short, metaphysics for Heidegger is onto-theo-logic because it seeks to ground beings in the "permanent presence" of an unconditioned Being (e.g. God) on which everything else is contingently related.

Now definite similarities exist between Heidegger's notion of ontotheology and Derrida's conception of logocentrism. Both ideas draw our attention to the primary theme of Western metaphysical thought, namely, the search for an absolute order of meaning or totalizing principle such as God, Logos, Truth, or Being, which is seen to be separate from the realm of contingent beings, and exists in itself as foundation. More specifically, Heidegger's concept of logos as the gathering together and laying down as a unity relates to Derrida's idea of logos in the term "logocentrism" which refers to a way of thinking centered on some ultimate principle or ground.

Derrida also follows Heidegger's example in reading the texts of individual philosophers and does not just look at the entire philosophical tradition. Their way of reading or interpreting, however, is quite distinct. Heidegger is more of the scholar who is well versed in the literature and who meticulously analyses the etymology of words. His concern is to disclose the general type or theme. Derrida simply states the theme and then deconstructs the text exposing its logocentric (phonocentric) biases.

Both Heidegger and Derrida have read Plato in a particular way. Heidegger shows how Plato's allegory of the cave in Book VII of the Republic embodies a shift in the meaning of physics from Being (presenting of the present) to being (the present). In preSocratic thought physics (or

physics) encompassed both the temporal aspect of presenting and the non-temporal aspect of appearing. Later, Plato concentrated solely on the present part of Being at the expense of the presenting part. The result was a conception of Being in terms of the eternal Forms or Ideas, for they are what illuminate all things and are the source of visibility. Derrida's reading of Plato focuses on the Phaedrus which is where Plato systematically subordinates writing and other forms of graphic representation to speech, and where speech is seen to be the harbinger of reason and truth. Both Heidegger's and Derrida's interpretations of Plato, however, point to the same outcome: In both, Plato is seen as the philosopher most responsible for the postulated division between a supersensible world of reality and a sensible world of appearance; a division which forms the bedrock of most metaphysical and religious systems of thought.

"But the fact that Platonism" which sets up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality, should not escape the generality of this structural constraint, and even illustrates it with incomparable subtlety and force, stands out as all the more significant." 16

Another Heideggerian influence on Derrida's notion of logocentrism involves the idea of presence. It might be argued that Derrida's sense of "spatial" presence is closely

akin to Heidegger's idea of "presence-at-hand" in Being and Time. For Heidegger, something can be said to be present-at-hand when it is viewed as a bare object with objective properties, causal relations, and a location in space, and not simply as a tool to be used for some purpose in a particular context. It is simply "there" independent of human thinking or doing.¹⁷ This independent "thereness" is what characterizes Derrida's idea of presence in the objective mode. The Aristotelian substance, for instance, objectively exists in concrete particular things as do the accidental and essential qualities. Despite change, an abstract materiality constantly remains. Both Heidegger and Derrida reject this idea of objective presence because for them everything occurs within a particular context of theoretical assumptions and practices, so that nothing can be purely present-at-hand. In other words, theory (reflection) and practice involve one another and are strictly interdependent.

Besides the similarities, there are important differences between Heidegger's and Derrida's interpretations of Western philosophy. The major difference between them involve their respective purposes or aims. Heidegger carries out his interpretation in order to destroy ontology and retrieve the thought of Being, whereas Derrida sets out to interpret the tradition only to show how it has

imprisoned us within a certain metaphysical epoch, and to reveal how this imprisonment came about. In other words, he wants to delineate the constraints on freedom or "freeplay", and to argue that logocentrism is inescapable.

"There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language - no syntax and no lexicon - which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest." 18

And:

"I try to keep myself at the limit of philosophical discourse. I say limit and not death, for I do not at all believe in what today is so easily called the death of philosophy." 19

That Heidegger's views have opened up a space for Derrida's thought there can be little doubt. As Derrida himself expresses the matter:

"I do maintain... that Heidegger's text is extremely important to me, and that it constituted a novel, irreversible advance all of whose critical responses we are far from having exploited." 20

Despite these influences, Derrida severely criticizes Heidegger for remaining entrapped within the epoch of ontotheology or a metaphysics of presence. Heidegger remains a prisoner of this epoch for three main reasons: first, because of his systematic and totalistic reading of Nietzsche's texts; second, because of his later concept of Ereignis; and third, because of his theory of language. I will investigate each of these criticisms separately.

The logocentric elements in Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche reside in his attempt to uncover a unified meaning and truth in Nietzsche's texts. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche is a systematic thinker who tried and failed to overcome the Western metaphysical tradition. By asking "What is the being of the entity" Nietzsche betrayed his metaphysical orientation for this has been the "master question" governing the entire course of Western philosophy. Nietzsche is further described by Heidegger as being the last metaphysician because of his answer to the metaphysical question; namely, that the being of the entity is the will to power.

Derrida takes issue with this "totalistic" reading of Nietzsche, and argues for a more rhapsodic interpretation. For him, "there is no totality to Nietzsche's text."²¹ The trouble with Heidegger's view is that it ignores and excludes the stylistic excesses within Nietzsche's writings, and settles for a single, proper meaning. Nietzsche's texts

are filled with innovative terms and metaphors which distance him from the surface of the text. For this reason, "there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche's texts".²² Heidegger has forgotten the essential heterogeneity of Nietzsche's writings because of his hidden commitment to a metaphysics of presence. His entire hermeneutic project rests on the "logocentric" assumption that there is an ultimate presence of meaning in Nietzsche's text which seeks to be released. For Derrida, this is simply part of the same metaphysical quest for origin and truth which lies at the base of logocentrism.

"Heidegger here is pursuing the Nietzschean operation into the very reaches where it exceeds metaphysics and Platonism. But at the same time it would seem that what he is after there is in fact a form of question more proper to a hermeneutic, and consequently philosophical, order, indeed the very order that Nietzsche's operation should have otherwise put out of order."²³

The second logocentric element that can be found in Heidegger's thought involves his concept of Ereignis. In Positions, Derrida states that Ereignis may be the "most profound and powerful defense of what I attempt to put into question under the rubric of the thought of presence".²⁴ Unfortunately Derrida does not elaborate on this provocative remark. I will therefore endeavor to suggest what Derrida might of meant given his more general criticisms of a metaphysics of presence.

The word "Ereignis" is used by Heidegger in its etymological sense as the "occurrence of owning". The essential ambiguity of the word is evident in its meaning both a coming to pass (event) and a bringing a thing into its own, or what is proper to it (appropriation). The usual translation of Ereignis is "the event of appropriation". The concept Ereignis represents Heidegger's attempt to overcome traditional metaphysics. The thought of Being (the infinite, eternal) and time (the finite, temporal) have preoccupied philosophers throughout history. Western metaphysics began when Plato separated the realm of Being (the Forms) from the realm of time (the appearing world), and subordinated the latter to the former. Heidegger has endeavored to rethink Being and time anew with his concept of Ereignis. Simply put, Ereignis is the event of appropriation which is prior to Being and time and gives meaning to them both. It is that movement or process which allows Being and time to belong together and makes them what they properly are.

Now Heidegger's concept of Ereignis could be seen by Derrida as falling into a form of logocentrism or ontotheology. To begin with, Ereignis appears to possess the same characteristics as any transcendental signified (e.g. God). Like the latter concept, Ereignis acts as the ultimate source and sanction of Being and time. This is the case regardless of whether Ereignis is conceived as a

separate third thing apart from Being and time, as some commentators have argued ²⁵, or as a further explication of Being itself as others have claimed. ²⁶ In either case Ereignis remains ontologically prior to Being, non-being, and time, and is their primordial source. Moreover, like the Christian conception of God, Ereignis grants Being and time almost as a gift. It sends Being in the manner of time, and gives time in the manner of Being. This makes Ereignis sound like the mysterious origin of all that is, and perhaps is Heidegger's final answer to the perennial metaphysical question of why there is something rather than nothing.

Besides being an ultimate source, Ereignis is also something that is permanently present. This is clear from Heidegger's account of the different epochs of Being. According to Heidegger, Ereignis grants Being to Dasein under the successive guises or determinations which constitute the history of Western metaphysics such as Idea, Substance, Will, and so on. Despite these different determinations, there remains any concealed element which is common to all epochs. This common, concealed element is the Ereignis. It is permanently present throughout all time, and thus resembles the a-historical God or Absolute of ontotheological thought.

"The history of Being becomes a history
in which no being, nothing, happens

except Ereignis' unfathomable process.
 The property of the abyss (das Eigentum
des Ab-grundes) is necessarily abyss of
 proper-ty, the violence of an event which
 befalls without Being." 27

It is by possessing the logocentric characteristics of ultimate source, ground, and presence that Ereignis can be classified as a ontotheological idea pointing to the limits of conceptualization.

The final logocentric element in Heidegger's thought that I wish to deal with concerns his theory of language. In Derrida's view, Heidegger is committed to phonocentrism, to the privileging of speech over writing.

"But doubtless there is a certain Heideggerean phonologism, a noncritical privilege accorded in his works, as in the West in general, to the voice, to a determined "expressive substance"." 28

This privileging of the voice and commitment to presence is most apparent in Heidegger's description of truth (alethia).

For Heidegger, truth consists in the disclosure event of Being. To illustrate this disclosure event, Heidegger makes prolific use of light images such as clearing, illumination, and brilliance, as well as auditory images (like when he says we are all waiting to hear the call of Being 29). Both these types of images, the ocular and the auditory, hark back to a Platonic language of representation where seeing

and hearing are thought to be more immediately present than writing, and so are more representative of a Being whose determination is presence.

Derrida also believes that in Heidegger's theory of language "Being" is the "masterword", the transcendental signified to which all other signifiers refer and derive their meaning. Speech, especially in the form of poetry, is the bearer of ontological reference and truth; truth being the disclosure of Being. For Derrida, any theory of language which rests on an irreducible dualism between the signifier and the signified is harbouring the metaphysical illusion that a sign must refer to something, and that this referentiality enables language to express truths. The search for a fixed origin, however, for a transcendental signified, is simply "the other side of nostalgia", and "there never has been and never will be a unique word, a master name... even the name of Being." 30

Thus although Heidegger's interpretation of the history of metaphysics shares much in common with Derrida's own perspective (specifically in terms of logocentrism), Derrida still claims that Heidegger remained captive to the ontotheological tradition.

III Levinas' Idea of Totality

In addition to Heidegger, the other major precursor to Derrida's thought regarding logocentrism has been the

Lithuanian Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Derrida has devoted a lengthy essay to Levinas' philosophy, 31 and refers to him occasionally throughout his writings. His respect for Levinas is evident when he says, "Totality and Infinity is a 'great book', a work of art, and that his own questions are 'really questions put to us by Levinas'. 32

Levinas sees himself as bringing together and improving upon two philosophical traditions: Continental Phenomenology and Judaic Interpersonalism. The former encompasses the philosophies of Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger, while the latter includes such Jewish thinkers as Rosenzweig, Cohen and Buber. What Levinas is essentially aiming at is a "phenomenology of the Other" which he feels has been either neglected or misconstrued in the course of Western philosophy. He is also seeking to correct what he considers to be an overadherence to Hellenic reason at the expense of Hebraic morality. In other words, Levinas wants to affirm the metaphysical priority of ethics over ontology, thus reversing the "totalistic" trend running throughout Western philosophical thought.

The entire history of Western metaphysics, according to Levinas, has been characterized by what he calls a "totality" and an "egology". All theoretical disciplines such as philosophy and science can be understood in terms of their attitude towards the Other. The Other is that which

lies outside oneself and includes other person, objects, nature and primarily God.

Philosophy is a totalistic discipline because it seeks a synoptic explanation of the Other, and incorporates the individual uniqueness of the Other into a more comprehensive system of thought. For Levinas, this is tantamount to violence since totalistic thinking ruthlessly excludes the Other, forcing it to surrender its individuality to a category that reduces the Other to a pure abstraction. Levinas labels this way of thinking "ontological" because it gives priority to Being over individual beings, and subordinates the relation with the Other to the relation of Being in general.

"Western Philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same. Interposition of a middle term and neutral term that ensures the triumph of Being." 33

Western philosophy is also an "egology" since it is based on the self's need for a comprehensive understanding of the world. The self seeks to reduce the multiplicity of experience to a unified structure of thought in order to feel more certain and secure. It is this egoistic need of the self which dictates the reduction of the Other to the same. Moreover, the Other takes on meaning and value only

in relation to the self, and the self only relates to the Other by means of reason (or thought and representation).

"The relation with the other is here accomplished only through a third term which I find in myself. The ideal of Socratic truth thus rests on the essential self-sufficiency of the same, its identification in its egoism. Philosophy is an egology." ³⁴

In egology, then, primacy is given to reason and ontological truth over that of interpersonal relationships.

Derrida's interpretation of the Western metaphysical tradition owes as much to Levinas as it does to Heidegger. Indeed, Levinas' idea of totality, like Heidegger's idea of ontotheology, anticipates Derrida's own conception of logocentrism. What each of these ideas have in common is a preoccupation with presence or identity which is really at the core of any metaphysical system. Identity refers to a state of absolute sameness, free of all negativity and difference, and imbued with the status of first principle or ground. For Levinas, totalistic thinking seeks identity by overlooking the individuality of things, reducing them to a nebulous Being. Similarly, logocentric thinking seeks identity by postulating a transcendental signified, an absolute centre which pulls the multiplicity of things towards itself. Both ideas, therefore, embrace a kind of monistic reductionism where the plurality of experience gets

reduced to a single, totalistic presence. In Levinas' thought this presence takes the form of an ontology of abstract Being, whereas in Derrida's mind presence takes the form of a transcendental signified which can be conceived of in numerous ways.

Derrida's description of the objective and subjective variants of presence (transcendental signified) owes something to Levinas' analysis. We saw earlier how the transcendental signified has been thought of in terms of an objective mode (e.g. Aristotle's ousia) and a subjective mode (e.g. Descartes' cogito). Levinas expresses a similar view. He sees the Western philosophical tradition as passing through three main phases. The first may be called the period of objectivity.³⁵ In this period, which encapsulates both ancient Greek and Medieval philosophy, primacy is given to the objective world where multiplicity (otherness) is reduced to some form of the same, be it Plato's Ideas, Aristotle's Substance, or Aquina's God. Each of these ideas represent an "imperialistic ontology" or "totality" since they embody a synoptic view of objective reality which destroys the radical alterity of the Other.

The objective phase of philosophy eventually gives way to the period of subjectivity. This phase, which primarily begins with Descartes and ends with Kant, centers on the subject (e.g. ego, self) rather than on some objective or transpersonal realm. The subject in the certitude of his

own self-consciousness becomes the foundation of knowledge, and things take on meaning only in relation to the subject (egology). This idea is clearly evident in Descartes' cogito, Leibniz' monads, and Kant's transcendental self; for in each there is an attempt to comprehend the real in terms of a totalistic explanation of the subject whose needs are primary..

Anomalies and insurmountable problems erupt in the subjectivity paradigm ushering in a new period of intersubjectivity. The phase of intersubjectivity, which begins with Kant's Second Critique and reaches maturity in Levinas' own philosophy of exteriority, emphasizes the Other over and against the totalistic object and subject. In intersubjective thinking, the radical alterity of the Other (e.g. nature, person, God) is rescued from the totalitarian, egological thought constructions of the earlier periods. The Other is seen for what it is, above and beyond any general totalization of it. By relating to the Other on its own terms, so to speak, we transcend the philosophic totality, egology, and violence so characteristic of Western thought.

Although Derrida's interpretation of Western philosophy owes much to Levinas' analysis, he believes Levinas himself has fallen victim to totalistic thinking. This is most apparent in Levinas' ideas of absolute otherness, positive infinity, and radical empiricism.

Levinas puts forth his conception of absolute otherness in opposition to the idea of a self-enclosed totality. The egoistic self tries to bring everything under its control by representing it in some conceptual system. Something, however, always remains outside the system, completely unrecognizable. This outside something Levinas calls absolute otherness or exteriority. The Other is that radical alterity transcending any reduction to the same. It can never be captured by any categories, and is beyond all cognitive structures.

"It is something other than all that, absolutely other and not other in conjunction with some relative term. It is the Unrevealed. Not revealed not because all knowledge is too limited and too small to receive its light, but also unrevealed because One and because to make oneself known implies a duality which already clashes with the unity of the One. The One is beyond being, not because it is buried and hidden. It is buried because it is beyond being, completely other than being."³⁶

In his critical rejoinder, Derrida cogently pinpoints the dilemmas inherent in Levinas' notion of absolute otherness. He first challenges the idea of a non-spatial exteriority outside of being. To say that the Other lies outside of being is to embroil oneself in the language of space, for outside is as much as a spatial concept as inside. It makes no sense then for Levinas to talk about a

non-spatial exteriority except through the language of the same, of totality.

"That it is necessary to state infinity's excess over totality in the language of totality; that it is necessary to state the other in the language of the same; that it is necessary to think true exteriority, that is, still by means of the Inside - Outside structure and by spatial metaphor; and that it is necessary still to inhabit the metaphor in ruins, to dress oneself in tradition's shreds and the devil's patches - all this means, perhaps, that there is no philosophical logos which must not first let itself be expatriated into the structure Inside - Outside." 37

Thus Levinas fails to eradicate such traditional, totalistic dichotomies as inside-outside, and so remains subject to the same binary logic operative in all metaphysical discourse.

There is a related problem with the concept of absolute otherness as it concerns the other person or the alter-ego. In being absolutely other, the other person must contain a reference beyond himself. He must, in other words, be other than something. Now "other" here must mean other than self for this is the only logical way of distinguishing oneself from another. Consequently, other is not really divorced from the relation to an ego and is, therefore, not absolutely other. Furthermore, the other person can only be absolutely other if, and only if, they are other than themselves. Yet in being other than themselves, they are

not what they are and thus, not absolutely other. This insolvable dilemma, Derrida argues, has adverse effects on the interpersonal encounter. Treating the other person as an alter ego deprives him or her of their equality as an ego, and ultimately destroys their alterity. The other is irreducible to my ego precisely because he is himself an ego. By approaching him as an alter-ego I submerge him into the mundanity of the world, thus collapsing his entire alterity.

"In effect, either there is only the same, which can no longer even appear and be said, nor even exercise violence (pure infinity or finitude); or indeed there is the same and the other, and then the other cannot be the other - of the same - except by being the same (as itself: ego), and cannot be the same (as itself: ego) except by being the other's other: alter-ego." 38

Positive infinity, so Levinas claims, is just another name for the totally exterior Other. It is completely non-negative and is the foundation of being, including all thoughts and actions. Positive infinity manifests itself in the fact of the other person. The presence of the Other in the face-to-face encounter demands that I question my egoistic existence and take an active, moral interest in other people. The face of the Other speaks to me and in its expressions I discern traces of the infinite in a positive mode of being. Levinas articulates the matter in the

following way:

"The calling of question of the self is precisely the welcome reception of the absolutely other. The epiphany of the absolutely other is the countenance where the Other calls out to me and signifies for me an order on behalf of his nudity and of his destitution. His presence is a summons to reply." 39

And elsewhere,

"This trauma which cannot be assumed, inflicted by Infinity on presence, or this affecting of presence by Infinity - this affectivity - takes shape as a subjection to the neighbor. It is thought thinking more than it thinks, Desire, the reference to the neighbor, the responsibility." 40

Derrida sees an overwhelming paradox in this description of positive infinity. Levinas is attempting to cognize something, the infinite, which is essentially pre-cognitive. In other words, he is using concepts and language to describe and apprehend a positive infinity that lies beyond all concepts and language; or to experience the infinite Other which transcends all experience.

"If one thinks, and Levinas does, that positive infinity tolerates, or even requires infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first

of all the words infinite and other. Infinity cannot be understood as other except in the form of the infinite. As soon as one attempts to think infinity as a positive plenitude (one pole of Levinas' non-negative transcendence) the other becomes unthinkable, impossibly unutterable. Perhaps Levinas calls us toward this unthinkable-impossible-unutterable beyond (tradition's) Being and Logos. But it must not be possible either to think or state this call," 41

Against this background, positive infinity and the encounter with the other emerge as incompatible. The infinite is supposed to express itself in and through the face of the other person, but this person is also a finite body. How can the two possibly interact? How can they be adequately reconciled? Moreover, Levinas' attempt to subordinate ontology to ethical metaphysics ultimately fails because the notion of the face to face encounter implies an ontological commitment involving at least the being of the other person. The idea of a positive infinity draws Levinas back into a philosophy of totality since infinity turns out to be the a-historical origin of meaning which is not unlike the traditional Judeo-Christian concept of God.

"Now Levinas simultaneously proposes to us a humanism and a metaphysics. It is a question of attaining, via the royal road of ethics, the supreme existent, the truly existent ("substance" and "in itself" are Levinas' expressions) as other. And this existent is man, determined as face in his essence, as man on the basis of his resemblance to God. Is this not what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks of the unity of metaphysics, humanism and ontotheology?" 42

Finally, Derrida accuses Levinas of lapsing into a "radical empiricism" which ultimately rests on a metaphysics of presence.

"By radicalizing the theme of the infinite exteriority of the other, Levinas thereby assumes the aim which has more or less secretly animated all the philosophical gestures which have been called empiricisms in the history of philosophy. He does so with an audacity, a profundity, and a resoluteness never before attained." 43

The type of empiricism Derrida has in mind here is more in accord, I think, with that of Sextus Empiricus, rather than with David Hume's. It is, in other words, more a matter of looking for a primordial experience rather than an analysis of the perceptual sources of knowledge. The primordial experience that Levinas alludes to is of the absolutely Other. The problem is that this experience is determined by a metaphysics of presence since it involves encountering the infinite through the presence of the other person's face. The presence of the Other is the source of experience and meaning. Thus the long complicity between empiricism and metaphysics in Western philosophy continues in Levinas' thought.

"By taking this project to its end, he totally renews empiricism, and inverts it

by revealing it to itself as metaphysics. Despite the Husserlian and Heideggerean states of his thought, Levinas does not even seek to draw back from the word empiricism. On two occasions, at least, he speaks for "the radical empiricism confident in the instruction of exteriority" (TI). The experience of the other (of the infinite) is irreducible, and is therefore "the experience par excellence" (TI). And, concerning death which is indeed its irreducible resource, Levinas speaks of an "empiricism which is in no way a positivism". But can one speak of an experience of the other or of difference? Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always an encountering of an irreducible presence, the perception of a phenomenality?

This complicity between empiricism and metaphysics is in no way surprising." 44

In summing up this chapter it is important to note that Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida all share a common orientation; they are all, in short, critics of modernity. The word "modernity" refers here to a cluster of concepts and interests involving the individual subject or consciousness, reason [rationalism], humanism, positivism, science, objectivity, utility, and historical progress. Its principal tenet is the belief that nature is a reasonable system that human beings, by virtue of their sensory and rational powers, can know [and control] without the aid of external authority.

Derrida and company place this central tenet in question. They reject the Cartesian subject-centered philosophy in favour of the strangeness and ruling force of

language. Their emphasis is on finiteness, plurality, paradox, and ambiguity, rather than on a rational order of things. 45 These thinkers, in short, are "post-modern" in that they treat modernity as a field of discourse coming to completion or as the last epoch of what is alleged to be a closed history. The task of philosophy in this context is to describe the internal rules that have regulated Western philosophical discourse through the ages. After this, the way is clear to think the "manifold" (the utter dispersion of things).

CHAPTER IV

Two Critical Perspectives on Derrida's Conception of Logocentrism

So far I have simply tried to articulate what Derrida means by logocentrism, and to show how he was indebted to Nietzsche's, Heidegger's, and Levinas' ideas concerning the Western metaphysical tradition. I now wish to offer some criticisms of his interpretive scheme. What are we to make of Derrida's general view of the Western metaphysical tradition? Is he essentially correct or not in claiming that logocentrism is the single, underlying theme running throughout the history of Western philosophy? There are two main areas for criticism I wish to focus on: the first concerns the method used by Derrida to arrive at his metahistory of philosophy, that is, his general perspective on the history and logic of the tradition as a whole; and the second concentrates on the specific content of the metahistory itself. I offer these criticisms only as possible lines of critical investigation, and not as definitive appraisals. However, I think they raise pertinent points and problems that any Derridean must seriously consider.

I Criticisms of the Method

Recall that on Derrida's scheme the history of metaphysics has simply involved one long search for a transcendental signified, for a form of absolute presence which exists outside of language and acts as the foundation for certain knowledge. Now there are two possible ways in which Derrida could have arrived at this theme of logocentrism: either a posteriori, by means of his method of deconstruction; or a priori, by way of pure theorizing. Both methods present serious problems.

In regards to the first method (a posteriori), Derrida arrives at his metahistory of philosophy through a select deconstructive reading of particular texts. (As mentioned earlier, a deconstructive reading is one which first uncovers the traditional hierarchical oppositions within texts - e.g. speech over writing, reality over appearance, etc. - and then reverses the hierarchy by demonstrating how the higher term really presupposes the lower term.) After deconstructing these texts Derrida concludes that they are all committed to a form of phonocentrism (the privileging of speech over writing), and thus to logocentrism. In this way the method of deconstruction leads to the interpretive metahistory of philosophy.

There are two major problems with the deconstructive method in this context: first it rests on a select, in-depth reading of only a few philosophical texts like Plato's Phaedrus or Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality. In

fact, a large number of Derrida's readings concentrate only on literary, artistic, or social science texts, not philosophical ones. Thus to draw a general conclusion about the entire Western philosophical tradition (e.g. that it is logocentric) from just analysing a few actual philosophical texts seems rather audacious and premature. It certainly breaks the rules of formal scholarship and investigation. Second, I do not think Derrida's deconstructive method led him to formulate his metahistory of philosophy; rather it was his metahistory of philosophy which led him to adopt the deconstruction method. I think Derrida already had in mind his view of logocentrism before he set out to actually deconstruct texts. In fact, a particular method cannot determine what texts or concepts are to be deconstructed since it simply carries out the prime purpose. Gadamer, for instance, brilliantly demonstrates how it was Descartes' theory of truth, where truth involves the apprehension of clear and distinct ideas, that led to his adoption of the method of systematic doubt, and not the other way around as is usually asserted. ¹ I think the same applies to Derrida regarding his theory of logocentrism. Some theory is needed first in order to direct the method.

This brings us to the second way in which Derrida may have arrived at his theme of logocentrism. I think what ultimately determines for Derrida the choice of texts and concepts to be deconstructed is his a priori theorizing

about the metahistory of philosophy, and not his method of deconstruction. More specifically, I believe Derrida chooses to deconstruct Plato's idea of the "pharmakon" in the Phaedrus or Rousseau's idea of the "supplement" in the Essay on the Origin of Languages because these works more readily confirm his own interpretation of Western philosophy as being phonocentric and logocentric. Just as Heidegger's concept of Being determines his interpretation of Western metaphysics as involving the forgetfulness of Being, Derrida's concept of presence determines his interpretation of Western metaphysics as consisting of the forgetfulness (repression) of writing and différance. His whole interpretive enterprise, then, seems to simply beg the entire question about the metaphysical tradition since he already confirms what he supposedly set out to demonstrate (e.g. that metaphysics is logocentric because it is phonocentric and thus logocentric).

II. Criticisms of the Content

More serious difficulties arise regarding the specific content of Derrida's metahistory of Western philosophy. In particular, I think there are three major problems with Derrida's view: first, it is too simplistic; second, it is too static; and third, it is too essentialistic. I will elaborate on each of these problems separately.

It is difficult to accept the view that the various metaphysical systems in Western philosophy are really just internal modifications of the single theme of logocentrism. Or that almost every philosopher since the Greeks has been working uncritically in an ontotheological closure. The trouble with Derrida is that he expands the meaning of presence to such an exorbitant extent that practically every metaphysical position comes under its sway. In so doing he loses sight of the definite differences that exist within the tradition. Leibniz, for instance, was dealing with different problems than Plato, and his doctrine of monads is a far distance from Plato's doctrine of eidos. Thus to lump the two philosophies together into a metaphysics of presence does a grave injustice, I think, to both systems of thought.

The same can be said for the idea of logos. Derrida seems to use the term logos interchangeably with the terms "presence and the transcendental signified as that ultimate, self-certifying plenum which centres the structure of discourse." This may indeed be one possible meaning to the term logos, but it certainly fails to encompass the majority of meanings. A prolonged quotation from the Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion will give some indication of its various meanings in philosophical discourse.

"A Greek term meaning "reason, word, speech, discourse, definition, principle or ratio..."

(1) Heraclitus (q.v. 3) found in the universe a formative and shaping power

analogous to the power of reason in man...

(2) From Anaxagoras (q.v. 3) through Aristotle, nous replaces logos as the motivating principle of the universe...

(3) Logos reappeared in the system of Stoics, when their principle of teleology was termed both logos and God...

(4) Even in Judaism there are tendencies to personify the word of God...

(5) Philo (q.v. 4) identified the creative word of the Old Testament with the logos of the Stoics...

(6) In the Gospel of John, the logos is both creative and redemptive; the latter aspect is given greater emphasis than the former. In John and in the early Church the principle was assimilated to the idea of an historic person, whose transcendent aspect is as a member of the Trinity.

(7) The logos is found among the emanations of many of the Gnostic systems (q.v., for example, Valentinus).

(8) Among the Apologists, Minucius found the Christian Trinity prefigured in Greek philosophy and identified the logos of the Greek philosophers with the son of Christianity.

(9) In modern philosophy, Fichte (q.v. 8) stated that God is present as logos in all there is; and Hegel's (q.v. 4) dialectic - derived from Fichte - is an expression of a working logos.

(10) Unamuno (q.v. 3) rejected the logos as an abstraction, substituting for it the Word as the intimate expression of the man of flesh and bone.

(11) For Heidegger (q.v. 8) the logos or Word is present in all discourse, capable of revelatory disclosures of Being when properly addressed." 2

Though some of these meanings might be congruent with Derrida's (e.g. Fichte, Heidegger), to label the entire tradition "logocentric" in the sense of a metaphysics of presence seems rather hasty and oversimplified.

The source of Derrida's oversimplification of the history of Western philosophy lies, I think, in his Nietzschean adoption of a single thematic structure or plot. By imposing a plot onto the history of metaphysics, a plot involving logocentrism and the systematic repression of différance, Derrida turns that tradition into a gross caricature. Plots or themes have a way of excluding those details that are not compatible with the overall representation. In true metonymic fashion there is an unwarranted overemphasis on some characteristics at the expense of others, so that the part may be wrongly taken for the whole.

This overemphasis is prevalent in Derrida's selective and distorted readings of Western philosophical texts. Derrida only seems to choose those texts that fit with his interpretation of a particular philosopher, and ignores or neglects other relevant texts, or different aspects of the same text, that might suggest an alternative view. Plato is a good example. Derrida uncritically follows Heidegger in placing Plato at the forefront of the Western metaphysical tradition. Plato's privileging of speech over writing together with his privileging of eternal Ideas over changing phenomena make his philosophy, in Derrida's mind, a paradigmatic example of logocentrism. Derrida, however, arrives at his interpretation by merely examining a certain aspect of a Platonic dialogue, the Phaedrus, (concerning

writing), and completely neglects other facets of the same text (e.g. nature of love) as well as other relevant dialogues (e.g. the Symposium). Consequently, Derrida gives a rather lopsided view of Plato, though one that bodes well with his own theme of logocentrism.

A related problem with applying themes or plots to history involves the difficulty of falsifying them. For instance, Derrida's concept of presence is construed so broadly, so comprehensively, that it can apply to almost any metaphysical system. This takes the specific meaning away from the term presence, and makes its general application difficult to falsify. (Derrida, however, would probably say this concern about falsification is inherently logocentric).

The problem with Derrida is that he has a metahistory without sufficient knowledge of the history. In other words, his knowledge of the history of Western philosophy is rather limited with huge gaps in places (i.e. Pre-socratics, early Medieval). He is certainly not the historian of philosophy that Heidegger was. Indeed, what Derrida really offers us is a mythology of Western philosophy, not a scholarly history.

There is another way of demonstrating Derrida's oversimplified and exclusive reading of Western philosophy; one could ask whether logocentrism is the only possible theme operating in the history of philosophy or whether

there are any other themes. In other words, one could point to certain philosophical systems that might serve as possible exceptions to Derrida's logocentrism. I believe at least four such exceptions to Derrida's metaphysics of presence might be found in Western philosophy: mysticism (including negative theology); voluntarism (including existentialism), nominalism and contextualism. I will attempt to show how these philosophical positions might differ from logocentrism, and then describe how a Derridean might critically respond to them.

In Derrida's mind, philosophy (logocentrism) is chiefly concerned with rationality, that is, with reason, speech and order (logos). On this view reality (including human nature) is conceived as something ultimately rational, and knowledge of it is attained through reason or dialectic. Consequently, philosophers seek to justify their various ethical and epistemological beliefs by basing them on rational principles. But there is at least two traditions that have been opposed to this rationalistic interpretation of philosophy: mysticism and voluntarism. These two positions have emphasized the non-rational nature of reality, and have bolstered the intuitive or conative aspects of human existence and knowledge over and above the rational aspects. In short, both prefer mythos (the concrete logic of association and narrative) to logos (the abstract logic of discursive reason).

The mystical tradition in Western thought (including negative theology) is a long one, stretching from NeoPlatonism (e.g. Plotinus), through early Christianity (e.g. the Pseudo-Dionysius), Catholicism (e.g. St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart), Protestantism (Jakob Boehme, George Fox), Medieval Judaism (e.g. Issac Luric, Baal Shev-tov), Sufism (e.g. Abu Yazid), up to Process Theology (e.g. Teilhard De Chardin), and even perhaps to the early Wittgenstein. Mysticism could be seen as a possible exception to logocentrism in at least two ways. First, in positing an experience beyond all discursive understanding and language, mysticism is taken out of the realm of logos. Unlike most philosophical discourse, mysticism does not concern itself with constructing arguments, verifying propositions, or clarifying concepts. Its main mode of expression is the via negativa which ultimately destroys rational thought because in trying to describe and understand the mystical experience rational thought finds itself enmeshed in irresolvable contradictions. In not being dependent on language, then, mysticism is not subject to the search for a transcendental signified that grounds and certifies discourse. Secondly, in overcoming mediacy (understood as distance or separation) an experience of fusion or union results which makes a metaphysics of presence obsolete. In other words, in an unmediated (mystical) experience nothing is present to

the experience, and the experiencer is not present to anything else. The experience is not centered on, or preoccupied with, any kind of object, transcendental or otherwise. Preoccupation may be the case in the preliminary stages of mental and bodily discipline, but it is certainly missing in the ultimate stage of the contemplative experience itself. Thus mysticism is not logocentric because it is not focused on a transcendental signified.

I think Derrida would not be convinced of mysticism's non-logocentric status. The mystical experience may indeed escape a metaphysics of presence when the latter is defined as a spatial (objective or subjective) and/or temporal plenum (e.g. "the ontology of being and beingness"). But it does not escape it when presence is defined as a denial of différance, that is, an identity. One of the defining characteristics of a mystical experience is its overwhelming feelings of oneness and unity. This experience of identity is also common to those mystical traditions (e.g. St. Teresa of Avila) which posit a difference between the individual self and God. There is an "ecstatic" moment where the two fuse into one, and undergo a kind of "spiritual marriage".³ Mysticism and negative theology are, therefore, not really negative at all since God's being is denied in order to attribute to him (her or it) a higher kind of essence and presence. And it is this dialectical recuperation of

negativity, this higher Aufhebung, which Derrida sees as being the hallmark of logocentrism.

"Philosophical language, as soon as it speaks, recuperates negativity - or forgets it, which comes to the same thing - even when it claims to affirm it, to recognize it." 4

Furthermore, a mystical experience does not occur in a vacuum but is part of a cultural-religious tradition which imposes a meaning or interpretation upon it. This explains why the experience is variously described as a union with God in Judaism, Christianity, Islam; a union with Brahman in Hinduism; a union with the Tao or nature in Taoism; and as a union with emptiness in Buddhism. Despite the different terminology, these traditions may be describing the same experience - union with some form of an absolute reality which brings together what was once apart and acts as the ultimate ground of all knowledge, meaning and life. And this is what Derrida broadly means by a "transcendental signified" whose postulation is the main ingredient of logocentrism. Mysticism, then, does not fall outside the realm of a metaphysics of presence broadly conceived.

The second main philosophic tradition that may be opposed to logocentrism is voluntarism. In its early form, voluntarism (or some view like it) was espoused by the Cyrenaics, the Epicurians, Duns Scotus, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, William James, Henri Bergson, and most of all Arthur.

Schopenhauer. Elements of voluntarism continue, I think, in the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus.

Both voluntarism and existentialism could possibly be viewed as falling outside logocentrism in two significant ways: first by positing a non-rational or absurd universe; and second, by privileging will or intentionality over reason or rationality.⁵ In regards to the first point, most voluntarists and existentialists (except perhaps the more religiously inclined ones like Duns Scotus) believe that the universe is not rational or orderly by nature. It is more or less chaotic. Any order or rationality that it might appear to have is imposed upon it by our own consciousness. Schopenhauer, for instance, claimed that all phenomena - human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate - was merely an expression of a universal Will which was for him the name of a nonrational, blind force whose operations are without ultimate purpose or design. The meanings we find in the world are placed there by our own intellects. Similarly, Sartre and Camus see the universe, or man's relation to it, as principally absurd, without inherent rationality or order. For them there is no ultimate explanation of why things are as they are and not otherwise. Indeed, at the heart of the universe are innumerable contradictions which defy human reason; order is reduced to chaos, necessity to contingency, and value to

brute facticity. But unlike Schopenhauer and other voluntarists, neither Sartre nor Camus postulate a nonrational Will lying behind phenomena. This is just another meaning imposed upon the world by consciousness. Human consciousness is basically no-thing which continuously tries to transcend its own situation. Hence, the universe consists of just human consciousness and things with no clear fit between the two.

A Derridean might respond to all this by pointing out that both voluntarists like Schopenhauer and existentialists like Sartre eventually end up positing a transcendental signified in one form or another. In Schopenhauer's case, this takes the form of the universal will, which he himself claims is the Kantian thing-in-itself or ultimate reality. And as Edward Von Hartmann noted, the will cannot simply be blind and chaotic since it has a clear end in view, namely, self-preservation. With Sartre and other existentialists, the transcendental signified turns out to be human consciousness (freedom) itself. It creates its own meanings and values, and imposes these on different situations. Human consciousness, therefore, inadvertently takes the place of God in being the source and foundation of all knowledge and value. As Sartre puts it, "It is only through human consciousness that value comes into the world".

In regards to anthropology, both voluntarism and existentialism privilege will or intentionality over

rationality. For Schopenhauer the inner experience of the individual will in terms of desires, wishes and the like lead to a conception of reality as universal will. The conative nature of human beings is inflated and then taken to be a model for reality as a whole. And since the will is blind and impulsive it is not subject to the logos. In fact, Schopenhauer, along with Hume and James, believes that it is not the intellect that controls the will; it is the will that controls the intellect. And much of our behavior is a result of deep, underlying forces whose character we are often wholly unaware. The essence of man, then, does not lie in the logos.

For existentialists like Sartre human beings have no essence, whether rational or nonrational. The most that can be said is that human consciousness is intentional, that it is always directed towards something. Intentionality does not simply involve cognition but includes desire, imagination and needs. In Sartre's terminology, "existence precedes essence", meaning we first exist in the world and then proceed to construct a meaning or essence for our life. Hence, existentialism places greater emphasis on the pre-cognitive, lived experience over and against the theoretical, reflective experience. In Heidegger this distinction is termed the ontic-ontological; in Sartre, the pre-reflective-reflective; and in Merleau-Ponty, the

pre-cognitive-cognitive. In each case there is the idea of a pre-conscious intentionality which serves as the foundation for reflective thought and action. The task of philosophy, then, is not to articulate this reflective logos, but to describe the pre-logos. And the best way of accomplishing this has been through mythos (e.g. discursive prose). Finally, existentialism, unlike rationalism or idealism, has drawn our attention to the darker, irrational sides of the human condition, and has tried to make us more aware of those nonrational, conative aspects of our being that are as important as the rational aspects.

I do not think voluntarism or existentialism escape being logocentric on the basis of their privileging will or intentionality over rationality. An important part of logocentrism is thinking in terms of dichotomies and of elevating one of the terms over and above the other term. Now it is true that the main tradition in Western philosophy has elevated reason or rationality over the nonrational. But what thinkers like Schopenhauer and Sartre do is simply reverse the hierarchy; on their schemes will or pre-conscious intentionality takes precedence over reason. By remaining within a dichotomous structure of thought, however, voluntarism and existentialism remain within the closure of logocentrism.

The other two possible exceptions to logocentrism, namely, nominalism and contextualism, are not as

antagonistic towards the rationalist interpretation of philosophy as are the traditions of mysticism and voluntarism. They do not seem to emphasize the nonrational aspects of reality or human nature over and above the rational aspects. Indeed, both nominalism and contextualism place much faith in reason and the empirical method. Their exception to logocentrism, then, comes from a completely different point of view.

The nominalist tradition, which includes the Sophists, Boethius, Roscollenus, William of Occam, Thomas Hobbes, Ferdinand de Saussure, and more recently Nelson Goodman, represents one of the most possible genuine exceptions to logocentrism. Though there are different versions of nominalism most assert the view that abstract or general terms, or universals, represent no objective real existents, but are mere words or names. All that a class of things has in common is the name given to them, so that universals can be said to exist post res but never ante res. Reality, then, consists only of actual, particular things, never universals. In nominalism there is no "presence" or "transcendental signified" standing outside of language giving it meaning. Meaning is generated wholly within the linguistic system. Thus nominalism rejects both realism (the view that universals objectively exist) and the referential theory of meaning (where the meaning of a word is what it refers to externally).

Derrida's own view has much in common with nominalism. Both concentrate on language and reject the view that a concept can exist independently of language (e.g. transcendental signified). But the similarities end there. Derrida believes a theory like nominalism either turns out to be secretly committed to a transcendental signified independent of language, or merely substitutes language (e.g. the sign) for the objective reality of a transcendental signified. This is clearly evident in Saussure.

By distinguishing the signifier from the signified, Saussure leaves open the possibility of an independent signified existing prior to its signifier.

"The maintenance of the rigorous distinction - an essential and juridical distinction - between the signanda and the signatum, the equation of the signatum and the concept (P.99), inherently leaves open the possibility of thinking a concept signified in and of itself, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of a relationship to a system of signifiers." 6

This conception of the sign can lead to the traditional view that a sign is a vehicle or substitute for an idea or thing. And this traditional view can then be transposed to the structure of the sign itself, with the signifier being

regarded as a substitute for the signified. It thus takes the place of the transcendental signified.

"Saussure contradicts the critical acquisitions of which we were just speaking. He accedes to the classical exigency of what I have proposed to call a "transcendental signified," which in and of itself, in its essence, would refer to no signifier, would exceed the chain of signs, and would no longer itself function as a signifier." 7

Moreover,

"The semiological or, more specifically, linguistic "science" cannot therefore hold on to the difference between signifier and signified - the very idea of the sign - without the difference between sensible and intelligible, certainly, but also not without retaining, more profoundly and more implicitly, and by the same token the reference to a signified able to "take place" in its intelligibility, before its "fall," before any expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible here below. As the fact of pure intelligibility, it refers to an absolute logos to which it is immediately united. This absolute logos was an infinite creative subjectivity in medieval theology: the intelligible face of the sign remains turned toward the word and the face of God." 8

Thus nominalism remains within the closure of logocentrism because it presupposes a conception of language, or more specifically, of the sign, which is tied to a concatenation of ontological distinctions (e.g.

intelligible-sensible), and to a metaphysics of presence.

The last possible exception to logocentrism that I wish to investigate is contextualism. Contextualism is a much more recent trend of thought when compared to mysticism, voluntarism or nominalism. Its roots lie in the earlier pragmatism of C.S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, and is now influenced by the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The prime proponent of contextualism at present is Richard Rorty. 9

Contextualism has constantly protested against epistemological foundationalism, the view that a belief is justified when it is connected to more basic beliefs that are self-evident. It has also been opposed to the more general concomitant view that mind is a mirror that reflects reality, and that truth resides in the accurate representation of things outside the mind. Both classical rationalism and empiricism fall under the spell of foundationalism whether in terms of Descartes' clear and distinct ideas or Locke's experience.

Contextualism generally holds to the twin nonfoundationalist principles of antiessentialism and fallibilism. There is no general theory of justification, no fruitful inquiry into the essential nature of knowledge. There can only be local justification within a particular context of inquiry. In any given circumstances we are willing to take some beliefs as basic and others as nonbasic. And according to the principle of fallibilism

these beliefs, both basic and nonbasic, are not stable or eternal, but subject to alteration. Consequently, the "spectator theory of knowledge", what Dewey believed to be the predominant view, together with the old dualism between theory (thinking) and practice (doing), is dropped in favour of the doctrine of active, self-correcting inquiry.

I believe contextualism is the most genuine alternative to logocentrism so far. Like Derrida, it is opposed to all forms of foundationalism (transcendental signified), and holds no view of interpretation to be eternally sacred or unchangeable. The contextualist doctrine of active, fallible inquiry corresponds in some ways to Derrida's idea of interpretation where the goal is not to discover an invariable "present" meaning lying anterior to discourse, but to constantly play at and construct different possible meanings. Derrida expresses it in the following way:

"Turned towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin, this structuralist thematic of broken immediacy is therefore the saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play whose other side would be the Nietzschean affirmation, that is the joyous affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation." 10

It would seem then that contextualism is the best candidate available (at least in Anglo-Saxon thought) for the position

of a possible non-logocentric philosophy. (Or to at least point in that direction.)

By investigating the four possible exceptions to logocentrism (mysticism, voluntarism, nominalism and (cpmtextialism) I have endeavored to show how the history of Western philosophy might be seen to include other themes besides logocentrism, and thus reveal Derrida's exclusive and oversimplified reading of the metaphysical tradition. But I also showed how at least three out of the four possible exceptions to logocentrism did not turn out to be exceptions in all respects. Despite this drawback, I still feel that Derrida should have been more attuned to the diversity in Western philosophical thought.

Besides being too exclusive and oversimplified, Derrida's metahistory of philosophy is also too static and abstract. In other words, his single thematic structure is unable to adequately account for the major differences, conflicts, and creative innovations prevalent in the Western metaphysical tradition.

According to Derrida, philosophy merely plays out what is already implicit within it so there is no such thing as pure originality. A philosopher such as Kant may redirect the lines of philosophical investigation but he is still working within the confines of a metaphysics of presence. Conflict in philosophy is only apparent because everyone is playing by the same logocentric rules of the game. A

humanist philosophy, for instance, is as committed to a transcendental signified (e.g. human consciousness) as a religious philosophy. The modern notion of creativity, then, is seriously put into question in Derrida's thought, since he is a critic of the modern, specifically the 18th century ideal of progress through innovation.

But is all change, conflict and innovation in philosophy merely repetition or reiteration? Has there been no progressive or even regressive movement in the history of metaphysics? To counteract Derrida's claims one must distinguish, I think, between what may be called the theoretical (abstract) and lived (concrete) levels of the philosophical tradition. 11 The theoretical level refers to the logic of the tradition as a whole (Derrida's metahistory being an example). It is a purely abstract construct. On this level, difference, change or conflict is seen to operate within the parameters of the general system, and are all just variants of the single theme of logocentrism. By contrast, the lived level refers to the concrete experience of particular philosophers and their thoughts. On this level, difference, change or conflict is experienced as real. A philosopher like Kant definitely saw himself as struggling against the tradition and starting anew. Indeed, it is often said that Kant inaugurated a "Copernican revolution" in philosophy by claiming that it is not the mind that revolves around the world, but rather the world

that revolves around the mind. Numerous philosophers (e.g. Husserl) have felt they have brought about a new way of doing philosophy, and believed the problems to be tackled in philosophy have changed. In this sense, change does occur in the tradition. Moreover, the sequential elements in the tradition seem irreversible. It is difficult to imagine Aristotle coming before Plato or of Kant coming before Descartes and Hume, or even of Derrida and deconstruction coming before existentialism, phenomenology, and structuralism. Derrida seems oblivious to the definite sequence existing within the history of philosophy, a sequence consisting of differently conceived of problems, methods, and areas of concern.

In suggesting that there is no real changes or creative innovations in philosophers' thoughts Derrida slips into a sort of intellectual elitism. He seems to think he knows the thoughts of philosophers' better than they themselves know them. But if there are no real innovations in philosophy how then does Derrida conceive of his own discourse? Are his remarks about logocentrism merely repetitive or do they convey something truly novel? What, in short, is the status of his own texts within the tradition?

Thus while Derrida might be correct in saying that there is no real change in philosophy on the abstract, theoretical level, this is purchased at the great price of

ignoring the real conflicts and changes that have occurred on the concrete level of philosophical experience.

One perhaps, could further argue that real thematic change and conflict does occur on the abstract, theoretical level. Some thinkers such as Leo Strauss ¹², George Grant ¹³, Eric Voeglin ¹⁴, and to some extent, Michel Foucault ¹⁵, have postulated a real dividing line in Western thought between what may be called traditionalism and modernity. ¹⁶ Traditionalism, which includes ancient Hellenic and Judeo-Christian thought, posits an inherent order and harmony to the universe. On his view, freedom or the good life resides in becoming attuned to this all-pervading harmony, whereas bondage or evil results from being separate from this order and harmony in the universe. Modernity on the other hand, does not necessarily posit an inherent order and harmony to the universe. For it freedom and the good life resides in imposing one's own meanings onto the world, while bondage or evil results from believing there is an inherent order that one must succumb to. In short, the thematic difference between traditionalism and modernity can be expressed by saying that traditional thought sees reality as a cosmos (a unified totality) and freedom as heteronomy, while modern thought sees reality more as chaos (a meaningless history) and freedom as autonomy.

The question is whether the major division in Western thought between traditionalism and modernity really represents a substantial thematic change or whether both are simply opposite sides of the same coin of logocentrism. I think Derrida would argue the latter. His view logically implies that although both systems of thought disagree on the ultimate nature of the world and human freedom, both still desire a foundation for discourse. Traditionalism finds this foundation in a transcendental source such as God, while modernity finds it in an immanent source such as history. Traditionalism and modernity, then, are both smaller paradigms of the much larger metaparadigm of logocentrism or the desire for presence.

The final criticism I wish to raise against Derrida's metahistory of logocentrism is that it is ultimately essentialistic. In other words, the single interpretive theme or plot structure of logocentrism commits Derrida to an essentialism untenable on his own terms. By imposing a thematic structure onto the history of Western metaphysics Derrida excludes all those elements that are not compatible with his scheme, and reduces everything to a totalistic sameness.

Moreover, the deconstruction method shows how a permanent meaning cannot be extracted from a philosophical text (or a text of any kind) yet Derrida proceeds to extract such a total meaning from the philosophical tradition as a

whole. Is he not then privileging one meaning over a number of their possible meanings, and in so doing interfering with the freeplay of interpretation and repressing différance? Is he not subjecting himself to the same search for presence, for security, for real meaning or a transcendental signified which he so castigates in others? And finally, he is not simply being a victim to what Levinas calls totalistic thinking which seeks identity by overlooking the individuality of things, and positing an abstract construct? Indeed, Derrida's whole metahistory of philosophy (logocentrism) might be seen to be as abstract and as essentialistic as any Platonic Form or transcendental Godhead.

The possible criticisms directed against Derrida regarding his method of arriving at his metahistory of logocentrism along with the oversimplification, staticness, and essentialism of the metahistory itself, does not in the end detract from his overall achievement. For instance, one may grant the oversimplification of his interpretation of the Western metaphysical tradition but still believe it to be enlightening. In this case, detailed criticism may be beside the point since it is the very exaggeration or caricature of Derrida's interpretive scheme which enables us to see the history of philosophy in an entirely new light. Indeed, one could even argue that only such an exaggeration

could have the desired effect of breaking the rigidity of other interpretations of the metaphysical tradition. Hence, Derrida might be classified, following Rorty, as an edifying as opposed to a systematic philosopher. His task, perhaps, is not so much as to represent what is real or true, but to suggest more interesting, fruitful ways of speaking. As Rorty expresses it:

"Great systematic philosophers are constructive and offer arguments. Great edifying philosophers are reactive and offer satires, parodies, aphorisms. They know their work loses its point when the period they were reacting against is over. They are intentionally peripheral. Great systematic philosophers, like great scientists, build for eternity. Great edifying philosophers destroy for the sake of their own generation. Systematic philosophers want to put their subject on the secure path of a science. Edifying philosophers want to keep space open for the sense of wonder which poets can sometimes cause - wonder that there is something new under the sun, something which is not an accurate representation of what was already there, something which (at least for the moment) cannot be explained and can barely be described." 17

In other words, Derrida is not so concerned, I think, with whether his interpretation of the Western metaphysical tradition is correct or not, or whether it accurately reflects the way things really happened in history. He simply wants to keep the conversation going and prevent it from solidifying into a mummified system of thought.

CHAPTER V

The Counter-view of Différance

In the previous chapter I attempted to criticize Derrida's conception of logocentrism. I now wish to explore, in a more cursory manner, his counter-view of différance or freeplay which is ostensibly at odds with a metaphysics of presence.

I Saussure's Relational Theory of Meaning

Despite his remarks on the inescapability of logocentrism, Derrida does hold to an implicit theory of meaning which he feels is not necessarily phonocentric. The theory was originally derived from the 19th century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and was transferred to philosophy via Lévi-Strauss (ethnology). Saussure's theory rests on the distinction between the signifier and the signified. Each sign has a material or sound element called the signifier, and a formal or conceptual element referred to as the signified. Signs derive their meaning not from some objective, extra-linguistic reality, but from the internal relations of signs to each other. For example, we can distinguish the sound sequence 'b'e't' because it contrasts with 'm'e't'. Likewise, we know what 'dog' means

because of its phonetically discriminating differences with 'non-dog'. All signs, then, are arbitrary and conventional and relate to one another by being differentiated.

This relational view of signs is completely antipathetic to a metaphysics of presence. The meaning or identity of a sign is defined by a play of differences that are internal to the system, and are more absent than present. Identity, the foundation for any metaphysics, becomes purely relational. There is no transcendental signified outside the linguistic system which is the source of meaning.

Although Derrida adheres to Saussure's relational theory of signs, he criticizes him for falling back into a form of phonocentrism. This is most evident in Saussure's view of writing. One of the principal characteristics of phonocentrism, as mentioned earlier, is its given priority of speech over writing. Speech is seen by Saussure as the more natural and predominant form of communication, whereas writing is wholly dependent on speech. The proper object of linguistic analysis is the spoken form of language. Writing is secondary.

But not only is writing subordinate to speech; it is also a danger to its purity. In other words, writing corrupts speech because it represents it imperfectly. In talking the words are temporal signs of the speaker's thoughts which are immediately grasped by the listener. In

writing, however, there is a distance between the writer's thoughts and the words on paper; a distance that often proves detrimental to thought. This imperfect representation is a result of the inherent characteristics of writing itself, namely, that it consists of external marks on some material which are separate from the immediate thoughts producing them. It appears external and alien to both the speaker and the hearer.

Derrida points to a contradiction in Saussure's phonocentrism. On the one hand, Saussure alludes to the mere externality or physical notation of writing, while on the other, to how this empty externality is able to corrupt the purity of speech. It is not clear how something subordinate to speech, even parasitic, can incur such damage. The dependent, external nature of writing would appear to make it more passive than active, and speech more the protagonist. Either Saussure has to reformulate his views on speech and writing or reverse the hierarchy.

Derrida believes Saussure's theory of signs does entail a reversal of speech and writing. If writing can have such a negative impact on speech, as Saussure claims, then perhaps it is speech that is really dependent on writing and not the other way round. More important, Saussure in his Course in General Linguistics ends up describing the nature of language as relational by using writing as an example.

"Since an identical state of affairs is observable in writing, another system of signs, we shall use writing to draw some comparisons that will clarify the whole issue."²

For instance, one can write the letter 'b' in any way so long as it is kept distinct from other letters such as 'a', 'c' or 'd'. By showing that the relational nature of language can be demonstrated by writing, Saussure inadvertently reverses the primacy of speech over writing and even presents speech as a form of writing. Derrida sums it up as follows:

"Let us ask in a more intrinsic and concrete way, how language is not merely a sort of writing... but a species of writing. Or rather, since writing no longer relates to language as an extension or frontier, let us ask how language is a possibility founded on the general possibility of writing."³

A more serious problem confronting Saussure's relational theory of meaning, according to Derrida, is the danger of the sign degenerating into an entity and thus reverting to a metaphysical concept. The distinction between a signifier and a signified could imply the possibility of an independent signified existing prior to its signifier, and therefore capable of being represented by more than one signifier. The traditional concept of the

sign as a vehicle or substitute for an idea or a thing can fairly easily be transposed to the structure of the sign itself, with the signifier being regarded as a substitute for the signified.

II Différance and Derrida's Implicit Theory of Meaning

To prevent the concept of the sign from collapsing into a metaphysics of presence Derrida alludes to a more sophisticated theory of meaning which is presented in his notion of différance.

Différance is a constructed neologism which designates an essential and complex characteristic of signs. The word comes from the French verb Différer meaning both to differ and to defer (meaning to postpone).

"The verb 'to differ' (différer) seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of spacing and temporalizing that puts off until 'later' what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible."⁴

Like Saussure, Derrida believes that any element of language relates to other elements and is distinct from them. But unlike Saussure, he believes that difference works within as well as between elements. This is due to

the deferring aspect of signs." A word (signifier) in standing for a thought, feeling or thing (signified) is actually indicating the absence of the referent. The signifier marks a postponement or deference inasmuch as it momentarily takes the place of the signified. There is a definite distance between the two. In suggesting its presence it is paradoxically marking its absence. This applies to both spoken and written words. When, for example, a person says "table" they are as distant from the actual physical object as they would be if they wrote "table" on a piece of paper. This différance involves a temporal as well as spatial distance. I can talk about things in the past, present, or future tense even if they do not exist. It is this interplay of absence and presence which defines the workings of language as différance.

"Différance is the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the spacing (espacement) by which elements refer to one another. This spacing is the production, both active and passive (the 'a' of différence indicates this indecision in relation to activity and passivity, indicates that which cannot be governed and organized by that opposition), of intervals without which the 'full' terms could not signify, could not function."⁵

For Derrida, nothing has the purity of an absolute presence whether in terms of being, god, speech, or the self. Like writing they are all infected by what they are not, by absence. The meaning of a term is never fully present because it depends on association with other terms to which it harks back and refers forward. We are thus left with nothing but a linguistic system consisting of what Derrida calls "traces", those "forever deferred others", or shadows of a supposedly real referent. Trace and différance represent the same phenomenon.

"A (pure) trace is différance. It does not depend on any sensible plenitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic."⁶

The apparent self-identity of each element is really an effect (or trace) of its difference from and deferral of other elements, none of which have an identity of its own outside the movement of differential relations. Trace, therefore, is deposited by the process of différance.

"Différance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be "present", appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. This trace relates no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very

relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not: that is, not even to a past or future considered as a modified present."⁷

In Derrida's view, then, linguistic meaning is a result of differences which are produced by the movement of différance, that is, by a process that differs, defers, and ultimately generates differences between terms.

"First, différance refers to the (active and passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving... Second, the movement of différance, as that which produces different things, that which differentiates, is the common root of all the oppositional concepts that mark our language... Third, différance is also the production, if it can still be put this way, of these differences."⁸

It might not be an exaggeration to suggest that Derrida's whole critique of Western logocentrism rests on his view of meaning as being relational and internal to the linguistic system. This puts him squarely at odds with many philosophers in the West who have adhered more or less to a referential theory of meaning where the meaning of a term is a result of its relation to either an external object or internal concept. For Derrida both views are permeated with a metaphysics of presence since each assumes that meaning is dependent on a present source (transcendental signified) outside of language, be it things in the world or ideas in

the mind. Both views somehow fail to see that semantic value is produced entirely within the confines of language without reference to an extra-linguistic world of things or thought-contents.

Since Derrida's critique of logocentrism is based on his tacit relational theory of meaning it is imperative that we examine its plausibility.

Can it be seriously maintained that meaning is purely a product of differential relations (différance) within language? Not entirely. To see the limitations of this view we must distinguish between two levels of meaning.⁹ One is a first-level meaning where a word has a determinate, fixed significance in the language at large independent of any further meanings or uses in a text. The other is a second-level meaning where a word is further determined in some sort of (con)text. The first level answers the question what is the sense of this word? Whereas the second level answers the question what are these words with specific meanings being used to do? Are they making an assertion, posing a question, or delivering a warning? We are asking here not what the sense of the word is, but what it means or wishes to convey.

Now the problem with Derrida's relational view of meaning is that it fails to explain how meaning originates on the first level. How can Derrida account for the sense given to such simple, concrete terms like brown or blue

without relying on a notion of reference? We could attempt to discover their meaning by using a dictionary but eventually we would require an ostensive definition that would demonstrate to us what falls under the terms blue and brown. Without some referential theory, some way of showing how words are related to the world, there can be no determinate semantic value assigned to words.

What Derrida's relational view of meaning does is simply account for the second level of signification where the sense of concrete words have already been carried over into a text. But words must first be assigned a determinate meaning before they can be used for whatever effect within or by the text. In fact, to apprehend a second-level meaning one must first grasp the determinate sense of the words involved.

Bearing this in mind we can see that Derrida's claim concerning the plural and undecidable meanings within texts relates only to second-level meanings. One can agree on the particular sense of constituent words in a text and yet come up with entirely different readings. But this is more problematic in regards to first-level meanings. There the senses of words are more or less fixed due to their reference to an external object or subjective intention.

Thus Derrida's whole relational theory of meaning leaves language hanging, and unanchored to anything that

would lend determinate semantic value to its words. And this is exactly Derrida's aim.

III Freeplay

Now Derrida's notion of différance forms the basis for his attempt to posit a possibly different way of thinking and of seeing the world, one that is not subject to the hierarchical and binary thought constructions of logocentrism. The whole perspective is oriented towards allowing space for his conception of freeplay while at the same time avoiding any form of order or centeredness.

Freeplay, like other "undecidable" terms in Derrida's lexicon, is just another name for the phenomenon of différance. It particularly refers to that aspect of différance which produces differences and ultimately meaning.

"Such a play, then - différance - is no longer simply a concept, but the possibility, of the conceptual system and process in general."¹⁰

And,

"What we note as différance will thus be the movement of play that "produces" (and not by something that is simply an activity) these differences, these effects of difference."¹¹

Derrida defines freeplay as "the disruption of presence."¹¹ It is a movement not bound to anything outside itself, but consists totally in the continual generation of possible meanings including substitutions, displacements, and differences. The world, or a text, can have no ultimate, final meaning. Freeplay generates a multitude of meanings. There is no pure experience, only reflection or interpretation (traces of traces).

Freeplay is free, then, because it is the playful individual who controls the various possible meanings (mediations), whereas in logocentrism it is the meaning which controls the individual. In this way, freeplay is a spontaneous activity, like artistic creation, which is free from moral values or telos.

There are two responses to this phenomenon of freeplay: either deny it and attempt to recover a lost innocence (presence), or steadfastly affirm it.

"As a turning toward the presence, lost or impossible, of the absent origin, this structuralist thematic of broken immediateness is thus the sad, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauist facet of the thinking of freeplay of which the Nietzschean affirmation - the joyous - affirmation of the freeplay of the world and without truth, without origin offered to an active interpretation - would be the other side."¹³

Derrida would like us to embrace the second alternative, though he thinks desire edges us towards the first. Desire is defined as a permanent lack which is continually seeking fulfillment. The process of this fulfillment Derrida calls "supplement".

"One could say that the movement of the freeplay, permeated by the lack, the absence of a center or origin is the movement of supplementarity."¹⁴

For Derrida, the movement of supplementarity explains how the illusion of the transcendental signified originates and how presence is attained without really attaining it. Supplement means both an addition and a substitute. It may add to something that is already present or replace something that is not present.

"The concept of the supplement... harbors within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary. The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence... But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory (suppleant) and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes-(the)-place (tient-lieu). As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness."¹⁵

What this means is the supplement, in being added to make up for a deficiency, reveals a lack which can never be satisfied. Thus the constant possibility of a supplement to the supplement.

In his study of Rousseau in Of Grammatology, Derrida shows how the supplement is an integral part of the metaphysics of presence. Rousseau uses the word supplement to describe both writing and masturbation. Each of these add and replace something; writing adds to and replaces speech, while masturbation adds to and replaces the "natural" relationship. So in both cases something external and artificial replaces something more primordial and natural and restores, through illusion, an absent presence.

Metaphysics, Derrida argues, operates in a similar manner. The whole edifice of Western metaphysical thought rests on the possibility of compensating for a primordial non-presence by way of the supplement. And philosophers have constantly fooled themselves into thinking that the supplement is the real presence or transcendental signified. (The supplement, of course, has taken many forms both spiritual and secular though all have in common what George Steiner has aptly called a "nostalgia for the absolute"). Thus in assuming presence to be primordial, philosophers have actually taken an effect (the supplement) to be a cause.

"Philosophy is, within writing, nothing but this movement of writing as effacement of the signifier and the desire of presence restored, of being, signified in its brilliance and its glory."16

The freeplay of différance or supplement represents a possible non-dualistic, and thus non-logocentric, way of thinking. The numerous peculiar terms used by Derrida, such as "différance", "supplement", "trace", "pharmakòn", "dissemination", "hymen", "gram" and the like, are all classified as undecidable terms which do not conform to ordinary logic and grammar. He deliberately shifts from one term to another so as to demonstrate the inevitable incompleteness of any set of philosophic axioms, and to emphasize that there is no master-word or concept, not even différance, which represents a first principle or origin. The words are used only strategically to deconstruct logocentrism.

"In marking out différance everything is a matter of strategy and risk. It is a question of strategy because no transcendental truth present outside the sphere of writing can theologically command the totality of the field."17

The "logic" of freeplay, and the other undecidable terms, is a neither-nor kind of logic. Instead of the either-or logic of Western metaphysics where one term in an

opposing pair is privileged over another term (e.g. being over becoming, reality over appearance), in a non-binary logic neither term is given priority. This is because each term is fully dependent on the other for its meaning; they are both at once, but neither one exclusively. What matters is not the hierarchical arrangement of metaphysical terms but the play between them; a play which allows both contradiction and non-contradiction without a dialectical Aufhebung.

"I have called undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum, "false" verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) oppositions, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (the pharmakon is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the supplement is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the hymen is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc.; the gram is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence nor an absence, neither a position nor a negation, etc."18

Derrida's attempts to articulate a non-binary logic of freeplay, where différance is conceived as the producer of meaning, should not be interpreted as a way of replacing a metaphysics of presence with a metaphysics of absence.¹⁸ In other words, Derrida is not advocating a negative ontotheology. As he himself says:

"Thus, the detours, phrases, and syntax that I shall often have to resort to will resemble - will sometimes be practically indiscernible from - those of negative theology... It belongs to no category of being, present or absent. And yet, what is thus denoted as différance is not theological, not even in the most negative order of negative theology... Not only is différance irreducible to every ontological or theological - ontotheological - reappropriation, but it opens up the very space in which ontotheology - philosophy - produces its system and its history. It thus encompasses and irrevocably surpasses ontotheology or philosophy."²⁰

Despite his frequent warnings, there are still elements in Derrida's conception of différance that come awfully close to an ontotheology. Recall that for Derrida everything is a matter of discourse, of traces. There are no pure simples, only a collage of interpretations. If this is so then what is the status of différance or freeplay itself. At times he suggests that in being characteristic of signs freeplay is part of discourse;

"The field (language) is in fact that of freeplay... This field permits these infinite substitutions only because... there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and founds the freeplay of substitutions."²⁰

while at other times he says freeplay is that which generates discourse.

"What we note as différance will thus be the movement of play that "produces" (and not be something that is simply an activity) these differences, these effects of differences."22

It would appear that freeplay has the odd ability to move in and out of discourse, to create and displace meaning. In-so-doing it may be construed as a kind of transcendental centre of origin, though Derrida warns against this interpretation.

"This does not mean that the différance which produces differences is before them in a simple and in itself unmodified and indifferent present. Différance is the nonfull, nonsimple "origin"; it is the structured and differing origin of differences."23

But warnings may prove inconsequential since Derrida's more elaborate passages concerning the "non-origin origin" of freeplay or différance does bear resemblance to the description of the creator God in the tradition of negative theology.²⁴

There is a further problem that should be mentioned. In being just a play of differences, of interpretations without a centre, freeplay must involve a certain degree of

randomness. But is this randomness a totally pure presence, a purity that is supposedly impossible to achieve? Derrida is not clear on this point. It is my opinion that he has not gone far enough in his deconstruction of metaphysical concepts for his notions of différance or freeplay appear just as metaphysical as others in the tradition. To be fully consistent Derrida would have had to deconstruct these undecidable terms as well. Failing this he may succumb to logocentrism.

Not only may Derrida's alternative of freeplay retain some traces of logocentric values, it is morally vacuous. In being primarily concerned with the freeplay of a mature, artistic-type individual, Derrida is excluding the whole realm of intersubjectivity. There is no sense of community or communication between persons in the Derridean state of freeplay, only the concerns of the egotist. Derrida is in no way calling for a general cultural revolution of the body politic, only a liberation of eros from the individual body. The perennial problem of suffering is not even touched upon let alone dealt with in any convincing way. An alternative, however, that says nothing about the problem of human suffering and its possible amelioration is either hopelessly naive or unbelievably insensitive.

The upshot of Derrida's analysis of freeplay, and all those other undecidable terms, is a different way of viewing language and the world; one that is not dualistic or

self-identical. What we are simply left with is freeplay in a fundamentally discontinuous text. This closely resembles a move from monotheism to polytheism except on a purely secular and textual level. The loss of a fixed centre (logocentrism) introduces the possibility of multiple centres (différance) of value and meaning. Or expressed differently, the death of God (monotheism) has given rebirth to the gods (polytheism). Perhaps in this way Derrida can be seen as being one of the most inspired (secular) polytheists of our time.

A SPECULATIVE CONCLUSION

Derrida's Tacit Conception of Freedom

Derrida's attempt to pinpoint and expose the history of Western logocentrism is not done without reason. The reason, however, does not really involve the scholarly appraisal of philosopher's writings as his rather unorthodox, and occasionally inaccurate, interpretations suggest. And it does not, I think, result from some pure academic interest in philosophical texts for their own sake. What then is his purpose in outlining the hidden contours of logocentrism? I believe it stems from a tacit commitment to freedom. Now by freedom here I do not mean civil liberties or free will. I refer rather to a more fundamental sense of freedom involving an emancipation from all repressive structures, particularly the huge repressive edifice of dualistic (logocentric) conceptualization along with the affirmation of creative play. This not only places Derrida's thought in that tradition of Western philosophy which has advocated the primacy of freedom over being (cf., for example, Fichte's Second Introduction to the Doctrine of Science)¹ but, more interestingly, links him with certain strains of Eastern philosophy such as Zen Buddhism, and with the literary genre of comedy. How, then, should we understand Derrida's implicit conception of freedom?

I think the best way to approach this problem is by viewing Derrida's work as an expression of a philosophy of the liminal.² In other words, Derrida is trying to articulate a "logic" of neither-nor, of betwixt and between. Différance or freeplay is neither this nor that, neither identity nor difference. It is beyond all classification and status. The liminal state, therefore, is one which dismisses all valuative hierarchies and embraces complete undifferentiation.

I believe this philosophy of the liminal leads Derrida to act in the combined roles of Zen master and clown. In regards to Zen, Derrida's writings can be seen to represent one long koan or unsolvable puzzle such as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" Just as this type of koan is designed in Zen to make the disciple aware of the limits of reason (discursive, dualistic conceptualization), Derrida's increasingly incoherent and mystifying texts force the reader to recognize the biases inherent within logocentric thinking and reading. More important, Derrida's method of deconstruction, which discloses the internal contradictions within the writings of various theorists, resembles in some fashion the Zen master's use of the koan and other techniques to show how reason, when pushed to its limits, collapses into contradiction. Perhaps this is why Derrida claims he stands "at the limits of philosophical discourse."³ By challenging these assumptions by means of

style and deconstruction Derrida is acting the part of a Zen master who through numerous techniques pushes and prods the student to the realization that reason has a place, but only a limited place, in the whole context of human existence.

Many of the effects of these "awareness" techniques in Zen Buddhism display a comic element, and in numerous writings on Zen the master is portrayed as a comic figure. This is because, like comedy, Zen techniques highlight contradictions within the human situation, or more specifically, in the attempts of reason to go beyond its proper function(s) and enthrone itself as the essence of human nature. Many of the Zen master's responses to student's questions make no sense whatsoever if viewed from a purely rational standpoint. For example, a student may ask "What is the Buddha-nature?", the master replying "three flux of wax." Or he may simply shrug or even hit the student. All this is to show the student that ultimate reality cannot be grasped by reason alone. And these responses all have a comic ring to them because they are not what we would logically expect. Perhaps like the Zen master, then, Derrida can be understood in the role of a clown, his writings one long joke or parody of the Western philosophical tradition. Let's examine this idea more closely.

Why should Derrida be viewed as a clown, and what bearing does it have on his tacit conception of freedom? To answer this we must understand what comedy is all about.

At the heart of all comic phenomena lies a contradiction, an implacable discrepancy between what ought to be and what is. As Kierkegaard so succinctly expressed it:

"Wherever there is life, there is contradiction, and wherever there is contradiction, the comical is present."⁴

The comic effect always involves a deviation from an accepted norm or the non-attainment of a perfect ideal. It recognizes that human beings are not just angelic intellects but also bestial bodies, and that the latter often undermines the achievements of the former. A person's efforts to follow the path of rational sobriety are forever being interrupted by the infirmities of the flesh. In this way, comedy exposes human folly and deals with characters less perfect than others. The comic vision, therefore, holds to a dualistic view of human nature as an incongruous mixture of bodily instinct and rational intellect, and finds the source of the ridiculous in the animal part which prevents a person from attaining the ideal perfection of which he or his society conceive him capable.

Now the clown is the concrete embodiment of the comic vision. His character and actions conspicuously express the frightful contradictions between the ideal and the real. He is, above all else, a rebel. The clown's outlandish dress, undignified manner, idiotic behavior, and paradoxical remarks invariably place him outside the sanctified order (nomos) of society. The clown, so to speak, is a mirror of society's own foibles and follies. And it is by standing outside of all status or rank that the clown can mix and confuse the symbols of order, making them all look ridiculous. The clown, in short, is the Lord of disorder (as the devil was called in medieval literature) since he condemns and is opposed to organized society which he feels is too confining and stultifying. Freedom, then, resides in the destruction of all established order.

I believe Derrida can be cast in the role of a clown since his stylish antics and deconstructive manoeuvres are all used to highlight the contradictory, and thus ludicrous, nature of textual systems of order (e.g. Western philosophical texts). Furthermore, just as the clown does not attack the nomos with open hostility but instead imitates all its symbols out of context, Derrida's stylistic excesses (such as the two column pattern in Glas) act, like the clown's behavior, to confuse or parody and dissociate the accepted symbols of discursive, textual order. Finally, the clown's conception of iconoclastic freedom appears to be

embraced by Derrida who believes all forms of centered discourse (transcendental signified) restrict freeplay.

"Nevertheless, up to the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure - or rather the structurality of structure - although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure - one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure - but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure... Nevertheless, the center also closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible."⁵

Seeing Derrida as a clown also helps to place his thought in historical context. Throughout the history of Western philosophy there has been a serious antagonism between those philosophies which advocate a permanent, ahistorical absolute to which we can appeal in determining the nature of truth, goodness, or reality, and those philosophies that question the accepted absolutes. Stated differently, the ongoing conflict has been between the philosophy of the priest who is the guardian of dogma, and the philosophy of the clown who is the destroyer of all established principles.⁶ The clown's philosophy is one

which questions that which appears unshakable or self-evident, points to inherent contradictions, and ridicules common sense. From this description we can see how Derrida's thought bodes well with the philosophy of the clown.

But not only does the clown function to destroy the accepted order; he also plays a more positive role in correcting human imperfections and affirming human survival. How so?

It is the view of a number of literary critics that comedy expresses a continuing faith in human continuity, its central message being that humanity will survive and is destined to carry on despite the numerous obstacles it must encounter. In other words, while tragedy is a celebration of humanity's capacity to aspire and suffer, comedy celebrates its capacity to endure. As a result, comedy, unlike tragedy, affirms human finitude and asks us to remember the tangible things of the world in all their singular density and transience. By showing the actual, imperfect world of earth which is our home the clown seeks to correct our forgetfulness and restore our confidence in temporality. He never gives up insisting that we are not angels who belong to eternity, but finite creatures who inhabit a dynamic world of space and time. By enlivening our sense of human actuality, the clown puts us in touch with the whole truth of our existence; namely, that we are

pathetic beasts with divine aspirations. And the whole truth may help us correct or improve upon our earthly deficiencies.

Derrida's connection with the clown's positive function can be more readily apprehended in reference to Nietzsche, one of Derrida's chief mentors. The clown's affirmation of dynamic finitude echoes, in some respects Nietzsche's philosophy of the Dionysian Overman (e.g. Zarathustra). For Nietzsche, the Dionysian Overman is the person who says "Yes" to all of life's vicissitudes. He is the one who affirms the world exactly as it is without "exception, subtraction, or selection."

"The tragic artist is no pessimist: he is precisely the one who says Yes to everything questionable, even to the terrible - he is Dionysian."⁷

The core of this Yea-saying lies in the affirmation of the eternal recurrence of the same. For Nietzsche, Western philosophy and religion has constantly devalued or rejected this world of change, becoming, and time in favour of another world of stability, being, and eternity (e.g. Platonic Forms, Heaven). This normative bifurcation results from the suffering and fear experienced by imperfect, finite human beings. Thus metaphysics is more a desire for the abolition of suffering and the negativity of life than a

true understanding of the world. It is the vengeance of those who cannot accept the travails of historical existence.

The eternal recurrence - the view that all aspects of life return an infinite number of times in an identical way - offers for Nietzsche a radical affirmation of this world of time and becoming. In asking whether we would want to live our lives over again in exactly the same manner for all time Nietzsche is really asking us to accept and celebrate life as it is, warts and all. We do not really need another world of eternity because this temporal one is good and sufficient in and of itself.

Derrida appears to side with Nietzsche's "joyful wisdom". For instance, in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" he says,

"... the Nietzschean affirmation, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation."⁸

By calling us back to this world, a world of diverse play, Nietzsche and Derrida are actually reminding us of our contingent, earth-bound existence, and that this must be faced with courage or what Nietzsche called "amor fati" (love of fate). And is this not the central message of the

clown and of comedy in general: that despite all the weaknesses associated with a finite, corruptible life there is still a faith, an affirmation in the tangible things of this world, and that we look ridiculous (funny) when we try to become something we are really not, namely, eternal.

This more affirming sense of comedy, like the iconoclastic sense, implies a conception of freedom. It is a freedom of creative play. The clown (Nietzsche and Derrida) accepts and rejoices in the world for its own sake, and is not concerned about any cognitive or practical value it may have. In playing one approaches the world without the question "What is it?" (cognitive response) or "What can I use it for?" (pragmatic response), but simply meets the world on its own terms. This play is creative because it is not governed by any transcendental or fixed point of reference. One does not discover new beliefs and goals but creates them. And this creation reflects the play-character of the world.

For Derrida, this creative play, in disrupting presence or the transcendental signified, opens up the possibility of numerous creative interpretations of a text.

"One could call play the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of ontotheology and the metaphysics of presence."⁹

and,

"...the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."¹⁰

In destroying the old order of meaning a new one is created which, in turn, is destroyed. It is this process of building (affirming) and demolishing (criticizing), of construction and deconstruction that characterizes the idea of play (différance) as freedom.

But is this notion of freedom as creative play congruent with the Zen Buddhist sense of freedom as involving the elimination of desire? I believe it is. When Buddhism talks about eliminating desire as a path to liberation it does not mean doing away with all possible desires. A totally desireless creature would be a dead one. What it actually means can be readily apprehended by referring to the Pali word for desire, tanha. Tanha means a state of very clinging or grasping craving. It is a compulsive striving not unlike what the psychoanalyst terms neurotic behavior. One of the most pervasive cravings is for some permanently secure and stable point in an overwhelmingly mutable world; for eternity in the midst of temporality. Concomitant with this desire for permanence is dualistic thinking which separates the world into two parts,

and privileges one of the parts over and above the other. A whole, stable edifice is thus constructed (e.g. the ego, god) which denies the transient nature of the world. It is only this "neurotic" desire for permanence, and other similar cravings, that Buddhism wishes to eliminate because it keeps us in bondage. In realizing the fictionality of permanence one is then free to embrace and celebrate life's changing diversity. The enlightened mind is really a playful one.

What the clown, the Zen master, the Dionysian Overman, and the deconstructive critic (Derrida) all have in common then is: (i) a realization of the illusory nature of all attempts to transcend time through the dualistic thought constructions of a repressive order of meaning; (ii) an awareness of the comical effects this obsessive desire for permanence has on worldly events; and (iii) an affirmative and joyful stance towards the plurality and dynamism of a non-centered world. They are all, in short, Lords of creative disorder.

Thus Derrida's implicit conception of freedom can be construed in a negative sense as a freedom from all repressive and illusory structures (e.g. logocentrism), and in a positive sense as a freedom towards creative play in a world (or text) with no absolute centre of meaning. It is this dual conception of freedom which I believe directs Derrida's whole deconstructive project. His attempts to

reveal the existence of logocentrism in Western thought is actually a revolt against the Gnosticism inherent in our culture. For Gnosticism is a way of thinking which harbours the secret hope that humanity's life in history shall come to an end. And it is precisely this common resistance to temporality, this "interruption of eternity", that Derrida has chosen to do battle with in his writings.

APPENDIX

The following list of Derrida's books and articles is copied from French Structuralism: A Multidisciplinary Bibliography. Compiled by Joan Miller (New York and London: Garland, 1981), pp. 130 -- 142.

A more complete and up-to-date bibliography of Derrida's writings has recently been published. It is Jacques Derrida: An Annotated Bibliography. Compiled by James Hulbert. (New York and London: Garland, 1985). (I was not able to obtain this book at the time of writing.)

JACQUES DERRIDA

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1962

1499. Translation of and introduction to *Phénomène de la géométrie*. By Edmund Husserl. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962. 2nd rev. ed. 1974. For English trans., see item 1610. For reviews, see items 1879a, 1879b and 1880.

1963

1500. "Force et signification." *Critique*, no. 193 (June 1963), pp. 483-499; no. 194 (July 1963), pp. 619-636. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 9-29.
On Jean Rousset's *Forme et signification: essais sur les structures littéraires de Corneille à Claudel* (Paris: José Corti, 1962).
1501. "Cogito et histoire de la folie." *Préflexions* avant l'œuvre point de départ le livre de Michel Foucault: *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'époque classique*. Paris: Plon, 1963]. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 68 (1963), 460-49-. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 51-97. See also item 1504.
1502. Review of *Lebenswelt und Geschichte. Grundzüge der Spielphilosophie* Edmund Husserls. By Hubert Hohl. Freiburg-Münch: Karl Alber, 1962. *Les Études Philosophiques*, 18 (1963), 95-96.
1503. Review of *Phänomenologische Psychologie. Vorlesungen Sommersemester, 1925*. Herausgegeben von Walter Biemel. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962. *Les Études Philosophiques*, 18 (1963), 201-206.

1964

1504. "A propos de Cogito et histoire de la folie." *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69 (1964), 116-119.
On item 1501.
1505. "Edmond Jabès et la question du livre." *Critique*, 20, no. 201 (February 1964), 99-115. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 99-116.

130

Jacques Derrida: Primary Sources

131

1506. "Violence et métaphysique. Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas." *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69 (1964), 322-354, 425-473. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 117-228.
1507. Co-translator, with Roger Martin, of "Les Frontières de la théorie logique." By W.V. Quine. In *Perspectives sur la philosophie nord-américaine*, 1. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, pp. 191-208. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 19, no. 2 (1964).
1508. Translator of "Le Monde-de-la-vie et la tradition de la philosophie américaine." By Marvin Farber. In *Perspectives sur la philosophie nord-américaine*, 1. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, pp. 209-219. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 19, no. 2 (1964).
1509. Review of *Edmund Husserl's Theory of Meaning*. By J.N. Mohanty. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 19 (1964), 617-619.
- 1965
1510. "Genèse et structure" et la phénoménologie." *Entretiens sur les notions de genèse et de structure*. Ed. Maurice de Gandillac, Lucien Goldmann and Jean Piaget. Centre culturel international de Cerisy-la-Salle, July-August 1959. Paris-The Hague: Mouton, 1965, pp. 244-60. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 229-251.
1511. "La Parole soufflée." *Tel Quel*, no. 20 (Winter 1965), pp. 41-67. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 251-292.
On Antonin Arnaud.
1512. Review of *The Idea of Phenomenology*. By Edmund Husserl. Trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 20 (1965), 538.
1513. Review of *The Paris Lectures*. By Edmund Husserl. Trans. Peter Koestenbaum. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964 [1965]. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 20 (1965), 539.
1514. Review of *The Formation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution*. By Robert Sokolowski. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 20 (1965), 557-558.
- 1966
1515. "De la grammatologie. I-II." *Critique*, 21, no. 223 (December 1965), 1016-1042; 22, no. 224 (January 1966), 214-43. Rpt. and developed in the first part of item 1522. See also item 1519.

Commentary and philosophical reflection on M.V. David's *Le Débat sur les écritures et l'hieroglyphe au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (1965), A. Lerot-Gourhan's *Le Geste et la parole* (1965), and *L'écriture et la psychologie des peuples* (1963).

- *1516. "Freud et la scène de l'écriture." *Tel Quel*, no. 26 (Summer 1966), pp. 10-41. Paper read in Dr. Green's seminar at the Institut de Psychanalyse in March 1966. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 293-340. For English trans., see items 1558 and 1567.
- *1517. "Le Théâtre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation." *Critique*, 22, no. 230 (July 1966), 595-618. Paper read at Parma, April 1966, at the Antonin Arnaud Colloquium (Festival International de Théâtre Universitaire). Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 341-368. For English trans., see item 1617a.
- 1518. "Avertissement." *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, no. 4 (September-October 1966), pp. iii-iv. Introduction to an entire issue entitled "Lévi-Strauss dans le 18ème siècle."
- 1519. "Nature, culture, écriture. La Violence de la lettre de Lévi-Strauss à Rousseau." *Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, no. 4 (September-October 1966); pp. 1-45.

The text of two classes of a course given at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1965-1966 under the title of "Écriture et Civilisation." Item 1515 contains the main points of the introduction announcing the systematic intention of this course. See part two of item 1522 for comparison.

1967

- *1520. "De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale: un hégélianisme sans réserve." In *Georges Bataille*, Ed. Henri Ronse. Aix-en-Provence: *L'Arc*, no. 32 (May 1967), pp. 24-44. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 369-407. For English trans., see item 1601.
- *1521. *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967. Contains items 1500, 1501, 1505, 1506, 1510, 1511, 1516, 1517, 1520, the French version of item 1542, and chapter XI entitled "Éclipse," pp. 429-436. For trans., see items 1548 (Italian), 1560 (German), 1569 (Serbo-Croatian), and 1616a (English). For reviews, see items 1862-1870.
- *1522. *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967. For trans., see items 1537 (Italian), 1549 (Spanish), 1574 (English), 1577 (German), and 1600 (English). For reviews, see items 1844-1857.

Contains: Avertissement; Première Partie: L'Écriture avant la lettre; Exergue; (1) La Fin du livre et le commencement de l'écriture; (2) Linguistique et grammatologie; (3) De la grammatologie comme science positive; Deuxième Partie: Nature, culture, écriture; Introduction à l'"Époque de Rousseau"; (1) La Violence de la lettre: de Lévi-Strauss à Rousseau;

Jacques Derrida: Primary Sources

133

(2) "... Ce dangereux supplément ..."; (3) Genèse et structure de l'Essai sur l'origine des langues; (4) Du supplément à la source: la théorie de l'écriture. Cf. items 1515 and 1519.

- *1523. *La Voix et le phénomène. Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967. 2nd ed. 1972. 3rd ed. 1976. For trans., see items 1534 (Italian) and 1566 (English), pp. 1-194. For reviews, see items 1883-1892.

Contents: Introduction; (1) Le Signe et les signes; (2) La Réduction de l'indice; (3) Le Vouloir-dire comme soliloque; (4) le Vouloir-dire et la représentation; (5) Le Signe et le clin d'oeil; (6) La Voix qui garde le silence; (7) Le Supplément d'origine.

- *1524. "La Forme et le vouloir-dire. Note sur la phénoménologie du langage." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 81, no. 3 (September 1967), 277-299. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 185-207. For English trans., see item 1566, pp. 107-128.

Husserl's attempt at an ethics of language, in *Ideas I*.

- *1525. "La Linguistique de Rousseau." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 82, no. 4 (1967), 443-62. For Spanish trans., see item 1576.

Rousseau's thinking on language, the sign, the origin of languages, and the relationships between speech and writing mark him as a forerunner of modern linguistics. This article is an early version of "Le Cercle linguistique de Genève" published in item 1553, pp. 165-182.

1526. "Implications: entretien avec Henri Rense." *Les Lettres Françaises*, no. 1211 (6-12 December 1967), pp. 12-13. Rpt. in item 1554, pp. 9-24.

1527. Review of *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*. By Edmund Husserl. Ed. R. Boehm. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 22 (1967), 94.

1528. Review of *Studien zur Phänomenologie*, 1966-1967. By Eugen Fink. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966. *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, 22 (1967), 549-550.

1968

1529. "La Pharmacie de Platon, I-II." *Tel Quel*, no. 32 (Winter 1968), pp. 1-48; no. 33 (Spring 1968), pp. 18-59. Rpt. in item 1552, pp. 69-197.

- *1530. "Logia et Gramma: note sur une note de *Logos und Zeit*." In *L'Endurance de la pensée. Pour saluer Jean Beaufret*. Ed. Marcel Jouhandeau. Paris: Plon, 1968, pp. 219-266. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 31-78. For trans., see items 1541 (English), 1550 (Spanish), and 1601 (German).

114

Individual Structuralists

1531. "Sémiologie et grammatologie, entretien avec Julia Kristeva." *Information sur les Sciences Sociales*, 7 (3 June 1968), 135-148. Rpt. in item 1554, pp. 25-50 and item 1544.
- *1532. "La 'Différance.'" *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, 62, no. 3 (July-September 1968), 73-101. Paper read at a meeting of the Société held in the Amphithéâtre Michelet of the Sorbonne on January 27, 1968. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 129-162. For trans., see item 1566 (English), pp. 129-162, and item 1603 (German). See also item 1533.
1533. "La 'Différance.'" In *Théorie d'ensemble*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968, pp. 41-66. Rpts. item 1532.
1534. *La Voce e il fenomeno. Introduzione al problema del segno nella fenomenologia di Husserl*. Trans. G. Dalmasso. Milan: Jaca Book, 1968. Trans. of item 1523.

1969

1535. "La Dissémination." *Critique*, 25, no. 261 (February 1969), 99-139; no. 262 (March 1969), 215-249. Rpt. in item 1552, pp. 319-407.
On Philippe Sollers' *Nombres*.
- *1536. "The Ends of Man." Trans. Edouard Morot-Sir, et al. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 30, no. 1 (1969), 31-57. Paper read at a French-American philosophers' conference on Language and Human Nature, SUNY Conference Center, Oyster Bay, Long Island, October 18-19, 1968. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 129-164. For German trans., see item 1603.
Analyzes the anthropological conceptions of Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger as opposed to post-war French philosophers who badly interpreted them.
1537. *Della grammatologia*. Milan: Jaca Book, 1969. Trans. of item 1522.

1970

1538. "Le Puits et la pyramide. Introduction à la sémiologie de Hegel." In *Hegel et la pensée moderne. Séminaire dirigé par Jean Hyppolite au Collège de France (1967-1968)*. Ed. Jacques D'Hondt. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970, pp. 27-83. Paper given January 16, 1968. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 79-127.
1539. "D'un texte à l'écart." *Les Temps Modernes*, 25, no. 284 (March 1970), 1546-1552.
On J. Garelli's *L'Ecart du maintenant et l'extension de l'esprit*.

Jacques Derrida: Primary Sources

135

1540. "La Double séance." *Tel Quel*, no. 41 (Spring 1970), pp. 3-43; no. 42 (Summer 1970), pp. 3-45. Rpt. in item 1552, pp. 199-317. See also item 1543.
On Mallarmé.
1541. "Ousia and Grammē: A Note to a Footnote in *Being and Time*." Trans. Edward S. Casey. In *Phenomenology in Perspective*. Ed. F.J. Smith. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, pp. 54-93. Trans. of item 1530.
- *1542. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." In *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man. The Structuralist Controversy*. Ed. Richard Mackey and Eugenio Umberto Donato. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970, pp. 247-265; discussion, pp. 265-270. Paper read at the colloquium on October 21, 1966. Rpt. in item 1521, pp. 409-428. For Serbo-Croatian trans., see item 1569.

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1543. *La Double séance*. Paris: Tel Quel, 1971, 88pp. Cf. item 1540.
- *1544. "Sémiologie et grammatologie: entretien avec Julia Kristeva." In *Essays in Semiotics. Essais de sémiotique*. Ed. Julia Kristeva, Josette Rey-Debove, and Donna Jean Umiker. The Hague-Paris: Mouton, 1971, pp. 11-17. Rpts. item 1531.
- *1545. "La Mythe d'Orphée blanche. La Métaphore dans le texte philosophique." *Poétique*, no. 5 (1971), pp. 1-52. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 247-324. For English trans., see item 1575.
- *1546. "Positions. Entretien avec Jean-Louis Houdebine et Guy Scarpetta." *Promesse*, nos. 30-31 (Fall and Winter 1971), pp. 5-62. Rpt. in item 1554, pp. 51-133. For English trans., see items 1555 and 1568.
- *1547. "Le Supplément de copule. La Philosophie devant la linguistique." *Langages*, 24 December 1971, pp. 14-39. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 209-246. For English trans., see items 1587 and 1602.
1548. *La Scrittura e la differenza*. Trans. Gianni Pozzi. Turin: G. Einaudi, 1971. Trans. of item 1521.
1549. *La grammatología*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Argentina Editores, 1971. Trans. of item 1522.
1550. *Tiempo y presencia. Ousia y gramme*. Trans. Patricio Marchant. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1971. Trans. of item 1530.

17c

Individual Structuralists

1972

1551. "Les Sources de Valéry: quel, quelle." *MLN*, 87, no. 4 (May 1972), 563-599. Paper given November 6, 1971 at Johns Hopkins University for the 100th anniversary of Valéry's birth. This issue of *MLN* was published as *Paul Valéry* in 1972 by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Article rpt. in item 1553, pp. 325-363.
1552. *La Dissémination*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972. Contains: Hors livre: préfaces, pp. 7-67 and items 1529, 1540 and 1535. For reviews, see items 1858-1861. English trans. forthcoming by University of Chicago Press.
1553. *Marques de la philosophie*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972. Contains: Tympan by Michel Leiris, pp. 1-xxv and items 1532, 1530, 1538, the original French version of item 1536 (dated 12 May 1968), and items 1525, 1524, 1547, 1545, 1551, and 1501. For reviews, see items 1878-1879.
- *1554. *Positions. Entretiens avec Henri Ronse, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Louis Houdebine, Guy Scarpetta*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972. Contains items 1526, 1531, and 1546. For Italian trans., see item 1589. For reviews, see items 1881-1882.
1555. "Positions." *Diabritics*, 2, no. 4 (Winter 1972), 35-43. Partial trans. of item 1546. See also item 1568.
1556. [Edmond Jabès aujourd'hui.] *Nouveau Cahiers*, 8^e année, no. 31 (Winter 1972-1973), 56.
1557. Interview with Lucette Finas: "Avoir l'oreille de la philosophie." *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, no. 152 (16-30 November 1972), pp. 13-16. Rpt. in *Écarts: quatre essais à propos de Jacques Derrida*. By Lucette Finas, et al. Paris: Fayard, 1973, pp. 303-312.
1558. "Freud and the Scene of Writing." Trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. *Yale French Studies* (issue entitled "French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis"), no. 48 (1972), pp. 74-117. Trans. of item 1516. Rpt. in item 1567.
1559. *Des Essais*. Trans. Eugenio Tizian and Alberto González Trovato. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1972. For review, see item 1871.
1560. *Die Schrift und die Differenz*. Trans. R. Gasché. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972, 1975, 1977. Trans. of item 1521.

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- *1561. "Signature, événement, contexte." *La Communication*, 11. Actes du XV^e Congrès de l'Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française. Université de Montréal, 1971. Montréal:

Jacques Derrida: Primary Sources

137

- Editions Montmorency, 1973, pp. 49-76. Rpt. in item 1553, pp. 365-393. For trans., see items 1603 (German) and 1611 (English).
1562. "Clas." *L'Arc* (issue on Jacques Derrida), no. 54 (1973), pp. 4-15. Excerpts of this article appeared in *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, no. 172 (1973), pp. 23-36. Cf. item 1570.
1563. "L'Archéologie du frivole." In Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*. Ed. Charles Porset. Paris: Editions Galilée, 1973, pp. 9-95. Rpt. in items 1569a and 1591.
1564. Anonymously. "Aphorismes ou 'textuels'" and "En marge de Rousseau." *Le Monde (des Livres)*, no. 8838 (14 June 1973), p. 22.
1565. "La Question du style." In *Nietzsche aujourd'hui? I. Intensité*. Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1973, pp. 235-287; discussion, pp. 288-299. For modified version and English, Italian and German trans., see items 1592 and 1614.
1566. *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
Contains a preface by Newton Garver, pp. ix-xxix; a translator's introduction, pp. xxxi-xlii; and trans. of items 1521, 1524 and 1532.
1567. "Freud and the Scene of Writing." Trans. and intro. Jeffrey Mehlman. *L'Arc* (issue on Jacques Derrida), no. 54 (1973), pp. 73-117. Rpt. of item 1558.
1568. "Positions." *Diacritics*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1973), 31-46. Partial trans. of item 1546. See also item 1555.
Interview with J.-L. Houdebine.
1569. "Struktura, znak i igra u govoru nauka o čoveku." *Isis*, 19, no. 12 (1973), 1477-1495. Serbo-Croatian trans. of item 1542 or of the last chapter of item 1521.
- 1569a. *L'Archéologie du frivole*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 1974.
(Palimpseste) Rpt. of item 1563. See item 1591 for new edition, table of contents and reviews.
1570. *Clas*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 1974. Cf. item 1562. For review, see items 1872-1877.
1571. "Mallarmé." In *Tableau de la littérature française. De Madame de Staël à Rimbaud*. Paris: Gallimard, 1974, pp. 368-379.
1572. "Le Parergon." *Digraphe*, no. 2 (1974), pp. 21-57.

138

Individual Structuralists

1573. "Le Sans de la coupure pure. (Le Parergon II)." *Digraphe*, no. 3 (1974), pp. 5-31.
1574. "Linguistics and Grammatology." *Sub-stance*, no. 10 (1974), pp. 127-181. Trans. of second chapter of part one of item 1522 by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. See also item 1600.
1575. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." *New Literary History* (issue on Metaphor), 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1974), 5-74. Trans. of item 1545.
1576. "La Lingüística de Rousseau." In *El origen de las lenguas*. By Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Calden, 1974 or earlier. Trans. of item 1525.
1577. *Grammatologie*. Trans. Hans J. Rheinberger and Hanna Zischler. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974. Trans. of item 1522.

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1578. "Economimesis." In *Mimesis des articulations*. By Sylviane Agacinski, Jacques Derrida, et al. Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975, pp. 55-93.
1579. Text of Valerio Adams: *le voyage du dessin accompagné par + R (par dessus le marché)*. Paris: Margit, 1975. See also items 1580 and 1581.
1580. "+ R (par dessus le marché)." In *Derrida le miroir*, no. 214 (May 1975), pp. 1-23. See also items 1579 and 1581.
1581. "Inédit + R (par dessus le marché)." *Quinzaine Littéraire*, no. 211 (1-15 June 1975), pp. 14-16. See also items 1579 and 1580.
1582. "Le facteur de vérité." *Poétique* (issue on Littérature et philosophie mêlées), no. 21 (1975), pp. 96-147. For English trans., see item 1586.
 . Commentary on Lacan's *Séminaire sur la lettre volée*; what psychoanalysis does with literature and how it seeks truth in it.
1583. "Pour la philosophie." *La Nouvelle Critique*, no. 84 (1975), pp. 25-29. Rpt. in item 1607.
1584. "Response to Questions on the Avant-Garde." *Digraphe*, no. 6 (October 1975), pp. 152-153.
1585. "La Philosophie refoulée." *Le Monde de l'Éducation*, no. 4 (1975), pp. 14-15. An extract of item 1606.
 Naby's (the minister of education) offensive against philosophy must not just elicit the reflex of defending the tradi-

Jacques Derrida: Primary Sources

139

tional institution. It must also lead philosophers to re-examine content and what is at stake in teaching their discipline.

1586. "Purveyor of Truth." Trans. Willis Domingo, et al. *Yale French Studies*. (Issue on Graphesis: Perspectives in Literature and Philosophy), no. 52 (1975), pp. 31-113. Trans. of item 1582.
1587. "The Copula Supplement." Trans. David B. Allison. In *Dialogues in Phenomenology*. Ed. Don Ihde and Richard M. Zaner. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975, pp. 7-48. Trans. of item 1547. See also item 1602.
1588. *El Pensamiento de Antonin Artaud*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Calden, 1975, 124pp. With Julia Kristeva. (Colección el Hombre y el Mundo, 18)
1589. *Posizioni. Colloqui con Henri Ronsse, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Louis Houdebine, Guy Scarpetta e Lucretia Finas*. Ed. Giuseppe Sertoli. Trans. M. Chiappini and G. Sertoli. Verona: Bertani, 1975, 156pp. (Il Lavoro critico: filosofia, 6) Trans. of item 1554.
1590. Article in *Theorie-Literatur-Praxis. Arbeitsbuch zur Literaturtheorie seit 1970*. Ed. Richard Brütting and Bernhard Zimmermann. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1975.
- 1976
1591. *L'Archéologie du frivole*. Paris: Denoël-Granchier, 1976. A new edition of item 1569a. Rpts. item 1563. For reviews, see items 1841-1843.
- Contains: (1) Première seconde--la métaphysique; (2) L'Après-coup de génie; (3) Imaginer--la doubleure des concepts et le roman de la force; (4) Note marginale ou remarque--les deux pages volantes; (5) Introduction à l'Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines--la frivolité même; Biographie de E. Bonnot de Condillac.
- *1592. *Eperons: les styles de Nietzsche. Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Venice: Corbo e Fàore, s. 1976; Paris: Flammarion, 1977, 129pp. See also item 1614. See item 1617d for American edition. For reviews, see items 1843a and 1843b.
- Modified version and English, Italian and German trans. of item 1565. Includes "Coup sur coup: introduction à Eperons" by Stefano Agosti and drawings by François Loubrieu.
1593. Reply in *Aujourd'hui, Rimbaud... enquête de Roger Munier*. Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1976.
- *1594. "Fore: les mots anglais de Nicolas Abraham et Maria Torok." In *Cryptonymie: le verbier de l'homme aux loups*. By Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Paris: Aubier-Montaigne/Flammarion, 1976, pp. 7-73. For English trans., see item 1615.

140

Individual Structuralists

1595. "Où commence et comment finit un corps enseignant?" In Châtelet, Derrida, Foucault, Liotard, Serres. *Politiques de la philosophie*. Ed. Dominique Grisoni. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1976. pp. 55-97.
1596. "Entre crochets. Entretien avec Jacques Derrida. Première partie." *Diagraphe*, no. 8 (April 1976), pp. 97-114. See item 1609 for second part of the interview.
1597. "Pas 1." *Gramma: Lire Blanchot I*, nos. 3-4 (1976), pp. 111-215.
1598. "Signéponge." *Diagraphe*, no. 8 (April 1976), pp. 17-39. See item 1604.
1599. "Où sont les chasseurs de sorcières?" *Le Monde*, 1 July 1976.
1600. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. Trans. of item 1522.
1601. "From Restricted to General Economy. A Hegelianism without Reserves." Trans. Alan Bass. *Semiotext(e)*, 2, no. 2 (1976), 25-55. Trans. of item 1520.
1602. "Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics." Trans. James Creech and Josué Harari. *Georgia Review*, 30 (Fall 1976), 527-564. Trans. of item 1547; to be reprinted in the forthcoming *Textual Strategies: Criticism in the Wake of Structuralism*, ed. Josué Harari. See also item 1587.
1603. *Randgänge der Philosophie*. Trans. Gerhard Ahrens, Henriette Beese, and Eva Brückner-Pfaffenberg. Frankfurt-Berlin-Vienna: Ullstein, 1976. Contains trans. of items 1532, 1530, 1536, and 1561, all part of item 1551.
1604. "Signéponge." In *Ponge Inventeur et Classique. Colloque de Cerisy*. Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977, pp. 115-144. Discussion, pp. 145-151. Differs from item 1598. Both are extracts of a work in progress.
1605. "L'Age de Hegel." In *Qui a peur de la philosophie?* By the Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique (GREPH). Paris: Flammarion, 1977, pp. 73-107.
1606. "La Philosophie et ses classes." In *Qui a peur de la philosophie?* By the Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique (GREPH). Paris: Flammarion, 1977, pp. 445-450. For an extract of this article, see item 1585.
1607. "Réponses à La Nouvelle Critique." In *Qui a peur de la philosophie?* By the Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique (GREPH). Paris: Flammarion, 1977, pp. 451-458. Rpts. item 1583.

Jacques Derrida: Primary Sources

141

1608. Preface to Warburton's *Essai sur les hiéroglyphes*. Paris: Aublet-Flammarion, 1977.
1609. "Ja, ou le faux-bond (Suite)." *Diagraphe*, no. 11 (March 1977), pp. 83-121. See item 1596 for the first part of this interview.
- Derrida answers questions on *Glas* (item 1570) and talks about upcoming works on Marxism, the practice of deconstruction and the notion of ideology.
1610. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*. Ed. David B. Allison. Trans. John P. Leavey. Stony Brook, N.Y.: Nicolas Hays, 1977; Boulder, Colo.: Great Eastern Book Co. (distributor), 1978; Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978. See item 1499. Derrida bibliography, pp. 181-193.
1611. "Signature, Event, Context." Trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman. In *Glyph 1. Johns Hopkins Textual Studies*. Ed. Samuel Weber and Henry Sussman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. pp. 172-197. Trans. of item 1561. See item 1612.
1612. "Limited Inc." In *Glyph 2. Johns Hopkins Textual Studies*. Ed. Samuel Weber and Henry Sussman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. pp. 162-254. English trans. of item 1613 which is the sequel to item 1611.
- Responds to the criticisms of John Searle published in *Glyph 1*.
1613. *Limited Inc.: Supplement to Glyph 2*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. This is the 81-page French version of item 1612 written in anticipation of its translation.
1614. "The Question of Style." Trans. Reuben Berezdivin. In *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*. Ed. David B. Allison. New York: Dell Publishing, 1977. pp. 176-189. Excerpts and trans. of items 1565 and 1592.
1615. "Fors: the English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok." Trans. Barbara Johnson. *Georgia Review*, 31, no. 1 (Spring 1977), 64-116. Trans. of item 1594.

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- 1615a. *La Vérité en peinture*. Paris: Flammarion, 1978, 440pp. (Champs, no 57. Champ philosophique) Drawn, in part, from various journals and publications of 1968-1978.
- 1615b. *Gérard Titus-Carmel: The Pocket Size Tlinget Coffin*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1978, 73pp. Text of an exhibit held at the Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1 March to 10 April 1978.

142

Individual Structuralists

- 1615a. "Le Retrait de la métaphore." *L'Esprit*, no. 7 (1978), pp. 103-126.
1616. "Scribble: pouvoir/écrire," in *Essai sur les hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens*. By William Warburton. Trans. Léonard Des Malpeines. Paris: Aubier-Montaigne/Flammarion, 1978. (Palimpseste)
- 1616a. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. and intro. Alan Bass. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 342pp. Trans. of item 1521.
- 1616b. "Coming Into One's Own." In *Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text*. Ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 114-149. (Selected papers from the English Institute, 1976-1977, new series no. 2)
On chapter two of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.
1617. "Restitutions of Truth to Size, in: la vérité en peinture." Trans. John P. Leavey. *Research in Phenomenology*, 8 (1978), 1-44. A portion of this text was read at Columbia University in the Fall of 1977. A French version was to be published in *Macula*.
- 1617a. "Theater of Cruelty and the closure of Representation." *Theater*, 9 (Summer 1978), 7-19. Trans. of item 1517.
- 1617b. "Becoming Woman." *Semiotext(e)*, 3 (1978), 128-137.
On Nietzsche.
- 1617c. "Speech and Writing According to Hegel." Trans. Alfonso Lingis. *Man and World*, 11, no. 1-2 (1978), 107-130.
- 1617d. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles--Éperons: les styles de Nietzsche*. Intro. Stefano Agostì. Eng. trans. Barbara Harlow. Drawings by François Loubrieu. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, c. 1978, 165pp. First American edition of item 1592.

1618. "The Retrait of Metaphor". Translated eds.,
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5 - 33.
1619. "Speculations - on Freud". Translated Ian McLeod,
The Oxford Literary Review, Vol. III, no. 2,
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1621. "Ce qui a force de musique". Diagraphe, no. 18-19
(1979), pp. 165 - 174.
1622. "Scribble: (Writing - power)". Translated Cary
Plotkin, Yale French Studies, no. 58, (1979),
pp. 116 - 147.
1623. "Me-Psychoanalysis". Translated Richard Klein,
Diacritics, vol. 9, no. 1, (Spring, 1979), pp.
4 - 12.
1624. "Living On: Border Lines". Translated James
Hulbert. Harold Bloom (ed.), Deconstruction and
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pp. 75 - 176.

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1625. "La Loi du Genre/Law of Genre". Translated Avital
Ronell. Glyph, no. 7 (1980), pp. 176 - 229.
1626. "La Carte postale: de Socrate à Freud et
au-delà", Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1980.

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1627. Positions. Translated and annot. Alan Bass.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
Trans. of item 1554.
1628. "Economimesis". Translated Richard Klein.
Diacritics, Vol. 11, No. 2, (Summer, 1981), pp.
3 - 25. Trans. of item 1578.
1629. Dissemination. Translated Barbara Johnson.
University of Chicago Press, 1981. Trans. of
item 1552.

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1630. "Sending: On Representation". Translated Peter and Mary Ann Caws. Social Research, Vol. 49, no. 2, Summer, (1982), pp. 294 - 326.
1631. "Octobiographie de Nietzsche". Claude Levesque and Christie McDonald (eds.), L'oreille de l'autre, Montreal: VLD Editeur, 1982. pp. 13 - 56.
1632. Margins of Philosophy. Translated Alan Bass (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982). Trans. of item 1553.

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1632. "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy". Translated John P. Leavey. The Oxford Literary Review, Vol. 6, no. 2, (1984), pp. 3 - 37.
1634. Glas. Translated John P. Leavey. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984. Trans. of item 1570.

1985

1635. The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud. Translated Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

NOTES

PREFACE

1. This division is taken from Derrida's own remarks in the opening of his thesis defence (based on published works) on June 2, 1980 at the Sorbonne. It has been published as "The Time of the Thesis: punctuations", trans. Kathleen McLaughlin, in Allan Montefiore (ed.) Philosophy in France Today, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See pp. 36, 48, 49.

2. I will explain these ideas later in the thesis.

3. Derrida calls this "phonocentrism". It too will be explained in more detail later on.

4. The proceedings of this symposium have been published under the title The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man, The Structuralist Controversy. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970).

5. See his Blindness and Insight (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Allegories of Reading (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

6. See his Fiction and Repetition (Cambridge Harvard University Press, 1982).

7. See His Criticism in the Wilderness (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press, 1980) and Saving the Text (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

8. See his Deconstruction and Criticism (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979) and Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. "Transcendental phenomenology would be the ultimate completion of this teleology of reason which passes through humanity..."

And among these metaphysical concepts which form the essential resources of Husserl's discourse, that of end, or telos, plays a decisive role."

"The Ends of Man", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, vol. XXX, no. 1, September (1969) pp. 43 - 4.

2. "He (Sartre) played an important role in my life at the time. He was a model that I have since judged to be ill-fated and catastrophic, but one I still love." "An Interview with Jacques Derrida", Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring (1984). Originally published in Le nouvel Observateur, Spring (1983).

3. "At the end of Being and Nothingness, when Sartre poses programmatically the question of the unity of Being (which in this context means the totality of being), when he titles this question a "metaphysics" in order to distinguish it from phenomenological ontology, which itself described the essential specificity of regions, it is obvious that this metaphysical unity of Being, as a totality in itself and of itself is precisely the unity of the human-reality in its final project. Being in itself and Being for itself were Being and this totality of being within which they were put together was linked to itself, referred to itself, became apparent to itself by the essential project of human-reality. That which was thereby named in a supposedly neutral and indeterminate way, was none other than the metaphysical unit of man and God, the project of becoming God as a final objective constituting human-reality. Atheism changes nothing in this fundamental structure. Sartre's attempt is a remarkable example verifying Heidegger's proposition according to which "all humanism remains metaphysical," metaphysics being the other name for onto-theology". "The Ends of Man", pp. 35 - 6.

4. "Defined in this way, humanism or anthropologism was at this time a sort of common ground of existentialism whether Christian or Atheist, of the philosophy of values, whether spiritualistic or not, of personalism, whether

rightist or leftist, and of Marxism in the classical style. And if one's references is on the ground of political ideologies, anthropologism was the unnoticed and uncontested common ground of Marxism, of social-democratic or democratic-Christian discourse." "The Ends of Man", p. 36.

5. See his Tristes Tropiques (Paris: Plon, 1955)
 - Anthropologie Structurale (Paris: Plon, 1958), translated as Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963).
 - La pensée sauvage (Paris: Plon, 1962), translated as The Savage Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
 - Le Cru et le cuit (Paris: Plon, 1964), Mythologique I. Translated as The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).
 - Du miel aux cendres (Paris: Plon, 1968), Mythologique III. Translated as From Honey to Ashes (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973).

6. See his Ecrits I (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966)
 - Scilicet, Vol. 2/3 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970)
 - Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973). Translated as The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. J. Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), (New York: Norton, 1978).
 - Les écrits techniques de Freud (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974).
 - Ecrits II (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971).

7. See his Lire le capital with Etienne Balibar (Paris: Maspero, 1968). Translated as Reading Capital (London: New Left Books, 1970).
 - Pour Marx (Paris: Maspero, 1965). Translated as For Marx (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

8. See his Le degré zéro de l'écriture (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1953).
 - Mythologies (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957). Translated as Mythologies (New York: Hill and Wong, 1972).
 - Eléments de semiologie (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964). Translated as Elements of Semiology (New York: Hill and Wong, 1968).
 - L'empire des signes (Geneva: Skira, 1970).
 - A Lover's Discourse (New York: Hill and Wong, 1978).

9. See his L'histoire de la folie (Paris: Gallimard, 1968). Translated as Madness and Civilization (New York: Random House, 1965).

----- Naissance de la clinique, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963). Translated as The Birth of the Clinic (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

----- Les mots et les choses (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). Translated as The Order of Things (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

----- L'archéologie du savoir (Paris: Gallimard, 1969). Translated as The Archaeology of Knowledge (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

10. See his Surveiller et punir (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). Translated as Discipline and Punishment (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

----- La volonté de savoir, Vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). Translated as The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

11. See his Nietzsche et la philosophie (Paris: P.U.F., 1962).

----- Différence et répétition (Paris: P.U.F., 1968).

----- Logique du sens (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969).

----- L'Anti-Oedipe. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972). Translated as Anti-Oedipus (New York: Viking, 1977).

12. "Structuralism lives within and on the difference between its promise and its practice. Whether biology, linguistics or literature is in question, how can an organized totality be perceived without reference to its end, or without presuming to know its end, at least? And if meaning is meaningful only within a totality, could it come forth if the totality were not animated by the anticipation of an end, or by an intentionality which, moreover, does not necessarily and primarily belong to a consciousness?" "Force and Signification", Writing and Difference, translated Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 26.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences, Writing and Difference, p. 279.

2. Jacques Derrida, Positions, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 20.

"a) elle doit passer par la déconstruction difficile de toute l'histoire de la métaphysique qui a imposé et ne cessera jamais d'imposer à toute la science sémiologique cette requête fondamentale d'un "signifié transcendantal" et d'un concept indépendant de la langue;"

Positions, (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1972), p. 30.

3. Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 20.

4. Ibid., p.20.

5. M.H. Abrams, "How to do Things with Texts", Partisan Review, XLIV, (1979), p. 569.

6. See his book, The Protestant Era, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

7. See his book, Paths of Faith, (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1981), p.4.

8. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 49.

"Nous avons identifié le logocentrisme et la métaphysique de la présence comme le désir exigeant, puissant, systématique et irrépressible, d'un tel signifié." De la grammatologie, (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1967) pp. 71 - 2.

9. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context", Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), p. 329.

"La déconstruction ne peut se limiter ou passer immédiatement à une neutralisation: elle doit, par un double geste, une double science, une double écriture, pratiquer un renversement de l'opposition classique et un déplacement général de système."

"Signature Evénement Contexte, Marges de la philosophie, (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1972), p. 392.

10. The laws, structure or textuality of the text refer to the objective set of rules independent from the author's intentions.

11. Derrida, Positions, p. 6.

"Deconstruire la philosophie ce serait ainsi penser la généalogie structurée de ses concepts de la manière la plus fidèle, la plus intérieure, mais en même temps depuis un certain dehors par elle inqualifiable, innommable, déterminer ce que cette histoire a pu dissimiler ou interdire, se faisant histoire par cette répression-quelque part intéressée."

Positions, p. 15.

12. Josué V. Harari (ed). Textual Strategies (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 37.

13. Derrida, Positions, p. 42.

"Aussi faut-il, par cette écriture double, justement, stratifiée, décalée et décalante, marquer l'écart entre l'inversion qui met bas la hauteur, en déconstruit la généalogie sublimante ou idéalisante, et l'émergence irruptive d'un nouveau "concept", concept de ce qui ne se laisse plus, ne s'est jamais laissé comprendre dans le régime antérieur."

Positions, p. 57

14. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 44

15. Ibid., p. 56.

"Nous voudrions plutôt suggérer que la prétendue dérivation de l'écriture, si réelle et si massive qu'elle soit, n'a été possible qu'à une condition: que le langage, "originel", "naturel", etc., n'ait jamais existé, qu'il n'ait jamais été intact, intouché, par l'écriture, qu'il ait toujours été lui-même une écriture. Archi-écriture dont nous voulons ici indiquer la nécessité et dessiner le nouveau concept; et que nous ne continuons à appeler écriture que parce qu'elle communique essentiellement avec le concept vulgaire de l'écriture."

De la grammatologie, pp. 82 - 3.

16. For a fuller account of this view see A.J. Cascardi, "Skepticism and Deconstruction," Philosophy and Literature, vol. 8, no. 1, April, (1984), pp. 1 - 14.

17. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 35

18. Derrida, Positions, p. 9.

19. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 120.

20. There can conceivably be degrees of logocentrism depending on: 1) how many logocentric values or concepts (e.g. telos, subject-consciousness) are expressed in one's texts, or 2) how many elements of philosophical inquiry (e.g. reflective, rational, critical) one adheres to. Heidegger, then, could be less logocentric than Levi-Strauss because he has less of 1) and/or 2).

21. See his article, "Style and Strategy at the Limits of Philosophy: Heidegger and Derrida", The Monist, vol. 63, no. 4, October, (1980), pp. 494 - 511.

22. Derrida, Positions, p. 6.

23. Ibid., pp. 6 - 7.

24. Derrida, Writing and Difference, p. 292.



25. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 3.
 "Le logocentrisme est aussi, fondamentalement, un idéalisme. Il est la matrice de l'idéalisme."
Positions, pp. 69 - 70.
26. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 3.
27. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 76.
28. Plato, "The Republic", Plato: The Collected Dialogues, trans. and edited by Peter Shorey, Edith Hamilton, Huntington Cairns, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 744.
29. In her introduction to Derrida's Dissemination, Op. cit., pp. viii - ix.
30. Plato, "The Phaedrus", trans. R. Hackford, Plato: The Collected Dialogues, trans. R. Hackford, p. 520.
31. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 12.
32. Ibid., p. 168.
33. Ibid., pp. 225 - 26.
34. Michel Foucault, "the Discourse on Language", The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972), p. 216.
35. Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness", Writing and Difference, p. 34.
36. Ibid., p. 35.
37. Ibid., p. 36.

38. "In this sense, I would be tempted to consider Foucault's book a powerful gesture of protection and internment. A Cartesian gesture for the twentieth century. A reappropriation of negativity. To all appearances, it is reason that he interns, but, like Descartes, he chooses the reason of yesterday as his target and not the possibility of meaning in general."

Ibid., p. 55.

39. Derrida, Positions, p. 51.

"Maintenant, bien entendu, le logocentrisme est un concept plus large que celui d'idéalisme, auquel il sert d'assise débordante."

Positions, p. 70.

40. Ibid., pp. 64 - 5.

"Le réalisme ou le sensualisme, l'"empirisme", sont des modifications du logocentrisme."

Positions, p. 87.

41. Ibid., p. 65.

42. Ibid., p. 51.

"Il constitue un système de prédicats dont certains peuvent toujours se rencontrer dans des philosophies qui se disent non-idéalistes, voire anti-idéalistes."

Positions, p. 70.

43. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 283.

44. Derrida, Positions, p. 22.

45. See his book, Groundless Belief: an essay on the possibility of epistemology, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

46. See his book, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

47. Derrida, Positions, p. 65.

48. Ibid, p. 65.

49. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", Writing and Difference, pp. 279 - 80.

50. Jacques Derrida, "Différance", Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays, trans. David Allison, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 153.

51. To say that it is "spatial" is not to limit it to the phenomenal world. God, for instance, can manifest this kind of presence. By spatial I mean simply the existence of some kind of plenum which is "there".

52. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 97.

53. Ibid, p. 12.

54. See Aristotle's "Categories", Richard McKeon (ed.) The Basic Works of Aristotle, trans. E.M. Edghill (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 9.

55. Ibid, pp. 9 - 10.

56. See Aristotle's "Metaphysics", trans. W.D. Ross, 1028b.

57. Ibid, 1029a.

58. See Aristotle's "Categories", p. 8.

59. René Descartes, "Meditations", The Rationalists, trans. John Veitch, (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), pp. 128 - 29.

60. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 12.

61. Jacques Derrida, "Ousia and Grammé", F.J. Smith (ed.) Phenomenology in Perspective, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 57.

62. See his Logical Investigations, Vol. I, trans. J.N. Findley, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 269 - 98.

63. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 62.

64. Derrida, Positions, p. 49.

65. Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man", p. 42.

66. See Hegel's "Introduction to the Philosophy of Spirit", In F.G.W. Hegel: The Essential Writings, trans. and edited by Fredrick Weiss (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp 225 - 52.

67. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 166.

68. Derrida, Positions, p. 27.

"Le gramme comme différance c'est alors une structure et un mouvement qui ne se laissent plus penser à partir de l'opposition présence/absence. La différance, c'est le jeu systématique de différents, des traces de différences, de l'espace par lequel les éléments se rapportent les uns aux autres. Cet espace est la production, à la fois active et passive (le a de la différance indique cette indécision par rapport à l'activité et à la passivité, ce qui ne se laisse pas encore commander et distribuer par cette opposition), des intervalles lesquels les termes "pleins" ne signifieraient pas, ne fonctionneraient pas."

Positions, pp. 38 - 9.

69. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 71.

70. For example, Spinoza says, "Watsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived". Ethics, The Rationalists, trans. R.H.M. Elwes, p. 189. He further states "By God I mean a being absolutely infinite - that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality".

Ibid., p. 179.

71. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 71.

72. Hegel, "Introduction to the Philosophy of Spirit", pp. 225 - 52.

73. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 24.

74. Ibid., p. 71.

75. Op. cit., p. 19.

76. Ibid., p. 19

77. The question of literature has always been at the forefront of Derrida's thinking. As he expresses it: "For I have to remind you somewhat bluntly and simply, that my most constant interest, coming even before my philosophical interest I should say, if this is possible, has been directed towards literature, towards that writing which is called "literary". "The Time of a Thesis: punctuations", Philosophy in France Today, p. 37.

78. "The Infinite Text", Glyph: Textual Studies, no. 7, Johns Hopkins University Press, (1980), p. 74.

79. Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session", Dissemination, p. 245.

80. Ibid., p. 255.

81. Ibid., p. 262.

82. See his Epilogue in the book, Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 554 - 57.

83. See his book, Validity in Interpretation, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 1 - 23.

84. Jacques Derrida "Force and Signification", Writing and Difference, p. 11.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

1. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p. 279.

2. Derrida, "White Mythology". Translated F.C.T. Moore, New Literary History, vol. VI, no. 1, Autumn, (1974), p. 11.

"La métaphysique - mythologie blanche qui rassemble et réfléchit la culture de l'Occident;"

"La Mythologie Blanche", Marges de la philosophie, p. 254.

3. Ibid, p. 11.

"Mythologie blanche - la métaphysique a effacé en elle-même la scène fabuleuse qui l'a produite et qui reste néanmoins active, remuante, inscrite à l'encre blanche, dessin invisible et recouvert dans le palimpseste."

"La Mythologie Blanche", p. 254.

4. G.W.F. Hegel, On Art, Religion and Philosophy, ed. and intro. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 230.

5. The following ideas are taken from Michael Ryan's book Marxism and Deconstruction. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 6 - 8.

6. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 286.

7. Derrida, "White Mythology", p. 18.

8. Ibid, p. 23.

9. Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse", The Rule of Metaphor, translated Robert Czerny (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 290.

10. Ibid., p. 290.

11. Ibid., p. 290.

12. Jacques Derrida, "The Retrait of Metaphor", trans. eds. Enclitic, vol. II, no. 2, Fall, (1978), p. 13.

13. Ibid., p. 15.

14. Ricoeur, "Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse", p. 286.

15. Ibid., p. 292.

16. Ibid., p. 294.

17. Derrida, "The Retrait of Metaphor", p. 12.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

1. I will concentrate more on Derrida's criticisms of Heidegger and Levinas since he rarely comments on Nietzsche in a negative way.

2. Derrida, Positions, p. 9.

3. See for example his book Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, trans. Barbara Harlow, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), which deals with Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche.

4. Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", Dissemination, p. 76.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 586.

6. Ibid., p. 584.

7. Ibid., p. 507.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", The Portable Nietzsche, trans. and edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 46 - 7.

9. Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology", New Literary History, pp. 26 - 7.

10. Ibid., p. 24.

11. Ibid., p. 27.

12. Derrida, "Différance", p. 148.

13. Martin Heidegger, Identity and Difference, trans. Joan Stambough, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969), p. 70.

14. Ibid., pp. 70 - 1.

15. Ibid., p. 59.

16. Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", Dissemination, p. 76.

17. In Being and Time Heidegger characterizes presence-at-hand in the following way:

"All entities whose Being 'in' one another can thus be described have the same kind of Being - that of Being-present-at-hand - as things occurring 'within' the world."

Being and Time. Translated John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 79.

18. Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", Writing and Difference, pp. 280 - 81.

19. Derrida, Positions, p. 6.

20. Ibid., p. 54.

21. Jacques Derrida, Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, p. 135.

22. Ibid., p. 103.

23. Ibid., pp. 81 - 2.

24. p. 55.

25. For instance, Joan Stambough in her introduction to Heidegger's The End of Philosophy, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973), pp. xiii - xi.

26. For instance, W.J. Richardson in his book Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. 504.

27. Derrida, Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, p. 119.

28. Derrida, Positions, p. 10.

29. For instance, "Man is the shepherd of Being. Man loses nothing in the 'less'; rather, he gains in that he attains the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by Being into the preservation of Being's Thought." "Letter on Humanism". Translated Frank Capuzzi. In Martin Heidegger - Basic Writings, David Krell (ed.) (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 239.

30. Derrida, "Differance", p. 159.

31. Namely, "Violence and Metaphysics": An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas", Writing and Difference, pp. 79 - 153.

32. Ibid., footnote no. 7, p. 312.

33. Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 43.

34. Ibid., p. 44.

35. The following remarks echo Andrew Tallon, in his review article of Levinas' Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence in Man and World, vol. 9, no. 4, December, (1976), pp. 451 - 62.

36. Emmanuel Levinas "On the Trail of the Other", Philosophy Today, vol. 10, Spring, (1966), p. 36.

37. Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics", p. 112.

38. Ibid., p. 128.
39. "On the Trail of the Other", p. 41.
40. Emmanuel Levinas, "God and Philosophy", Philosophy Today, vol XXII, no. 2, Summer, (1978), p. 138.
41. Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics", p. 114.
42. Ibid., p. 142.
43. Ibid., p. 151.
44. Ibid., pp. 151 - 2.
45. Levinas may be the exception here because of his overtly religious orientation.

NOTES

CHAPTER IV

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975).

2. William Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion, (New York: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 314.

3. St. Teresa of Avila describes this experience as follows:

"What I want to explain is the soul's feelings when it is in this divine union. It is plain enough what union is; in union two separate things become one."

This is from "The Degrees of Prayer" in F.C. Happold's Mysticism: A study and an Anthology, (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 352.

4. Quoted in Christina Howells' "Sartre and Derrida: Qui perd gagne", Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, vol. 13, no. 1, January (1982), p. 30.

5. It may be the case that the anthropology really determines the metaphysics here. In any case I think it is clearer to deal with them separately.

6. Derrida, Positions, p. 19.

7. Ibid., pp. 19 - 20.

8. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 13.

9. See his book, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, op. cit.

10. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p. 292.

11. I am indebted to Danièle Letocha for this distinction.

12. See his Natural Right and History, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

13. See his Philosophy in the Mass Age, (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1959).

14. See his Order and History, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958).

15. See his The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

16. By traditionalism I mean the whole Western way of life and thought before the 1600's. It corresponds to an agrarian (including maritime) and rural society. Modernity is the whole Western way of life and thought in the last 400 years. It corresponds to an industrial and highly urbanized society.

17. Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, p. 369.

NOTES

CHAPTER V

1. I call différance a counterview because Derrida claims it "is neither a word nor a concept", ("Différance", p. 130). It is that play of differences which is never appropriated by the logocentric tradition, and so runs counter to it.

2. Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics.

3. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 52.

4. Derrida, "Différance", p. 129.

5. Derrida, Positions, p. 27.

6. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 62.

"La trace (pure) est la différence. Elle ne dépend d'aucune plénitude sensible, audible ou visible, phonique ou graphique."

De la grammatologie, p. 92.

7. Derrida, "Différance", pp. 142 - 3.

8. Derrida, Positions¹, pp. 8 - 9.

9. I am indebted to Sollace Mitchell for the following remarks. See his "Post-structuralism, Empiricism and Interpretation", Sollace Mitchell and Michael Rosen, (eds.) The Need for Interpretation, (London: The Athlone Press, 1983), pp. 54 - 89.

10. Derrida, "Différance", p. 140.

"Un tel jeu, la différence, n'est plus alors simplement un concept mais la possibilité de la conceptualité, du procès et du système conceptuel en général."

"La Différance", p. 49.

11. Ibid, p. 141.

"Ce qui s'écrit différence, ce sera donc le mouvement de jeu qui "produit", par ce qui n'est pas simplement une activité, ces effets de différence."

"La différence", p. 50.

12. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p. 292.

13. Ibid, p. 292.

14. Ibid, p. 289.

15. Derrida, Of Grammatology, pp. 144 - 45.

"Car le concept de supplément - qui détermine ici celui d'image représentative - abrite en lui deux significations dont la cohabitation est aussi étrange que nécessaire. Le supplément s'ajoute, il est un surplus, une plénitude, le comble de la présence. Il cumule et accumule la présence..."

Mais le supplément supplée. Il ne s'ajoute que pour remplacer. Il intervient ou s'insinue à-la-place-de; s'il comble, c'est comme on comble un vide. S'il représente et fait image c'est par le défaut antérieur d'une présence. Suppléant et vicaire, le supplément est un adjoint, une instance subalterne qui tient-lieu. En tant que substitut, il ne s'ajoute pas simplement à la positivité d'une présence, il ne produit aucun relief, sa place est assignée dans la structure par la marque d'un vide."

De la grammatologie, p. 208.

16. Ibid, p. 286,

17. Derrida, "Différance", p. 135.

18. Derrida, Positions, p. 43.

19. Derrida's counter-view of différance, has been interpreted as a metaphysics of absence by James Han in his review article of Of Grammatology, in MLM 94, (1979), pp. 809 - 826.

20. Derrida, "Différance", pp. 134 - 5.

21. Derrida "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p. 289.

22. Derrida, "Différance", p. 141.

23. Ibid, p. 141.

24. See for example the idea of the creator God in the negative theology of Dionysius the Areopagite (the pseudo-Dionysius), especially his Mystical Theology.

NOTES

CONCLUSION

1. This is argued by Stanley Rosen in his review article of Derrida's. Of Grammatology in Philosophy and Rhetoric, Vol. 15, no. 1, Winter, (1982), p. 67.
2. See for example, James Jakob Liszka's "Derrida: Philosophy of the Liminal", Man and World, Vol. 16, No. 3, (1983), pp. 233 - 250.
3. Derrida, Positions, p. 6.
4. Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding UnScientific Postscript. Translated David Swenson, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 459.
5. Derrida, "Structure, Sign and play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", pp. 278 - 79.
6. See Leszek Kolakowski, "The Priest and the Jester", Dissent, 9, no. 3, Summer, (1962) pp. 215 - 35.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche "Twilight of the Idols", The Portable Nietzsche, op. cit., p. 484.
8. Ibid, p. 292.
9. Derrida, Of Grammatology, p. 50.
10. Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", p. 280.

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14. _____. "The Double Session". Dissemination, op. cit.
15. _____. "Signature Event Context". Margins of Philosophy. Translated Alan Bass. (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982): 307 - 330.

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19. _____ . "Twilight of the Idols". The Portable Nietzsche, op. cit.: 463 - 563.

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