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**for love of the ritual:
Derrida-philosophy**

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or the degree of Master of Arts (Philosophy) at the
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*Except where otherwise indicated,
this thesis is my own work,*

bb.

Le 1er septembre 1977.

*Tu m'as dit il était une fois que je
pouvais te demander l'impossible.
Tu n'as pas supporté cette folie
élémentaire, pour toi il faut être
près ou loin.*

*de la lettre ouverte. Mon
goût du secret (a-b-s-o-l-u): je ne
peux jouir qu'à cette condition, de
cette condition. MAIS, la
jouissance secrète me prive de
l'essentiel. Je voudrais que tout le
monde (pas tout le monde, la
meilleure âme télescopique de
l'univers, appelle ça Dieu si tu
veux) sache, témoigne, assiste. Et
ce n'est pas une contradiction,
c'est pour ça, en vue de ça que
j'écris quand je peux. Je joue le
secret contre les témoins faibles,
les témoins particuliers, même s'ils
sont foule, parce qu'il sont foule.
C'est la condition du témoignage -
ou du voyeurisme- en principe
universel, du non-secret absolu, la
fin de cette vie privée que
finalement je déteste et récuse;
mais en attendant, du privé il faut
en rajouter. Implacablement, et du
secret et de la crypte et de la
réserve. Je ne refuse pas la
publicité absolue du témoignage, je
récuse des témoins, certains
témoins. Les uns après les autres,
c'est vrai jusqu'à présent, et
presque tous. Moi-même parfois,
c'est pour ça que j'écris un peu
sans croire à rien, ni à la
littérature, ni à la philosophie, ni à
l'école, à l'université, à l'académie,
au lycée, au collège, ni au
journalisme. Jusqu'à présent.
C'est pour ça que je m'accroche un
peu aux cartes postales: si
pudiques, anonymes, offertes,
stéréotypées, «rétro» -et
absolument indéchiffrables, le for
intérieur lui-même que les
facteurs, les lecteurs, les
collectionneurs, les professeurs
finalement se passent de main en
main les yeux, oui, bandés.*

*le discord, le drame entre
nous: non pas de savoir si nous
devons continuer à vivre ensemble
(pense aux fois innombrables de
notre séparation, à chaque
autodafé), si nous pouvons vivre
avec ou sans l'autre, ce qui a
toujours passé notre décision, mais
à quelle distance, selon quel mode
de l'éloignement. Et là-*

[J.D.]

*Lees maar,
er staat niet wat er staat.*

(M. Nijhoff)



for love of the ritual: Derrida- philosophy

Selon quel mode
de l'éloignement

*As well as Moira Gatens, Mark
Hewson, Beverley Shallcross,
Roe Sybylla, Paul Thom and
Raina Verrills, I would like to
thank Aurelia Armstrong and
Paul Patton.*

0./ We all know the game:

[for P.P.]

<<Le <<présent>> essai n'est qu'un tissu de <<citations>>. Certaines sont entre guillemets. Généralement fidèles..>>

which book would you take with you if you were to be deserted on an uninhabited island? It is only a game, it is never completely serious. But it says something about the one who is asked to make the choice. Many people would hesitate and might not be able or might not be willing to make a choice. Others spontaneously would say: the bible, Plato, the Greek tragedies, Shakespeare, one or other great novel or the work of a great thinker. I myself would take with me... the big dictionary of my language. Again, my saying so is not completely serious, it is only a game.

Why the dictionary? In the first place because all texts and books that are written in Dutch, and that I would otherwise like to take with me, are written with words that one can find in the **Van Dale. Het Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal**. Texts are weaves or constructions, woven or built from material that is in the dictionary. An English text cannot be something other than a particular combination of English words, registered in the **Oxford English Dictionary**. Second, when you open the dictionary on any page -or, let me express myself more modestly- when I open that book on any page, I fall from one wonder into another. I am constantly referred to all sorts of different words. All sorts of memories come up and all sorts of expectations are raised. I suddenly see connections that I had never seen or suspected before, and whole narratives begin to outline themselves: all that on the pursuit of mere words.

*Les mots, dans les
dictionnaires,
gisent, pareils ou
de dates diverses,
comme des
stratifications.*
(St. Mallarmé)

In the stream of words different kinds can be discerned: there are difficult words and there are easy words, lovely words and dreary words, beautiful words and ugly words, sad and joyful words, dirty words and very pure and refined words, big, expensive and pretentious words, but also ordinary and most modest words. There are archaic words and there are modern words. Lonely and forgotten words that repel one another and that are hostile to one another, but also words that easily find one another, words that call one another forth in what Jean Baudrillard calls a *catastrophe of charm*, or that need one another's company, words that go together very well, albeit only because they rhyme or because they resemble one another. Every page of the dictionary is, for me, like an unintentional and unintended, and perhaps a -to risk that (big) word- *postmodern* piece of art that is quite fascinating. Even more so than a book on art with reproductions of, for example, the Sistine chapel or the work of Valerio Adami. For such books contain merely reproductions, while a page of a dictionary is not a reproduction since there is no original: each page is an instance or example of *the thing itself*.

Perhaps you will ask: why have you chosen Derrida then as 'favourite', and not the dictionary? Well, my fascination for the dictionary is prompted by Derrida. He has pulled me to it, and what I have said up to now would not have been possible without him. Now Derrida might not have the **Oxford English Dictionary**, or the **Van Dale**, but he has the **Littré**, the French counterpart. That book, the **Littré**, is perhaps the most frequently cited book in Derrida's work, not to say anything of the implicit borrowings. He often copies sections from it, sometimes even respecting the particular typography. Derrida, like Heidegger, is very partial to dictionaries and he likes to play all sorts of games with them. If there is one person who is well aware of the fact that philosophy and literature, but also science, is built up

out of words that are combined in all sorts of different ways, then it is Derrida.

I looked in the **Shorter Oxford English Dictionary** and **The Budget Macquarie Dictionary** for the word 'favourite'. The

word's context -which, in a dictionary, is insignificant, since the words are arranged according to a merely arbitrary principle,

Cf. Alan Bass, *L before K*; cf. also Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, p. 8, and Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, pp. 137-38.

namely the alphabet which is in turn an arrangement

to which, from childhood onwards, we have become

accustomed, but in which there is no necessity at all,- that context, then, is

already fascinating in itself. Around the word one finds: fashion, fat, fatal,

fatuous, fauna, fauteuil, February, feces, foetus. With these words one could

weave a whole story. Notice that one could expand the context in both

directions. As is always the case with context, real ones as well as linguistic

ones, the limits that one demarcates, or the delimitation from where one lets

a text begin or end, are the result of an arbitrary decision or choice. Now

what does one find under the entry 'favourite'? I read: -(OED) *A. sb. 1. A*

person or thing regarded with peculiar favour, one preferred above others

1583; in Racing, etc. the competitor or competing animal "fancied", as being

most likely to win 1813. 2. One who stands unduly high in the favour of a

prince, etc. 1599. (So, in application to things, or by extension: a favourite

piece of art, song, record &c..) 3. A curl or lock of hair hanging loose upon

the temple: worn in the 17th and 18th centuries. [Cf. F. favoris whiskers.]

1690. #4. = FAVOURER -1591. B. adj. Regarded with especial favour, liking

or preference 1711. [Fortunes's] spoiled and favourite child BYRON

- (BMD) *n. 1. a person or thing regarded with special favour or preference. 2. Sport. a competitor considered likely to win. 3.*

Racing. the horse, dog, etc., which is most heavily backed. 4. a person treated with special (esp. undue) favour, as by a ruler. adj. 5. regarded with particular favour or preference.

I add here that, in Dutch, the gendered word *favoriete* also is the most favoured concubine of an Eastern prince and, in cardgames, is the ace of trumps. If I had the talent and genius of Derrida I could write a whole essay on the dictionary's prompting.

(BMD) Prompt: -v.t. 6. to assist (a person speaking) by suggesting something to be said. 7. Theat. to supply (an actor or reciter) with his cue from offstage if he has missed it, or his line if he has forgotten it. -v.i. 8. Theat. to supply offstage cues and effects. In application, cf. B. Pautrat, *Versions du Soleil*, pp. 156-57: *Notre point de départ sera fait de deux fragments, l'un de 1872, l'autre de 1886-1887, qui résument une proposition constamment avancée par Nietzsche dans sa critique du langage naturel. Dans le Philosophenbuch: <<Der Philosoph in den Netzen der Sprache eingefangen>>. Dans le Nachlass: <<Nous cessons de penser lorsque nous voulons nous soustraire à la contrainte de la langue, nous parvenons à peine à penser que cette limite soit une limite réelle: la pensée rationnelle est un interpréter (ein Interpretieren) selon un schéma que nous ne pouvons pas rejeter.>> Dans les deux cas, qu'il faut penser ensemble, la langue -la Sprache, langage en général ou langue naturelle- est donc déterminée comme filet, lacet (ce dans quoi un oiseau se trouve pris), prison, lieu d'une contrainte et d'un asservissement (Zwang). [...]; ne retenons de ces lignes que la proposition philosophique qu'elles formulent à propos de la langue et de la philosophie: le rapport du philosophe à la langue est fait de servitude et de servitude nécessaire.*

An essay that could be about love, about cuddling, about rendering and receiving favours, about contests and competitions, about winning prizes

and laying wagers, about backing something or someone and that, backing, means -according to the dictionary- expecting something from something or someone. It

could also be about *favoris* and rules of attraction, sex and the imaginary world of eastern princes with their harems and veiled women, election and

mutual jealousy. Finally, a word

could be said on horses and cardgames, on the ace of trumps and the labyrinth of which each single game is a realization. And all this with reference to Jacques Derrida. I do not have the talent of Derrida and so I will not attempt such an essay. I will not enter a contest or competition with him. I know for sure that I would lose and that no one would back me. But I am convinced that if one looked in the dictionary for the several words I named,

one would be confronted with the most interesting discoveries and surprises, so that the essay would expand in all directions and could well run out of hand. I do not, however, want to follow that path. Let me instead formulate some considerations that have to do with Derrida and that are inspired, or prompted by him.

The word 'favourite' means in the first place something like 'the favoured one'. It is the first meaning the dictionary gives. Now, as a matter of fact,

Derrida does not need my or our favours, although no writer can do without readers and although I wish him well, him, *him* more than anyone else.

toi, uniquement toi, mon amour...La carte postale, p. 34.

Otherwise, he would not be my 'favourite'. To be a *Mandela devient admirable pour avoir su admirer. Et ce qu'il a su, il l'a su dans l'admiration. Il fascine aussi, nous le verrons, pour avoir été fasciné.* favourite has something to do with admiration, with giving someone preference above others and that means: electing. We can only admire, Derrida suggests, someone who admires. There are a lot of things, especially texts and the Law, which he admires. *'Admiration de Nelson Mandela ou Les lois de la réflexion', p. 454.*

It is likely that one can only favour someone and give her preference if she, in one way or another, is in turn favoured, gifted and that again means elected. Here it is not about favours then which we render someone, or about gifts that we give, but about favour and gifts that come from elsewhere.

Perhaps Heidegger would speak here of the favour, or gift, of *das Sein*. In that sense Derrida is, in my eyes, a favoured one and hence my favourite. That, of course, is a 'choice' on my part.

Luce Irigaray, *L'admiration (Lecture de Descartes. Les passions de l'âme, art. 53), p. 76: -admirer. L'admiration étant à la fois active et passive.*

To choose, then, and especially to choose in favour of

an author is, within philosophy, a life-sized problem. For philosophy aims to be a strictly rational discourse in which everything is rationally justified and in which something like subjective preference and aversion do not play a (decisive) part. Philosophy aims at formulating a knowledge that does not limit its pretension to a particular group but that is instead universally valid and that -at least in principle- is destined for all. As a believer or -perhaps- as a sectarian you can choose in favour of a particular book, for example the bible, which you consider the book you want to follow, or you can choose in favour of a particular person, Christ, in whom you see an exemplar, a master, a (Immanuel Kant) *Lehrer*, or a *guru*. By so doing you join a particular, and that also means -again, according to the dictionary- a restricted community of followers or imitators. But philosophy is not a faith or sect and philosophers do not form a community, in this sense. So if some choice is involved in philosophy, then it should in principle be justifiable in all respects. If this is not the case, then the philosophy you choose must be dependent on accidental and precarious factors. To choose in favour of -or perhaps against- Derrida, in favour of or against Hegel, Heidegger, Witherall is to make a choice which cannot be completely justified. Of course, some reasons or justifications can be given, but they can never be sufficient. This problem -which philosophy is not very keen to face for it is threatening, making philosophy all too dependent on (seeming) contingencies- is taken very seriously by Derrida. According to him, an element of contingency which escapes our control and initiative is always involved, structurally, in philosophy. Moreover, this is true in all the sciences, and throughout the whole culture. Philosophy cannot stand this and attempts to avoid it, but as strategies of avoidance are never holeproof, it will attempt to hide contingency as much as possible. When Derrida reads texts he is especially attentive to those contingencies that are repressed, or hidden, but that nevertheless crop up in all manner of symptoms such as

hesitations, hitches, repetitions, citations, stylistic and rhetorical peculiarities, promises, slips &c .. This reading is not meant as some sort of critique (in the philosophical sense of that word) of philosophy, on the contrary, the issue is to show how *it could not have been otherwise*. Any philosopher has her favourite[s] -even if this is, really, how *it should not be*.

Another antinomy, perhaps. To be added, then, to *le programme*.

One can formulate the same problem in a different way, so that perhaps different aspects may come to the surface. Philosophy purports to articulate truth. We know -at least since the Enlightenment- that truth has something to do with universal validity. What is valid only for a small community, of followers, can only have the status of an opinion, a belief, or, perhaps, an ideology. One of the problems philosophy has to face is that one can never completely leave behind beliefs. Truth is important, for, as Augustine says, no one really wants to be deluded. That, as Nietzsche reminds us, some self-deception is necessary in order to enjoy life and to survive is of course a problem in itself, but one can state that, generally speaking, everyone wants to know the truth and so everyone will feel that philosophy is -at least in principle- important.

For many extended stretches of time during the past four years, I have been intensely preoccupied with thinking and writing about philosophical matters. This cannot have been easy for my family [...] yet throughout they have been remarkably tolerant and uncomplaining [...] That I take such flights sometimes strikes me as absurd, anyway. Isn't it ludicrous for someone just one generation from the shtetl, a pisher from Brownsville and East Flatbush in Brooklyn, even to touch on the topics of the monumental thinkers? Of course it is. Yet it was ludicrous for them too. We are all just a few years past something or other, if only childhood. Even the monuments themselves, so serenely in command of culture and intellect, must have been children once and adolescents-so they too are immigrants to the realm of thought, R. Nozick, *Acknowledgements*, viii; cf. also I.B.Singer, *The Spinoza from Market Street*, and Vl. Nabokov, *The Art of Literature and Commonsense*, p. 373: *I remember a cartoon depicting a chimney sweep falling from the roof of a tall building and noticing on the way that a sign-board had one word wrong, and wondering in his headlong flight why nobody had thought of correcting it.* [Human attention is apparently characterized by a profound instability depending on the essentially symbolic character of the significations to which it is directed. The constant shiftings, or *asides*, as Vl. Nabokov puts it, have less than critical, or typically *de-constructive* effects. Our attachment to critical discourse too is liable to such *asides*; but then we could not be attached to it were this not so!]

And yet, as Robert Nozick remarks in **Philosophical Explanations**, even the smallest accident can mean that we no longer find philosophy and truth important at all, and that they radically lose their significance. It is perhaps - and one can read this in Derrida as well as in Nozick- therein that the appeal of philosophy lies. *Only things that can lose their significance can appeal.* To lay a wager or play a cardgame is arresting only if

you *want* to win and *can* lose; more strongly, you can only want to win if it is possible to lose. *Otherwise it would be indifferent.* And indeed, philosophy is reminiscent of a game in which *everything* is put in play and in which the stakes are *total*. This game, philosophy, derives its appeal from the fact that you can lose and perhaps also from the awareness that, in the end, one always loses, as humans are finite and elected to death and oblivion.

This brings us to cherishing and loving, which are related, as the dictionary suggests, to the choice of a favourite. Really to love someone and give her/him preference above all others -someone who pretends to love all people equally does not really love anyone at all- means to put oneself at stake, to risk both the loss of oneself and of the other. There can be no

question of love without the willingness to run that risk. And so to love has something to do with the awareness of being mortal and finite.

What makes true human love possible is -as

Burov, Anna's lover realized- the recognition of the fact that, one day, you and the other will be no more. To choose someone, for example Jacques

Anton Checkhov, *Lady with Lapdog*; cf. also Friedrich Nietzsche, *Im grossen Schweigen, Morgenröthe, Fünftes Buch*, section 423.

Derrida, as a 'favourite' means to love him in one way or another, and to give him preference above others. This does not mean that this preference is all-exclusive. In the same way that one can love several people at the same time, one can have many favourites and that is what is normally the case -, if I can speak for myself. But always related to such a choice is a risk, and without this risk there could be no question of favouritism. You can try to avoid this risk by not loving anyone at all; or by spiriting your choice away in doing *as if* you choose for no one in particular. Perhaps the risk can be minimized by backing several horses at the same time or by choosing someone who is already favoured by almost everyone, who is heavily backed (and so for whom the odds of failure are low?), for instance a 'monumental' thinker like Aristotle or Plato. The risk of being mistaken and of backing the wrong horse seems to be reduced then. But one should not forget that this also is a choice, or once was, and that this choice was in fact made by only a small group of people. The majority of the world's population has never heard of Plato and Aristotle, and only an extremely small elite has ever read anything by those thinkers. Philosophers normally cannot imagine this, since those thinkers seem so important to them, that is: are so much their favourites, that it seems to them 'barbaric' not to know their names. Of course, this hasn't anything to do with barbarism but everything to do with just having other circles of preferred and elected ones.

Choosing Derrida as my 'favourite' does not mean that he is, for me, the only one and definitely not, as far as I am concerned, that he is the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century. There are other thinkers and, what is more, other writers who command my admiration. But to choose Derrida as 'favourite' means to love him, in one way or another, with all the related risks. What does it mean to love an author, a philosopher? More concretely: what does it mean to love Derrida? Answering this question involves, first of all, making a distinction that is essential and at the same time extremely problematic. 'Jacques Derrida' is a proper name, one of the many names that *he* bears and that bear *him*. It may be that there are other people around who bear the same name, just as the initials in the dedication can be and in fact are the initials of many people, Peter Pan, Paul Patton, Pol Pot, and so forth (Pleasure Principle). The name 'Jacques Derrida' first of all denotes a concrete person to whom one can point, into whom one can bump, whom one could invite to dinner, or befriend, who lives at a particular address, who has a phone number (so it seems) and who was born in a particular place, in fact on the 15th of July 1930 in a rather small place, El-Biar, in Algeria. This name also denotes a whole set of texts. 'Derrida' is also a metonymy, a rhetorical figure. The **Van Dale** gives the following example of a metonymy: 'Ik lees Couperus'/'I'm reading Couperus.' So I can say, as I often do, when prompted: 'I am reading Derrida', that is: a set of texts that are ascribed to him by himself and others, texts that bear his signature and that are, in some respect, his 'property.' A problem arises as to the relation between the man and the text. The concrete person is, amongst other things, also an author. Still, this is only one aspect of his existence. The set of texts by Derrida are part, and are not part of the concrete person. For instance, one can continue to read Derrida when he has ceased to be, when physically he is no more. Most of the authors read by philosophers are in fact dead. To

be sure, you cannot and may not simply identify Derrida with his texts. There is an irreducible difference, or inequality, here which is constitutive of a text as text.

Cf.: *s.e.c.*, Éperons,
Limited Inc a b c &c.

To choose Derrida as 'favourite' -does that mean to love him as a person or to love his work? I do not know Derrida; we are not friends. Does that matter? I think that, in this context, it is not important. Yet the notion of 'importance' is a rather relative one. What in a woman/man's life could be more important than friendship? Who could state adamantly that the personal events in someone's life -for instance Hegel's sorrow and concern with and for his family- are less important than his philosophy? As Nozick reminds us, we, finite and limited as we are, forget sorrow and concern. And can we be sure that memory retains the most important things? Supposing that one does not simply accept that the history of the world will always have the final say, then, perhaps, one can be attentive to the 'infinite' importance personal relationships can have. Let me say, for convenience's sake then, that when one speaks about Derrida as 'favourite', it is about his texts. 'By extension', as the dictionary might say.

There is no doubt that one can love texts. You can love Shakespeare for example, or Flaubert, Couperus, or Plato, Heidegger, and even the dictionary. What does it mean, to love a text? It does not necessarily mean that you understand everything in it, nor that you agree with everything written there. But it has something to do with a certain love of reading, a hunger or, better, a desire to be occupied by it, to pay attention to it and to keep it in mind. Some people love to read, and Derrida is one of them. He reads with an enormous love. He is, as he puts it, jealously in love with the texts in the margins of which he scribbles. Still, there are people who do not like to read. Why it is, exactly, that someone loves to read is a question that occupies me

and to which no simple answer is possible. It is a question which Derrida also raises. An answer, I think, must be sought in the direction of the structure of human desire/desires; it may well have something to do with eroticism, to come back once again to the dictionary. It is however easier to see why people -a lot of people- do not love to read. Reading is demanding. Moreover, it supposes that you withdraw from the world

surrounding you and isolate yourself. Perhaps one can listen to music together with other people,

but reading is a rather solitary occupation which requires that one isolate oneself and withdraws one's attention from others. A lot of people, in our culture, can hardly appreciate this.

Cfr. M. Blanchot on *la solitude essentielle* in *L'espace littéraire*; Ph. Sollers in *Vision à New York*, Préface p. 9, on writing: *Plus j'écris, plus je vois [...] Année après année, à quoi bon compter les années? Je sais que je n'ai pas vraiment décidé cette vie-là, ce retrait-là, ce malentendu permanent avec les autres.*

Amongst those who love to read some give preference to 'literary' above 'philosophical' texts. The opposition between these two 'types' of texts is not at all clear. It is both essential and problematic, as Derrida has argued, indeed, on several occasions, for instance in **La dissémination**.

But one could at least say that no philosophical text is able to put into words as many of the nuances and subtleties of human existence and human relationships as can a great

Cf. Vl. Nabokov, *Good Readers and Good Writers*, p.3.

novel or a great short story. What one can read in a philosophical essay on the relationship man-woman is often nothing more than a concatenation of generalities and platitudes, compared with what is said about that relationship in, for example, **Anna Karenin** or **Femmes**; and what is said in a philosophy of language often hasn't that much to do with language, compared to what is revealed about language in, for example, **Finnegans Wake** or **H**. Yet in spite of this infirmity,

philosophy, philosophical texts, exert an appeal of their own. The texts of Derrida exert a great appeal, at least on me. I like reading them. Derrida is, hence, my, or better, *one* of my 'favourites'.

The appeal that emanates from Derrida consists in -among other things- the fact that he draws attention to what in fact takes place when you read and/or write. He can teach you how to read and especially how to enjoy reading, though I would doubt that he makes writing easier. Emmanuel Levinas once remarked that Derrida *has put a bomb under every word* so that it becomes extremely dangerous to use them any more. Vigilance is hence called for. And this awareness does not make writing easier. But Derrida has not made reading easier either, only more intense and appealing because he has taught us to pay attention to those things in and around the (philosophical) text, things which the reader usually fails to notice. For instance the elementary fact that a text is built up out of words, clauses and fragments borrowed from other texts,

La carte postale, p. 410: *L'emprunt est la loi. [...] Sans emprunt, rien ne commence, il n'y a pas de fonds propre. Tout commence par le transfert de fonds, et il y a intérêt à emprunter, c'est même le premier intérêt. L'emprunt rapporte, il produit de la plus-value, il est le premier moteur de tout investissement. On commence ainsi par spéculer, en pariant sur une valeur à produire à partir de rien. Et toutes ces <<métaphores>> confirment, à titre de métaphores, la nécessité de ce qu'elles disent.* that is, that a text is built up out of 'citations' that can be explicit but that usually remain implicit.

As regards citations and citing, matters stand strangely. Whoever has ever published something will usually feel flattered when she/he is cited by other people, at least when the citation concerns the publication in its general structure, for example when the publication is taken up in a bibliography, or when its basic idea is represented. But most of the time the author will feel extremely disappointed, when a particular phrase from the publication is cited, because

he/she will inevitably have the feeling that that phrase wasn't really that important, that it did not really correspond to what they meant to say, or that, anyhow, it always gets wrested out of its 'proper' context. Anyone who publishes and is cited has these feelings. These will also be the feelings of those writers whom I cite in writing these pages. So Derrida must, on the one hand, feel honored by the fact that his name crops up in so many publications; on the other hand it must be really horrible for him (and a little amusing too, depending on his mood) to be confronted with concrete citations *-Il n'y a pas d'hors texte*, for example.

When philosophers cite -and they cite very frequently- the word 'idea' is, according to Derrida, a citation- they usually borrow from authors that are already dead. Fortunately, the dead need not suffer from it. Spinoza need not suffer from being cited affirmatively by deep ecologists, terrorists and marxists alike. To be dead, says Derrida, means at least this, namely: that no

honoring nor dishonoring, whether calculated or

Cf. *Mémoires: for Paul de Man*, pp. 48-9. not, touches the bearer of the name; it only touches

the name.

Writing implies citing: already circulating words and already written or spoken phrases get taken up into a new concatenation of words and phrases.

Writing also implies citationability or repeatability: what is written can in turn be taken up in other concatenations, it can be cited.

So our words and phrases can function in concatenations that are no longer ours. Citing is always accompanied by a wresting of words out of the real and linguistic context in which they occur and therefore it is accompanied by an

alteration of meaning. Citationability is

VI. Nabokov, *Good Readers and Good Writers*, p. 3: *Curiously enough, one cannot read a book: one can only reread it.* constitutive of a text as text.

This explains why Plato and so many philosophers after him shrank from writing -even if they also died at their writing desk. Writing means or implies that no author can completely command his/her texts or keep them under control, neither as regards their coming into being nor as regards their being

understood: that is to say, the effects they evoke. A text always and inevitably gets out of hand.

Any writer must relate him- or herself to an

Hors livre, **Diss 42**:
S'il n'y a rien hors du texte, cela implique, avec la transformation du concept de texte en général, que celui-ci ne soit plus le dedans calfeutré d'une intériorité ou d'une identité à soi [...], mais une autre mise en place des effets d'ouverture et de fermeture.

Maurice Blanchot, **L'entretien infini**, Note: *Écrire, l'exigence d'écrire: non plus l'écriture qui s'est toujours mise (par une nécessité nullement évitable) au service de la parole ou de la pensée dite idéalisante, c'est-à-dire moralisante, mais l'écriture qui, par sa force propre lentement libérée (force aléatoire d'absence), semble ne se consacrer qu'à elle-même qui reste sans identité et, peu à peu, dégage des possibilités tout autres, une façon anonyme, distraite, différée et dispersée d'être en rapport par laquelle tout est mis en cause, et d'abord l'idée de Dieu, du Moi, du Sujet, puis de la Vérité et de l'Un, puis l'idée du Livre et de l'Oeuvre, en sorte que cette écriture (entendue dans sa rigueur énigmatique), loin d'avoir pour but le Livre, en marquerait plutôt la fin: écriture qu'on pourrait dire hors discours, hors langage.*

qual quelle: les sources de Valéry, M352-53: Mais, s'il y a un timbre et un style, en concluera-t-on pour autant que la source ici se présente? Point. Et c'est pourquoi Je s'y perd, ou en tout cas s'expose dans l'opération de maîtrise. Le timbre de ma voix, le style de mon écriture, c'est ce qui pour (un) moi n'aura jamais été présent; Entre crochets, pp. 108-09: Même si j'avais beaucoup à dire sur le mode idiomatique de <<je suis mort>> qui me manoeuvre, ou avec lequel je ruse, quelque chose m'en reste absolument dérobé, illisible, du côté de ce que j'appelle le timbre ou le style dans Qual Quelle: accessible seulement depuis la place de l'autre. Je le suggère dans Glas: ce texte ne peut intéresser que si, au delà de toutes les ruses, de tous les calculs impreunables, on est assuré qu'à un certain point je ne sais pas ce que je fais, je ne vois plus ce qui me regarde.

uncontrollable exteriority without which there would be no interiority; personal style is this 'impossible' relationship, *rapport sans rapport*.

Generally speaking, philosophers, who usually do not think about themselves as being writers in the first place, find it much harder to relate to this exteriority in a creative and fruitful fashion.

Derrida has, furthermore, drawn attention to the fact that any text, in order to be a text, will exhibit empty spots, or blanks. These spots are even materially 'visible' as the margin or border, as the white space between the letters and words: that is to say, where in fact there is nothing written. Without these blanks a text could not be a text. To these spots there also belongs that which is not said. In every text there is much more that is not said than there is said. And -paradoxically- the little that can be said depends on the lot that can not be said, as Vladimir Nabokov confided to Alvin Toffler (*Playboy*, Jan. '64). He who would like to tell all at once and on the same spot cannot write. A text therefore always has a certain extension in time and space. Like the margin and the white spaces, the unsaid constitutes the condition of possibility for the coming into being and being understood of a text. They form -as it were- the frame or threshold of a text. It is from this bar or border onwards that a text *becomes* a text; yet that line can never be precisely drawn, since it is constantly transgressed.

All this is related to Derrida's attentiveness to the rhetoric of a text. The rhetoric of a text exhibits all sorts of extremely subtle and hidden strategies aimed at winning the reader over to its side, aimed at raising his or

Cl. Lévesque, *L'économie générale de la lecture*, pp. 162-63: *Dès lors, la limite d'un texte se perd, en quelque sorte: la signe qui sépare un texte de sa marge est impossible à tracer d'une manière précise et contrôlée. [...]Le texte ne peut jamais s'absoluer dans une illusoire autonomie, se croire sans contexte, et ne reposant que sur lui-même, dans l'intimité inentamée d'un dedans en rupture absolue par rapport à tout dehors.*

her interest or letting it continue, eliciting 'opposition' in the sense of either approval or disapproval, agreement or disagreement. This rhetoric, this calculus of seduction can take the form of a complex play of veiling and unveiling, of saying and not-saying, of making promises and calling up expectations. Through this play a certain captivating, mesmerizing tension is created or maintained. The play can take place through the choice of a title

[à préciser], a tone [*apocalyptique*] and thematic, a certain division or construction of the material, and its elaboration and formulation. The distribution and choice of citations as well as the choice of words also plays a very important part. For it so happens that some words and expressions do make a greater impression in certain milieus, or are simply more familiar and therefore suggest an affinity or proximity. In certain philosophical

milieus there may even

rest a taboo on

particular words

because of the

contaminating

connotations they may

have acquired. So style

is important.

So style is important; VI. Nabokov, *The Gift*, pp. 256-57: *Chernyshevski's "philosophy" goes back through Feuerbach, to the Encyclopedists. On the other hand, applied hegelianism, working gradually left, went through that same Feuerbach to join Marx, who in his Holy Family expresses himself thus:*

....no great intelligence
Is needed to distinguish a connection
Between the teaching of materialism
Regarding inborn tendency to good;
Equality of man's capacities-
Capacities that generally are
Termed mental; the great influence
Exterior circumstances have on man;
Omnipotent experience; sway of habit
And of upbringing; the extreme importance
Of industry; the moral right to pleasure,
And communism.

Even a strictly

I have put it in blank verse so it would be less boring.

scientific or formalized

use of language is a stylistic matter. In certain circumstances scientific discourse will have more force of conviction than other forms of style. And simplicity, honesty and spontaneity can operate in a rhetorical mode. In any text a complex process of seduction is at work, a process of wanting to seduce and of wanting to be seduced. The sophist Gorgias (in whose eyes rhetoric represented the highest form of art) once remarked, regarding literature, and the Greek Tragedies in particular, that the one who seduces (the Greek verb here is *apatan*, to cheat, to outwit, to beguile; the Latin *seducere* also has the connotation of distracting something, a sign for instance, or someone, *you*, from its telos, from its truth or destination -and what comes to mind here is the *pharmakon* which, *operating through seduction*, makes

Socrates *stray from his general, natural, habitual paths and laws*), that the one who seduces, then, is more just than the one who does not; and that the one who allows herself to be seduced is wiser and better educated, better formed than the one who does not allow himself to be seduced. To a certain extent this holds for all sorts of texts. Derrida would subscribe to Gorgias' remark,

M. Taylor, *Foiling Reflection*, p. 57: *one of the most important lessons Derrida has taught us: philosophical analysis is undeniably rhetorical.* though with the required nuance. This nuance consists in the fact that we have the (philosophical) duty to unmask seduction as seduction; but that

unmasking can only be an infinite, or interminable task in which any unmasking in turn partakes in the process of seduction.

Some justification is hereby given for choosing Derrida, Jacques, as 'favourite'. The choice is not made, however, without hesitation. To choose a favourite means, in a sense, to choose a master or exemplar. Now Derrida, like Nietzsche, has occupied himself intensively with education and, particularly, with education in philosophy -philosophy, that is, in Derrida's words, *cet enseignement de l'inenseignable*. In the education in philosophy a teacher or tutor is indispensable, but also superfluous. The mentor is both desirable

and undesirable, both necessary and impossible. For philosophy is, according to Derrida, a knowing and a not-knowing, something determinate and indeterminate, with and without aims, a social and cultural institution and the breaking of all institutional borders, bound to space and time, to programs and timetables, and at the same time

something completely other than that. There is an unresolvable tension between autonomy and heteronomy, between autodidactic and heterodidactic.

Cf. Les antinomies de la discipline philosophique, pp. 13-17 in particular; cf. also *Théologie de la traduction*, pp. 172-73.

Philosophy stands under a double law, a double bind. To choose a favourite, within philosophy, is in effect to destroy this relation of tension and to reject the double -or divided- law. To do so would amount to the most blatant betrayal of Derrida's work...

-Yes, it is likely that all philosophers do have their favourites, but it can and should not be that way. And so Derrida is my favourite, my favourite with a huge question mark...

1. / A philosopher who is not

Quit sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris, dicit Dominus. Haec sunt verba Christi, quibus admonemur quatenus vitam eius et mores imitemur, si volumus veraciter illuminari et ab omni coecitati cordis liberari. De Imitatione Christi.

Ich wohne in meinem eigenen Haus,
Hab Niemandem nie nichts nachge-
[macht
Und -lachte noch jeder Meister aus,
Der nicht sich selber ausgelacht.
Über meiner Haustür
[Motto der Ausgabe 1887] Die
fröhliche Wissenschaft.

only succesful in writing difficult books
but also in acquiring an international
renown piques one's curiosity and spurs
on the desire for initiation. Those who would like to be initiated are first of
all looking for a reliable guide: someone who understands what the difficult
philosopher means, who can transpose this understanding into an accessible
and familiar idiom, thereby managing to keep himself modestly in the
background¹. Derrida evokes this traditional pattern of expectation, but he
also disturbs it: he is difficult, and famous; however, he acts as a spoil-sport
or jokervis à vis those who aim at offering a faithful interpretation or
transcription of his work. For, by the way in which he discusses other
(philosophical) writers, he has stripped the notion of 'faithful
interpretation' of its usual supports. With concrete
analyses Derrida demonstrates how *uncertain* and Archi Bunker: *What's
the difference?*
unsteady the distinction is between 'I mean what I say'
and 'I am [only] doing *as if*.'

John Sallis, *Echoes*, p. 6: In his readings of other writers he makes their
human speech is itself
acoustical; speech itself statements and claims *echo* in ways in
echoes, echoes even itself.

¹ Cf. G, p. 227: *le redoublement effacé et respectueux du commentaire.*

which they would no longer recognize themselves, and although he seems to follow them [their writings] with a meticulous conscientiousness he leads them into places in which they would not want to dwell for a second. Derrida's work, one could say, is dominated by the fascination for the *falsification* that menaces and haunts the 'proper' in its purity, and for the mask by which even the 'real face' itself emerges as a mask, *eine Maske mehr*. Without debunking the virtue of faithfulness and without glorifying betrayal, he unsettles the belief in the possibility of an *undivided* and *total* faithfulness.

We can have the honest intention of expressing ourselves in what we say or write, and may want to be personally present in what we say or write. This desire manifests itself not only in the practice of an interior monologue but also in the composition of a poem and in the keeping of a diary. Even in a rather everyday conversation (the bakery) we usually expect *some* involvement on the part of the other to whom we present our linguistic constructions. Now, to the extent to which we *can* appreciate the other's attentiveness to our linguistic constructions *as* an attentiveness to our own personality, we *must*

Ja, ou le faux-bond, pp. 93-5:
(encore que...mais là je ne suis sûr de rien et j'aime écrire précisément à ce point où le calcul se perd absolument) [...] Naturellement, l'important (pour moi en tous cas), ce n'est pas de réussir ce calcul. Je n'en suis pas tout à fait responsable, le <<je>> n'en est pas tout à fait responsable, et le calcul ne réussit qu'à échouer. Puis j'ai peu d'illusions ou d'espérances à ce sujet. Mais je voudrais m'approcher de ce qui me pousse à faire ça. Et d'où. Ça je ne sais pas. Je sais pas mal de choses, je veux dire sur ce que j'écris, mais ça je ne sais pas et c'est ça qui m'intéresse et me travaille.

consider these constructions *as* expressions or embodiments of our own personality. However, our expressions can *only* be intimate, proximate or personal to the exact extent to which they are *about* to slide into something in which we would not or no longer recognize ourselves.

Entre crochets, pp. 108-09:
Je le suggère dans *Glas*: ce texte ne peut intéresser que si, au delà de toutes les ruses, de tous les calculs imprenables, on est assuré qu'à un certain point je ne sais pas ce que je fais, je ne vois plus ce qui me regarde.

Because the signs are pregnant and so assume importance in their concrete materiality they remain always to some extent external: they never completely fall under our own control and are structurally able to circulate in ever new contexts, some of which will be estranging, meaningless or horrific to us: we can only express ourselves in that of which we do not have full control and *in which, as a result, we also lose ourselves*².

This paradoxical structure also commands the fashion after which our appearance -in the broad sense of that word: mimicry, gesticulation, intonation &c.- can be an expression of ourselves. Here too there is an irremediable and constitutive risk of contamination: we cannot control the effects our appearance will evoke: things inevitably get out of hand and, caught as we are in iterability, and folded accordingly, *on est toujours l'imbécile de quelqu'un* [Henry de Montherlant]. Sometimes it will so happen that we are much liked by someone simply because our appearance invokes, without our knowing it, a striking resemblance to a third person: with someone we might not

even know but who symbolizes all sorts of sympathetic or unsympathetic characteristics in the eyes of the one who is taking in our appearance. We are not in command of our own *imago* and the impression we make on others to some extent

Limited Inc a b c, p. 34: *L'itérabilité altère, elle parasite et contamine ce qu'elle identifie et permet de répéter; elle fait qu'on veut dire (déjà, toujours, aussi) autre chose que ce qu'on veut dire, on dit autre chose que ce qu'on dit et voudrait dire, comprend autre chose que...etc. En termes classique, l'accident n'est jamais un accident. Et le mis des misunderstandings [...]doit avoir sa condition de possibilité essentielle dans la structure des marques; des marques remarquables ou [...]des oral or written utterances. Limitant cela même qu'elle autorise, transgressant le code ou la loi qu'elle constitue, la graphique de l'itérabilité inscrit, de façon irréductible l'altération dans la répétition (ou dans l'identification): a priori, toujours déjà, sans attendre, at once, aussi sec [...] Tels sont les vices qui m'intéressent: l'autre fois dans la première fois d'un coup, at once.*

² Cf. St. Cavell's analyses of skepticism (of meaning) and the underlying anxieties, in particular the discussion on the private language argument, *The Claim of Reason*, pp. 343-54, in which he relates that phantasy (p. 1.) to the fear

always eludes our grip,- however desperately we might be calculating these effects. The fashion after which we relate ourselves to the inability (*impouvoir*) to control completely our *imago* in turn determines what or who we are. Our so-called personal style is a result of the way in which we can lose hold of our image: *Le timbre de ma voix, le style de mon écriture, c'est ce qui pour (un) moi n'aura jamais été présent. Je n'entends ni ne reconnais le timbre de ma voix. Si mon style se marque, c'est seulement sur une face qui me reste invisible, illisible. Point de speculum: j'y suis aveugle à mon style, sourd au plus spontané de ma voix. [...] Le spontané ne peut surgir comme initialité pure de l'événement qu'à condition de ne pas se présenter lui-même, à cette condition de passivité inconcevable et irrelevable où rien ne peut se présenter à soi-même³.*

de l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, pp. 387-88: Rapport absolument unique: d'un langage à un silence souverain qui ne tolère aucun rapport, aucune symétrie avec ce qui s'incline et glisse pour se rapporter à lui.

Everybody has to relate herself to this difficulty for which there is no algorithmic or general solution and which is akin to the task the artist

faces. What a poet or novelist 'means' can never totally be disconnected from the way in which he, or she, wields the language. The significance of her work will inevitably be determined by the external form, that is: by something that is never the transparent representation of her intention and that hence withdraws from her control. The associations which are set going by her use of the language no longer come under the management of the writer.

of *inexpressiveness*, the fear that our expressions might at any time signify nothing, or too much.

³ *qual quelle*, pp. 352-53.

Elements of the most [...] enter into a contest of fashion and ideology. Cf. *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 119: *J'ajoute, pour l'anecdote [...], qu'on a eu la bonne idée, récemment, de traduire <<aufgelöst werden können>>, dans L'idéologie allemande, par <<peuvent être déconstruites>>.* [...] Doubles bénéfice: la déconstruction est déjà chez Marx, et déjà dans *L'idéologie allemande*, et non seulement à l'«état pratique» mais sous son nom; de surcroît, elle y est dénoncée comme insuffisante, seulement théorique ou idéelle, au-dessous de la «subversion pratique» (traduction très in et post-soixante-huitième pour «den praktischen Umsturz»); *La carte postale*, p. 285: *Abbauen: c'est le mot que certains heideggeriens français ont récemment traduit par <<déconstruire>>, comme si tout était dans tout et toujours devant la caravane. [...] On met la main sur une marque et on rapplique partout. On peut voir ainsi, de l'autre côté s'il on pouvait dire, le mot <<déconstruction>> tomber du ciel dans le texte de Marx. Jusqu'ici, <<aufgelöst>> était fidèlement traduit par <<résolu>> ou <<dissous>>.* [etc.]; cf. also *Lettre à un ami japonais*, p. 392, and *The ear of the other*, p. 86.

In his work Derrida does not only unfold a theoretical train of thought. He also knows how to strike a rather singular tone: through an unusual combination of minute textual analysis and

theoretical radicalism, through a continuous shifting from earnestness to frivolity, through a mixture of reserve and auto-biographical frankness, through a controlled transgression of current codes and genres, through a

most adroit manipulation of texts which renders the distinction between stating and quoting unclear... Now, to the extent to which Derrida's own style (or styles) is an essential part

of his undertaking, the significance of his work in part eludes his explicit aims or intentions: it is already lost on him, and so if we were to follow him faithfully in what we think we can reconstruct

as his 'real aims', then *ipso facto* we would betray the work in which he expresses and presents himself.

Although what Derrida writes should *not* be read *only* as a theoretical exposition, it is indeed possible to extract from his writings interesting philosophical opinions, for instance: that *only things that can lose their significance can appeal*⁴. The idea that Derrida's work -to the extent precisely that style, *rappor sans rapport*, is important- cannot exhaustively be translated into theoretical theses, is itself a theoretical thesis which is brought to the surface in Derrida, in his texts. No contradiction can be spotted herein. The same text can both describe and produce certain effects of signification. Marcel Proust has not only expressed, in his writings, a longing for times past; he has also dealt with this longing, or desire, after a theoretical fashion. The thoughts on this longing in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, in particular the last volume, *Le temps retrouvé*, are in themselves worthy of further reflection and could certainly enter into an overtly philosophical discourse. But although Proust himself

⁴ This proposition could be tended towards a remark of L. Wittgensteins. In *Bemerkungen über Frazers Golden Bough* Wittgenstein notes that *keine Erscheinung ist an sich besonders geheimnisvoll, den jede kann es uns werden* (p. 7). In this context this remark can not only come to signal that the distinction between (say:) *sacraments* and *sacramentalia* might well be *indécidable*, or *intenable* ,a proposition which could be arrived at in a derridean analysis, but also that what constitutes the mysterious is a matter of formal distinctions that -although they *institute* a bond with the mysterious- also put it at stake. What institutes (and protects) the sphere of the mysterious remains resistant and inaccessible, exposing it, from within, to repetition and ridicule. The insight that the evocative, or signifying strength of the supplement that institutes a bond with the mysterious (or the sacred) has everything to do with this vulnerability of significations found tantalizing expression in Nabokov's scandalous (i.e. *from a logical point of view*) definition of artistic beauty: beauty is *beauty plus pity* ("*The Metamorphosis*", p. 251).

provides lengthy explicit interpretations of what is accomplished in his cycle of novels, it would of course be inappropriate to reduce the whole concrete richness of *À la recherche du temps perdu* to illustrations or applications of certain theoretical insights. A 'literary' text can have far reaching theoretical impact without, for that reason, being reducible to an (in principle substitutable) example of a general idea. Now, the theme itself of a text that in its singularity *-diese Worte, in diesen Stellungen*, as Wittgenstein would say⁵ withdraws itself from the generalities of theoretical thought, receives not only a theoretico-philosophico treatment in Derrida's work, but also a number of concrete literary realisations. One would be misguided to interpret these concrete realisations as the monotonous repetition, in different guises, of the same idea. That these realisations are more than applications or illustrations can easily be demonstrated: even if we would possess a plausible theory of the mechanism by which fiction can touch or fascinate us, this still would not mean that, from then onwards, we could only read novels and stories as illustrations of this theory.

It follows that there is no reason to veil Derrida's philosophical insights in the clouds of secrecy or mystery. For if his work also contains a coherent vision, then it must be possible to state this vision in a clear language. No doubt, it is possible that some theoretical insights can be considered as the pendants of a praxis or attitude for which is required more than a theoretical insight. Nietzsche has unmasked vanity as a form of self-deception⁶. Although this theoretical unmaking is convincing, it is clearly insufficient as a remedy. And the theoretical idea that our so-called personal style escapes the control of our intentions is in itself insufficient to prevent

⁵ *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, I 532.

⁶ *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* I, section 89.

us from desperately calculating the effects of our linguistic constructions. The theoretical idea that the text in which we express and present

ourselves is never in line with our explicit aims is by no means sufficient to enable us to write such a text.

La carte postale, p. 212: << *A v e c vous, on ne peut plus se présenter*>>, *me dit une jeune Américaine (je crois).*

Apparently Derrida has not been willing, up to now, to present his theoretical insights in the form of a systematic exposition. This does not mean that any systematization would be impossible, in principle, but rather that Derrida (like Nietzsche before him) is not only interested in such communication only by means of theoretical exposition. He allows philosophical ideas to play a part in texts that in themselves do no longer belong to 'the' genre of theoretical exposition. In that way theoretical thinking gets implicated in some sort of intrigue which it no longer commands: *A la conception frontale du thème Derrida oppose la silhouette textuelle ou le bias, le bifax, marqué d'un double jeu. Jeu qui dissèque les mots, les réinscrit dans des séquences qu'ils ne commandent plus. [...] Aux thèmes, Derrida substitue l'inscription qui déjoue toute position*⁷.

Derrida's mode of work for sure irritates and frustrates many a reader and one can rightfully feel that way; however, favouring a theoretical mode of exposition above the mixture Derrida practices cannot itself be grounded in theory -, *non-vérité étant la vérité de la vérité*.⁸

⁷ LsD, pp. 31-2.

⁸ Cf. Spurs/Éperons, p. 50.

The theoretical insights which Derrida formulates, directly or indirectly, can -like *all* thoughts of whatever theoretician- be paraphrased⁹, criticized, elaborated, or expanded. In this respect Derrida's work does not pose totally new difficulties. But the 'usual' difficulties with which one has to come to

terms in interpreting whatever philosophical texts are 'other' than one more commonly would represent them. Derrida has pointed out forms of undecidability, of undecidable doubleness by which the notion of 'faithful interpretation' gets unsettled and faithfulness to a doctrine emerges as an impossible demand.

La clôture de la représentation, p. 364: A énoncer ainsi les thèmes de l'infidélité, on comprend très vite que la fidélité est impossible. Il n'est pas aujourd'hui dans le monde de théâtre qui réponde au désir d'Artaud. Et il n'y aurait pas eu d'exception à faire, de ce point de vue, pour les tentatives d'Artaud lui-même: la <<grammaire>> du théâtre de la cruauté, dont il disait qu'elle était <<à trouver>> restera toujours l'inaccessible limite d'une représentation qui ne soit pas répétition, d'une re-présentation qui soit présence pleine, qui ne porte pas en soi son double comme sa mort, d'un présent qui ne répète pas, c'est-à-dire d'un présent hors du temps, d'un non-présent. Le présent ne se donne comme tel, ne s'apparaît, ne se présente, n'ouvre la scène du temps ou le temps de la scène qu'en accueillant sa propre différence intestine, que dans le pli intérieur de sa répétition originare, dans la représentation. Dans la dialectique. [...] Le tragique n'est pas l'impossibilité mais la nécessité de la répétition.

⁹ *Limited Inc a b c*, p. 144: This paraphrastic moment, even if it appeals to aimal competence [...] is already an interpretive reading. This moment, this already concerns interpretations and semantic decisions which have nothin "natural" or "originary" about them and which impose, subject to con that require analysis, conventions that henceforth are dominant [...].

It would be ludicrous strictly to identify the ideas of a philosopher with what she has explicitly stated in her publications or other writings. For if in the business of interpretation one would have to stick to the letter then no paraphrase and no understanding would be possible. Any philosophical text must time and again be translated, formulated, rewritten in terms of new controversies or situations and be grafted upon or related to other philosophical or non-philosophical texts¹⁰. How far can one go in doing so? Philosophers go at painstaking length in order to articulate their ideas as clearly and as distinctly as possible. Yet no philosopher can anticipate the ways in which in the future their ideas will combine or split themselves and how new philosophical positions and alliances will profile themselves on the basis of this *passages*. The fate of her thought is dependent upon historical contingency in which technological innovations¹¹ and socio-institutional and politico-economical factors play a part. No single big name in philosophy has ever been able to protect his ideas against effects that would strike him as strange, as unintelligible, ridiculous or roundly disgusting. This does not mean that those effects therefore rest on wrong interpretation. Baruch de Spinoza set himself the highest standards in formulating his

¹⁰ Cf. D. McDonald, *Foreword*, p. xvi: *Supplementarity applies in the history of ideas too. If one cannot really understand Derrida without reading Hegel, then Hegel is at once outside and inside Derrida, a supplement made necessary by Derrida himself. To "introduce" the past, one must actually return to it.*

¹¹ Cf. Fr. Kittler, *The Mechanized Philosopher*, p. 195: *"Our writing instruments contribute to our thoughts." Friedrich Nietzsche, the first mechanized philosopher, was inspired by his brand-new typewriter to make this simple and scandalous statement. The statement, written on the very machine on which it is commenting, has itself never been commented on. Technical progress is sometimes too revolutionary to be recognized. Like Nietzsche's great thought, it arrives on doves' feet.*

Cf. Saul Kripke, theories. Fortunately
Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition, p. 14; he need not know how
 badly he had been paid for that by
 of the 'critical differences' between history.
 Derrida and the *skeptic-of-meaning* cf.
 X John Llewelyn, **Since an author can Derrida on the Threshold of Sense**, never survey all the
 pp. 109-14; see also **Limited Inc a b c**, interesting
 pp. 136-37.

possibilities of
 combination of what he has launched
 himself it is impossible to want to remain
 faithful to him. Even if we would situate
 ourselves as a God in the mind of Spinoza we
 would not be able to determine what Spinoza
really meant or thought.

This does not mean, however, that the
 interpretation of philosophical texts can
 only be determined by sheer arbitrariness.
 Only, the nature of the restrictions to which
 one has to comply cannot be fixed once and
 for all in the most general terms. For
 interpretation is itself a genre which
 steadily develops and the possibilities of which cannot completely be
 described in

*Once I planned to make a survey of Kafka's precursors. At first I thought he was as singular as the fabulous phoenix; when I knew him better I thought I recognized his voice, or his habits, in the texts of various literatures and various ages. I shall record a few of them here, in chronological order. [...] If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous selections I have mentioned resemble Kafka's work: if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other, and this fact is the significant one. Kafka's ideosyncrasy, in greater or lesser degree, is present in each of these writings, but if Kafka had not written we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist. The poem "Fears and Scruples" by Robert Browning is like a prophecy of Kafka's stories, but our reading of Kafka refines and changes our reading of the poem perceptibly. Browning did not read it as we read it now. The word "precursor" is indispensable in the vocabulary of criticism, but one should try to purify it from every connotation of polemic or rivalry. The fact is that each writer creates his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future². In this correlation the identity or plurality of men matters not at all. The first Kafka of *Betrachtung* is less a precursor of the Kafka of the shadowy myths and atrocious institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany; J.L.Borges, *Kafka and his precursors*; cf. *La carte postale*, p. 285.*

² See T.S. Eliot, *Points of View* (1941), pages 25-26.

advance. So with regard to any philosophical text it cannot be determined in advance what is and what is not acceptable or permissible. A liberty which one cannot allow oneself within a particular context becomes acceptable and interesting in another context in which in turn different restrictions hold¹².

Even philosophers cannot always, if ever, be taken for their words. What they write or say is sometimes merely prompted by academic rivalry or by diplomatic care *vis-à-vis* an institution; and whatever they write or say will be informed by all sorts of conventions and contracts. Derrida frequently teases¹³ his readers or his audience by pointing out that philosophical ideas too adopt themselves to the conventions and contracts of concrete contexts and circumstances. It follows that philosophers too impose limits onto their thinking.

But then when and how ever to ascribe a conviction or idea to someone? There are *no absolute*, that is: *no ahistorical* or *originary* criteria to answer or settle this question, once and for all. What is decisive here are varying social conventions that are not *absolutely anchored*, not *monolithic* or *self-identical*¹⁴.

As just an example of such a *generic* innovation I mention that it was the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) who introduced the genre of his *kursus* on Aristotle's **Metaphysics**, namely the *tractatus* which consequently replaced the *quaestio disputata*, the genre of the medieval commentary.

¹² Cf. **Limited Inc a b c**, p. 145.

¹³ **Limited Inc a b c**, p. 143: *I realize that my answers have already been too long. For contingent reasons of time and space, and hence without rigorous justification, I will have to pay greater attention to the economy of my responses.*

¹⁴ **Limited Inc a b c**, p. 144.

Jenseits von Gut und Böse, 9, 289: Der Einsiedler glaubt nicht daran, dass jemals ein Philosoph -gesetzt, dass ein Philosoph immer vorerst ein Einsiedler war- seine eigentlichen und letzten Meinungen in Büchern ausgedrückt habe: schreibt man nicht gerade Büchern, um zu verbergen, was man bei sich birgt?- ja er wird zweifeln, ob ein Philosoph "letzte und eigentliche" Meinungen überhaupt haben könne, ob bei ihm nicht hinter jeder Höhle noch eine tiefere Höhle liege, liegen müsse- eine umfänglichere fremdere reichere Welt über einer Oberfläche, eine Abgrund hinter jedem Grunde, unter jeder "Begründung". Jede Philosophie ist eine Vordergrunds-Philosophie- das ist ein Einsiedler-Urtheil [...] Jede Philosophie verbirgt auch eine Philosophie; jede Meinung ist auch ein Versteck, jedes Wort auch eine Maske.

De imitaione Derridae: a hermit doubts whether a philosopher could ever have final and *eigentliche* opinions. Signification are effects produced, *leurrres* de *réappropriation*. There could be no imitation apart from a certain rhetoric and policing: if there is undecidability, then there need be contracts, laws, institutions¹⁵ etc... Which is to say, of course, that *there is no mimetology*: everything begins with reproduction.

La pharmacie de Platon, p. 71-2: *Réservant toujours une surprise à l'anatomie ou à la physiologie d'une critique qui croirait en maîtriser le jeu, en surveiller à la fois tous les fils, se leurrant aussi à vouloir regarder le texte sans y toucher, sans mettre la main à l'«objet», sans se risquer à y ajouter, unique chance d'entrer dans le jeu en s'y prenant les doigts, quelque nouveau fil. Ajouter n'est pas ici autre chose que donner à lire. Il faut s'arranger pour penser cela: qu'il ne s'agit pas de broder, sauf à considérer que savoir broder c'est encore s'entendre à suivre le fil donné. C'est-à-dire, si l'on veut bien nous suivre, caché.*

¹⁵ Cf G. Deleuze, *La pensée nomade*.

2./ Derrida investigates the

[For Jo Vanhoenacker,
who has arrived early]

*S'il y avait une définition de la
différance, ce serait justement la limite,
l'interruption, la destruction de la
relève hégélienne partout où elle
s'opère.*

J'ai essayé de
remettre la philo-
sophie au scène,
dans une scène
qu'elle ne gouverne
pas.

possibility of a limitation, and of a transgression
or delimitation of philosophical knowledge that
aspires

to be an embracing knowledge. Involved is the
question of the potence and impotence of
philosophical discourse, of what falls inside the

system of philosophical knowledge and what escapes it, of the limit or bar
between the interior and the exterior. Derrida has never formulated this
problematic in such

La carte postale, p. 73: Si daringly general terms.

*la poste (technique, position,
<<métaphysique>>) s'annonce
au <<premier>> envoi, alors il
n'y a plus LA métaphysique,
etc. (ça j'essaierai de le dire
une fois de plus et
autrement) ni même L'envoi,
mais des envois sans
destination.*

For he is extremely careful

with expressions such as

the tradition, *t h e*

metaphysics as onto-

theology, *the* philosophy

as absolute, totalitarian knowledge, *the* philosophy of
presence or identity. Such generalities are never used
by Derrida without the necessary reserve or nuance.

*Daran mitzuarbeiten, dass die
Philosophie der Form der
Wissenschaft näherkomme -
dem Ziele, ihren Namen der
Liebe zum Wissen ablegen zu
können und wirkliches
Wissen zu sein -, ist es, was
ich [Georg W. Fr. Hegel,
Weltweisheits Doktor and
amateur boxer] *m i r*
vorgesetzt; Vorrede, p. 14.*

*tympan, ix: peut-on
traiter de la philo-
sophie (la méta-
physique, voire l'onto-
théologie) sans se
laisser déjà dicter,
avec cette prétension à
l'unicité, la totalité
imprenable et impé-
riale d'un ordre? S'il y
a des marges, y a-t-il
encore une philo-
sophie, la philo-
sophie?*

Yet in spite of this important restriction, which we are yet to acknowledge, it is still mainly against the background of the *Hegelian concept of philosophy* as an embracing, absolute

tympan, viii: (*Hegel, encore, toujours*)

system of knowledge (*das System*

der Wissenschaft) that we can

begin to situate and understand the

general interrogation that lies at

the basis of the peculiar *oeuvre*

and specific interest of Derrida. It

is especially this conception of

philosophy that he wants to

deconstruct.

Philosophy Beside Itself, p. 46: *Hegel is the philosopher of the philosophic tradition; in his writing that tradition is closed and fulfilled, consummated. But this very act is also constitutive of that tradition, making it visible as such and so open to what will necessarily appear as its "outside". Hegel creates what will be named the "metaphysical enclosure" (Heidegger) and the "logocentric closure" (Derrida) - to philosophize after Hegel is to do so from somewhere else, somewhere from which that enclosure is in view; G p.: [Hegel]: dernier philosophe du livre et premier penseur de l'écriture.*

Philosophical knowledge (*das Wissen; die Wissenschaft*) is motivated and propelled by the infinity of understanding. Philosophy -*noblesse oblige*- wants to understand any experience whatsoever in the light of an all-embracing rational cohesion or totality. It wants to bring this cohesion to the surface, and to realize it on the level of the notion (*das Begriff*). The notion is the realm of the Spirit (*die Geist*), the world in which the Spirit, unlike an Abraham destined to *errance*, comes to its own and is finally at home, at its destination. In and through the notion the Spirit understands (*begreift*) the other-than itself (as the other of itself); an object or world - an exterior- which not only opposes the Spirit as a *Gegen-stand*, but which - in a first moment- is also opposite and strange (*fremdartig*) to the realm of the Spirit. The world is *contrary to*, and in this sense *other than* the Spirit insofar as this world offers resistance to the Spirit and is as yet not fully understood. But by understanding (*begreifen*) this world,

this immediate (initial) contradiction loses its validity. Insofar as this world is understood, it is no longer radically opposite to, and no longer other than the realm of the Spirit, the world of the notion. The Spirit then recognizes itself in this world -as Odysseus could finally recognize himself throughout his vagaries, and pull himself together by narrating the story of his life, before coming back from where he started, *chez soi*- the world is appropriated in and by the notion and in this

way is sublated (*aufgehoben*) and incorporated (*vereinseelt*, one would have to say, or *vereinleibt*) into the realm of the Spirit. The world that is understood, is a spiritual world, a world of the Spirit. By

Vorrede, p. 29: *Das reine Selbsterkennen im absoluten Anderssein, dieser Äther als solcher, ist der Grund und Boden der Wissenschaft oder das Wissen im allgemeinen; cf. Die Phänomenologie des Geistes, p. 146.*

Vorrede zur Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, understanding the other-than-itself,

p. 24: *Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; and was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig.*

philosophical knowledge realizes (*verwirklicht*) itself and finds a concrete content. The Spirit recognizes its own rationality in reality. The rationality of reality is the very rationality of the notion.

The Spirit realizes its own rationality in reality by understanding reality. Through the mediation of the other-than-itself philosophical knowledge thus comes to an understanding of itself. The reality which the Spirit understands, is a world in which the Spirit comes to an understanding of itself, and comes to its own notion. Absolute knowledge, which is only determined (*bestimmt*, destined) by itself, that is to say by the notion, is hence, on the one hand, a knowledge of the other (an objective knowledge) and, on the other hand, a realization of itself in this knowledge as complete *self-knowledge*. Since the notion realizes itself in the objectivity of the

world, this world is no longer really contrary to the Spirit. That appearance is understood as such, as

falsch.

Vorrede, p. 40: *Das Falsche wäre das Andere, das Negative der Substanz, die als Inhalt des Wissens das Wahre ist. Aber die Substanz ist selbst wesentlich das Negative [..]*

The world is not an exterior that

could restrict or limit philosophical knowledge in the process of its self-unfolding.

Hence my formulation of Derrida's interrogation. Is there a real, not merely apparent limitation of absolute knowledge (*absolute Wissen; savoir absolu*) possible? Could absolute knowledge -insofar as it is borne by the infinity of the notion- still be really determined and limited by an exterior (exteriority) - a standpoint, a subject or an object *outside* of the absolute- without that exterior in turn being understood and seized (*begriffen*) in the gradually progressing process of self-realization and self-unfolding of the notion? Is there still room for a subject that brings to the surface an exterior that cannot be understood and resolved by the absolute?

Vorrede, p. 39: *Die Ungleichheit, die im Bewusstsein zwischen dem Ich und der Substanz, die sein Gegenstand ist, stattfindet, ist ihr Unterscheid, das Negative überhaupt. [...] - Wenn nun dies Negative zunächst als Ungleichheit des Ichs zum Gegenstande erscheint, so ist es ebenso sehr die Ungleichheit der Substanz zu sich selbst. Was ausser ihr vorzugehen, eine Tätigkeit gegen sie zu sein scheint, ist ihr eigenes Tun, und sie zeigt sich wesentlich Subjekt zu sein. Indem sie dies vollkommen gezeigt, hat der Geist sein Dasein seinem Wesen gleichgemacht; er ist sich Gegenstand, wie er ist, und das abstrakte Element der Unmittelbarkeit und der Trennung des Wissens und der Wahrheit ist überwunden. Das Sein ist absolut vermittelt; - es ist substantieller Inhalt, der ebenso unmittelbar Eigentum des Ichs, selbstisch oder der Begriff ist. Hiermit beschliesst sich die Phänomenologie des Geistes.*

This interrogation must simultaneously be elaborated on a threefold level.

Primo. What is the place, the position, the structure of a *subject* that wants to bring to the surface such an exterior? What sort of subject is this, who wants to point to an exterior that cannot and must not become an object of knowledge? Is that subject a subject *other* than *das Absolute*? That subject wants to be and must be outside of (exterior to) *das Absolute* if it is to bring to

the surface anything at all that cannot be localised and determined by *das Absolute*. How can such a locus be localised and determined by *das Absolute*? Won't that subject be precisely the realization (*Verwirklichung*) of the total intelligibility which *das Absolute* wants to achieve? Won't that subject complete and realize in that very moment what *das Absolute* could up to then only partially realize? For that subject understands, then, more than does *das Absolute*. Moreover, what could and will prevent or arrest absolute knowledge from understanding, after the event, the place of that subject - which at first seemed to be outside of *das Absolute*- as a standpoint in and through which *das Absolute* comes to an enriched and final knowledge of itself?

Secundo. What is or what could be that exterior that falls out of the range of *das Absolute*? Supposing that one could bring to the surface an exterior that cannot be brought into presence by the absolute subject but can be by that other subject. After all, has one not to see something in order to see that there is something that cannot be understood by *das Absolute*? But what will arrest the absolute subject from integrating this new presence, in a second moment, into itself as a moment in and of the infinite self-unfolding of the notion (*die Selbst-Verwirklichung des Begriffs*)? In other words, is there an exterior possible which would be something

other than a supplementary replenishment of the all embracing system of *das Absolute*? Either that exterior is something, and then it can at least in principle become determined, known and understood. But then nothing is in the way of integrating it into the all embracing system of *das Absolute*. Or it cannot be determined, and then it must be a rather undetermined nothing,

G, p. 442: *Ce qui altère le nerf vivant de la langue [...] n'a donc surtout pas lieu. Moins que rien et pourtant, à en juger par ses effets, beaucoup plus que rien.*

nicht etwas daseiendes. But in that case it seems that absolute knowledge need not be bothered, and need not concern itself with it at all. Is there a third possibility which escapes this alternative?

Tertio. What is the nature of the discourse, the knowing that wants to curtail the totalizing drive of *das Absolute* without in turn being lapped up by the logic of the notion? That discourse wants to determine and limit the all embracing system, in such a way that this limitation cannot in turn be interpreted from the system onwards as an additional step towards a definitive realization of all embracing intelligibility. The system of *das Absolute* would then be limited by something other than itself, that is to say, by a discourse that is 'other', and in this way does not correspond (or conform) to the logical structure of absolute knowledge, *das absolute Wissen*. But is such a discourse possible? Let me elaborate this latter facet of Derrida's interrogation from the perspective of Martin Heidegger.

Philosophy has always been a philosophy of presence: being is being-present to a subject. It is only in Hegel that this presence is realized, on the level of *das Begriff*, as absolute self-presence; a presence that is not disturbed by anything, by no absence whatsoever. Can we -so I could reformulate Derrida's interrogation from Heidegger onward- in turn determine the project of understanding being as being-present, as a *particular* project, as one amongst all possible projects, that is allotted to us by the dispatch of an unfathomable *Seinsgeschick*, as a particular manner to relate ourselves to that *Geschick*, as a historically determined process that originates somewhere (in or with Plato) and the end of which is gradually drawing near (since or with Hegel), as a project that at some (future) stage we will be able to leave behind us definitively, once and for all? But can such a project be replaced by a project of a different kind, for instance by a

philosophy of absence? Yet can being be thought otherwise than as being-present? Is not an absence, as soon as it is thought, necessarily brought into presence and reduced to a being-present? Is there a discourse, a sort of knowing, a philosophical programme or tractatus possible that can get away with this fundamental project?

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 383: *Il n'y a qu'un discours, il est significatif et Hegel est ici incontournable; tympan*, p. ii: *A le penser comme tel, à le reconnaître, on le manque. On se la réapproprie, on en dispose, on le manque ou plutôt on manque (de) le manquer, ce qui, quant à l'autre, revient toujours au même; Hegel, la mort et le sacrifice*, p. 344-45: *En fait, l'homme est toujours à la poursuite d'une souveraineté authentique. [...] Nous verrons qu'il poursuit de plusieurs façons ce qui se dérobaît toujours à lui. L'essentiel étant qu'on ne peut l'atteindre consciemment et le chercher, car la recherche l'éloigne.*

Furthermore, what is the logic, the grammar of a discourse that states that this project is itself only a particular project? Can such a knowing still justify itself logically?

Let me summarize this obsessive interrogation undertaken by Derrida and Heidegger as follows. Is not any opposition between an interior (presence) and an exterior (absence) in and by the movement of *das Absolute* - a movement that knows only the quietude and stability of the movement itself- necessarily

Vorrede, p. 26: *Allein, wie auch Aristoteles die Natur als das zweckmässige Tun bestimmt, der Zweck ist das Unmittelbare, Ruhende, das Unbewegte, welches selbst bewegend ist; so ist es Subjekt. Seine Kraft, zu bewegen, abstrakt genommen, ist das Fürsichsein oder die reine Negativität. Das Resultat ist nur darum dasselbe, was der Anfang, weil der Anfang Zweck ist,- oder das Wirkliche ist nur darum dasselbe, was sein Begriff, weil das Unmittelbare als Zweck das Selbst oder die reine Wirklichkeit in ihm selbst hat. Der ausgeführte Zweck oder das daseinde Wirkliche ist Bewegung und entfaltetes Werden; eben diese Unruhe aber ist das Selbst. The *Unruhe* is over-all controlled by a teleologically *gesicherte* or rhetorically *geforderte* 'Zurückgang' or 'Wiederkehr' 'in die Einfachheit'. Lettre, disons, devant arriver, et à destination!*

sublated (*aufgehoben*) and reduced to an opposition *within* the absolute system, in such a way that the opposition between itself (*das System der Wissenschaft*) and an exterior (that cannot be integrated into the system) is in fact dissolved? Can philosophy really hold out, endure and think the tension with an unsublatable exteriority? Is the system of absolute

rationality invulnerable and insensitive to any exteriority whatsoever? In short, should the relation between identity and non-identity be thought from identity onward or as an unsublatable difference? Can difference be the object of any philosophical knowing?

Derrida wants to trace an exteriority and activate it in such a way that it confronts philosophy, from within, with its own defectiveness, failure and vulnerability; that is to say, an exteriority which renders philosophy -at its culminating point, as it climaxes, armed in the most potent and tricking way imaginable- at the same time impotent and utterly defenceless. If this exteriority is to be truly effective, then it should not in turn be recuperable *within* the logic of the notion and *within* (a) metaphysics of presence. It will therefore have to correspond or conform to three formal conditions.

Primo. What escapes the potency (*Macht*) of the self-realizing system of the notion, can and should not essentially be something, not a being of which can be said what it is, not an object that can be determined and known in a purely theoretical way. This exterior can and should essentially not be an

object dressing itself in front of the knowing subject, not a being which we can see more or less clearly, not a hidden presence which can be gradually

unveiled by a subject of knowing. For

Vorrede, p. 28: Dies Anundfürsichsein aber ist es erst für uns oder an sich, es ist die geistige Substanz. Es muss dies auch für sich selbst, muss das Wissen von dem Geistigen und das Wissen von sich als dem Geiste sein, d.h. es muss sich als Gegenstand sein, aber ebenso unmittelbar als aufgehobener, in sich reflektierter Gegenstand.

as soon as it is about an exterior that can be defined, an exterior the essence of which can be articulated, it can also be integrated into an embracing system of knowing. It must be about

an exterior that irrevocably ties knowing to a radical not-knowing: a not-knowing (*un non-savoir*) that is not to be (mis)taken for a provisional *not-yet*-knowing. One consequence of this is that the traditional division

subject-object is essentially inadequate and hence problematic when it comes to thinking the relation to such an exterior.

Secundo. It can and should not be an exterior that menaces the interiority of the system *merely* from the outside, for a menace that comes *merely* from the outside can easily be neutralized; such an exterior can easily be kept at a distance, outside, and thrust down. It must therefore be about a truly menacing exterior which accomplishes

itself always *in* the system. Put differently, it must be about an exterior that is *out* of itself *within* the system, an exterior in the interior, an exterior exceeding

G, p. 52: *Le dehors entretient avec le dedans un rapport qui, comme toujours, n'est rien moins que de simple extériorité. Le sens du dehors a toujours été dans le dedans, prisonnier hors du dehors, et réciproquement* ; G, p. 308 : *il [le supplément dangereux] viendrait du dehors qui serait simplement dehors. Ce qui est conforme à la logique de l'identité et au principe de l'ontologie classique (le dehors est dehors, l'être est, etc.) mais non à la logique de la supplémentarité, qui veut que le dehors soit dedans, que l'autre et le manque viennent s'ajouter comme un plus qui remplace un moins, que ce qui s'ajoute à quelque chose tienne lieu du défaut de cette chose, que le défaut, comme dehors du dedans soit déjà au-dedans du dedans, etc ..*

itself exorbitantly. It follows that classical logic, which requires that the exterior be outside of the interior and be separated and distinguishable from it, is essentially inadequate and should therefore be put into question when it comes to thinking the relation to the exterior which Derrida has in mind.

Tertio. It should, finally, be about an exteriority which causes or promotes a radical failure of any intentional meaningconstructive (*Sinngebende*) activity. The exteriority must expose the meaning of a system from within to a *radical* loss of meaning; that is to say, a loss to which no new meaning can be given, a loss of meaning that is experienced as meaningless.

The bar or limit between the exterior and the interior which is

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 383: Le poétique ou l'extatique est ce qui dans tout discours peut s'ouvrir à la perte absolue de son sens, au (sans) fond de sacré, de non-sens, de non-savoir ou de jeu, à la perte de connaissance dont il se réveille par un coup de dés.

put at stake¹ by the exterior is the uncontrollable limit of meaningfulness and meaninglessness.

In order to perform this paradoxical and almost impossible task Derrida will have to construct his text according to a very special style, logic, and grammar.

It is not in itself difficult to write a text that escapes the logic of the notion and self-consciousness. But such a discourse will consist, then, of a hotchpotch of incoherent connections, arbitrary associations and gratuitous ideas, *und ist*

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 384: En tant que manifestation du sens, le discours est donc la perte même de la souveraineté. La servilité n'est donc que le désir du sens: proposition avec laquelle se serait confondue l'histoire de la philosophie; proposition déterminant le travail comme sens du sens, et la technè comme déploiement de la vérité; proposition qui se serait puissamment rassemblée dans le moment hegelien et que Bataille, dans la trace de Nietzsche, aurait portée à énonciation, dont il aurait découpé la dénonciation sur le sans-fond d'un impensable non-sens, la mettant enfin en jeu majeur. Le jeu mineur consistant à attribuer encore un sens, dans le discours, à l'absence de sens.

*darum von einer Art, die die Philosophie verschmähen muss*². Such a style of writing will only be viewed from within the rationality of philosophical knowing as an incarnation of pure irrationality, a lapse into the *utterly subphilosophical*³. Such a discourse will deviate so

much from the discourse of the notion as regards style, tonality, rhetoric, logic and grammar, that the difference will be indifferent. This type of difference could not really affect philosophy, effectively, from within. Philosophy will remain insensitive and

G, p. 222: Presque inconcevable: la simple irrationalité, le contraire de la raison sont moins irritants et déroutants pour la logique classique.

¹ *Mise en jeu, en feu -par une permutation à laquelle il faut ici s'exercer, la double séance, p. 61 n36; cf. also ibid., pp. 309-10, and Sarah Kofman, LSD, p. 43.*

² W.F.G. Hegel, *Vorrede (Phänomenologie)*, p. 44.

³ W. Kaufman, *Hegel: Texts and Commentary*, p. 71.

invulnerable to such a (pseudo)radical break-out. The deviation and attempt to undermine is too coarse to be really effective. Philosophical rationality won't even recognize itself in such a break-out. This type of discourse will simply be rejected and confined to an exterior which philosophy indeed has nothing to do with. It will finally be considered as a regress or fall to a level of irrationality which philosophy has left behind itself and understood long before.

Yet on the other hand, Derrida does not want to point out the logical inconsistencies in a philosophical exposition either. He rarely *refutes* argumentations.

He does not replace a train of thought with a better logical argumentation. His style is reminiscent rather of psycho-analytical treatment⁴. Neither does he want to offer all sorts of supplementary replenishments. For, in so doing, Derrida would fall back into that which he wants to undermine: his discourse and texts would not, then, be repelled, but accepted with gratitude

Monthly Python's Flying Circus: Just The Words, Vol 2, pp. 87-8: *Man* I came here for a good argument. *Mr Vibrating* No you didn't, you came here for an argument. *Man* Well, an argument is not the same as contradiction. *Mr Vibrating* It can be. *Man* No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements to establish a definite proposition. *Mr Vibrating* No it isn't. *Man* Yes it is. It isn't just contradiction. *Mr Vibrating* Look, if I argue with you I must take up a contrary position. *Man* But it isn't just saying 'No it isn't'. *Mr Vibrating* Yes it is. *Man* No it isn't, argument is an intellectual process..contradiction is just the automatic gainsaying of anything the other person says. *Mr Vibrating* No it isn't.

⁴ *Arbeit*; the affinity with Freud does not reside in what Freud states explicitly but, rather, in the attentiveness for what is, *encore autrement, bien sûr, outré, troué, symptomatique*, in a text; cf. Sarah Kofman, *Un philosophe <<unheimlich>>*, LsD, p. 95, "Si l'attention au <<rebut>> relève d'une écoute analytique, Derrida, pour rendre compte de la subversion qu'il opère, ne s'en tient pas à la notion psychoanalytique de déplacement, " ,see also Pos, p. 15 : "Ecriture [...] qui donne à lire les philosophèmes, et par suite tous les textes comme des sortes de symptômes (mot que je suspecte bien sûr) de quelque chose qui n'a pas pu se présenter dans l'histoire de la philosophie [...]"; in the end there might be no Derridean analyses that is *not* overdetermined by Freudian metapsychology.

and integrated as a supplementary step towards the total realization of absolute knowing. The defectiveness and impotence with which Derrida wants to confront philosophy forms a negativity that cannot be filled up by anything or anyone.

A style of writing that effectively disjoins the logic of a text and lifts it out of its hinges, is parody, the caricatural double (*Doppelgänger*) of a text. In parody the original remains immediately recognizable; that is why parody is not immediately thrust down.

Entre crochets, p. 93: intérêt, prêtrise de l'interprète es parodies, interprêtrise. Non, la parodie suppose toujours quelque part une naïveté, adossée à un inconscient, et le vertige d'une non-maîtrise, une perte de connaissance. La parodie absolument calculée serait une confession ou une table de la loi.

Parody produces a difference *that is not a difference*. But in this paradoxical

interval of a difference *with no difference*

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 374: *Et d'abord la différence entre la maîtrise et la souveraineté. On ne peut même pas dire que cette différence a un sens: elle est la différence du sens, l'intervalle unique qui sépare le sens d'un certain non-sens.*

there can be released -when parody is

Hors livre, p. 62: *L'excès aventureux d'une écriture qui n'est pas dirigée par un savoir ne s'abandonne pas à l'improvisation. Le hasard ou le coup de dés qui <<ouvrent>> un tel texte ne contredisent pas la nécessité rigoureuse de son agencement formel. Le jeu est ici l'unité du hasard et de la règle, du programme et de son reste ou son surplus.*

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 370: *Car au bout de cette nuit quelque chose s'était tramé, aveuglement, je veux dire dans un discours, par quoi s'achevant la philosophie comprenait en soi, anticipait, pour les retenir auprès de soi, toutes les figures de son au-delà, toutes les formes et toutes les ressources de son dehors. Par la simple prise de leur énonciation. Hormis peut-être un certain rire. Et encore.*

successful- a maximal distance that has as an energetic effect, a total disturbance, totally disrupting the text from within: the disturbance which is produced by an outburst of

laughter (*éclat de rire*).

My Chances/Mes Chances, p. 4: *I shall cast out two questions, then. Once these questions are cast, imagine that suddenly (d'un seul coup) they become two dice. Afterwards (après-coup), when they have fallen, we shall try to see, if something still remains to be seen, at what sum they arrive between them: in other words, what their constellation means. And whether one can read my fortune (mes chances) or yours.*

The parody of a character consists in a perfect repetition, imitation, doubling or mimesis. The character which is parodied, is

immediately recognizable. The difference is barely noticeable; one can hardly say in precisely what the difference consists. In this way the reading and writing of Derrida are a repetition, a doubling, an almost literal reproduction of another text; the sentence structure, the choice of expressions are respected even in the smallest details. The distance between the two texts is as minimal as possible⁵. Parody is only possible on the basis of a maximal attentiveness and sensitivity to the

character: each action is thoroughly analyzed; nothing is overlooked; the smallest detail, characteristic, trait, facial expression, gesticulation is registered; the wording and style of speaking are retained integrally ; both intonation,

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 377: *Ressemblant à une figure [dans l'enchaînement de la phénoménologie], trait par trait, elle en est l'altération absolue. Différence qui ne se produirait pas si l'analogie se limitait à tel ou tel trait abstrait.*

grammar and the content and choice of words are repeated with the greatest attention, care and precision. And yet it is repeated in such a way that a shift of accent is occasioned: the repeated iterates in a different context, in a different frame, and this displacement of context completely disjoins [*zerrisst*] the original.

⁵ Cf. Pos, p. 12 : *il faut surtout lire et relire ceux dans les traces desquelles j'écris, les <<livres>> dans les marges desquelles j'écris et entre les lignes desquels je dessine et déchiffre un texte qui est à la fois très ressemblant et tout autre.*

..unfaithful in its faithfulness: *La carte postale*, p. 29: *Je suis un monstre de fidélité, l'infidèle le plus pervers.* Parody is directed to those characteristics in which the character is most vulnerable: her facial expression, her appearance⁶. Likewise, Derrida's reading and writing is characterized by an enormous respect for the material externality of a text; he is scrupulously careful not to let slip away a single detail from his sensitive gaze; punctuation marks, peculiar turns of phrase, titles, divisions and even the signature in the text are registered meticulously. But in the repetition the frame is altered: in *Glas* Hegel is literally placed on the same page as Genet. And in this chasm an unsublatable distance and

estrangement⁷ can still take

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 382-83: *En doublant la maîtrise, la souveraineté n' échappe pas à la dialectique. [...] Loin d'interrompre la dialectique, l'histoire et le mouvement du sens, la souveraineté donne à l'économie de la raison son élément, son milieu, ses bordures. Loin de supprimer la synthèse dialectique, elle l'inscrit et la fait fonctionner dans le sacrifice du sens.*

place. In the repetition a text is stripped of its peculiarity (property, *propriété*, identity).

Parody is only possible on the basis of a generous love and a great respect for the character; it requires a direct involvement with, and a physical proximity to, that character. But parody is at the same time shameless; it leaves nothing untouched; everything is contaminated; nothing remains standing (*l'érection -tombe*); it profanes and desecrates; it is disrespectful in its respect, unfaithful in its faithfulness.

⁶ That is : *question de style; qual quelle*, pp. 352-53 : *Le timbre de ma voix, le style de mon écriture, c'est ce qui pour (un) moi n'aura jamais été présent...Si mon style se marque, c'est sur une face qui me reste invisible, illisible. Point de speculum : j'y suis aveugle à mon style, sourd au plus spontané de ma voix; cf. Nabokov, *Common-sense and the art of literature*, and the de Montherlant one-liner.*

⁷ Expropriation, desapproximation, theft (*vol*).

And this paradoxical interval explodes in a(n) (out)burst of laughter (*éclat de rire*). Nowhere else are we so touched

by the nullity, the futility of a character than in parody. In parody the distinction between original and copy is about to disappear or dissolve. A good parody makes itself forgotten *as* parody. Is it real or not real? The character herself or an imitation? Mask or real face? When Derrida quotes Hegel, is that still really Hegel or not⁸?

Every now and then⁹ *Reb Derrissa* succeeds in bringing about this effect: an outburst of laughter. Reason is defenceless against this laughter; this laughing is totally disarming; no arm, no argument, no law is powerful enough to reduce this laughter to silence¹⁰. And the more reason defends itself against this laughter, the more futile, the more derisory and laughable it becomes. The double provokes, not mild, ironical laughter, nor aggressive

⁸ Cf. Sarah Kofman, *LsD*, p. 85 : " [...] *l'indécidable est par excellence unheimlich : atopique, sans foyer ni patrie, ne revenant jamais au père.*"

⁹ In so far as parody is itself an effect of style it follows that Derrida must lose himself in his writing and that, thus, parodic effects cannot be produced at will: Derrida calculates -with what, obliquely, deregulates calculation; cf. *My Chances/Mes Chances*, p.4: *We certainly count on the calculating capacity of language, with its code and game, with what regulates its play and plays with its regulations*; p. 16: *My clinamen, my luck, or my chances (mes chances) are what lead me to think of the clinamen beginning with the divisibility of the mark.*

¹⁰ Cf. Sarah Kofman, *LsD*, p. 96: *Derrida, philosophe <<unheimlich>>, de l'écart, de l'écartèlement, de la mise à l'écart, catastrophique et <<monstrueux>> (Cf. Gramm., pp. 57, 61,62), fait perdre toute défense. [my emphasis; BB]; cf. also *La carte postale*, p. 64: *Le surarmement, mon doux amour, voilà ce qui nous a rendus fous, le surarmement aphrodisiaque du discours, pas le nôtre mais l'arsenal des raisons, la logistique dont nous nous étions pourvus*; if Derrida's texts can be so disarming, that has also something to do, then, with the fact that his writings are not strikingly argumentative.*

laughter, but instead, the roars and peals of a laughter which catches one off-balance. A laughter which, in and through repetition, imitation, is touched by the nullity, the futility of what we take so seriously and what we have to take so seriously, *jusqu'en son terme*, in order to be able to laugh about it. Laughing is not a lucid act of consciousness that distances itself from its object; the object is not put at a distance, in front of consciousness, and in this distance contemplatively neutralized¹¹. Indeed distance is developed in laughter, but this distance is not the effect of a transparent Sartrean gaze, of an endlessly *néant* -izing *pour soi*. By the *éclat de rire* reason (*dire*, discourse), rationality itself sinks away into nullity, a negativity that is of a different order than the negativity of consciousness. Nowhere is reason confronted more with its futility and ultimate nullity than in laughter. In laughter reason experiences, goes through its own decline, no longer knowing where it has it, and in this decline nothing is 'pitied', instead one laughs about it. No, it is not truth and insight in the true reality which philosophy finds at its completion, *am Schlusse*,

¹¹ Cf. *My Chances/Mes Chances*, p. 5: The objectum (ob-jet) is kept under view and, within sight or intuitus, while it puts a handle on the hand or conceptus, the Begreifen or Begriff. [...] Grasping everything in advance, anticipation (antipare, ante-capere) does not let itself be taken by surprise; there is no chance for it; cf. also *La carte postale*, p. 90-1: *Ce malheur sans fond, le désastre de cette chance, je comprends que les autres n'arrivent pas à le supporter, il est insupportable et moi-même je ne cherche pas à le supporter. On ne peut que s'essouffler à en avoir raison (d'où la raison, qui n'est rien d'autre, mais avec elle nous ne nous aimons pas).*

Ach, es sind nicht nur die Dichter und ihre schönen "lyrischen Gefühle", an denen dieser Wieder-Erstandene seine Bosheit auslassen muss: wer weiss, was für ein Opfer er sich sucht, was für ein Unthier von parodischem Stoff ihn in Kürze reizen wird? "Incipit T r a g ö d i a" -heisst es am Schlusse dieses bedenklich-unbedecklichen Buchs: man sei auf seiner Hut! Irgend etwas ausbündig Schlimmes und Boshafes kündigt sich an: incipit p a r o d i a, es ist kein Zweifel... Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe par 2, Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft.

but *un éclat de rire*. One does not laugh *at* truth; one laughs because it is all nothing(ness), *non-vérité*, *femme*, *Baubô*.¹² Like in death and *Angst* (M. Heidegger¹³), in laughter (Nietzsche, Freud¹⁴, Bataille¹⁵, Derrida) it is about

¹² Cf. Sarah Kofman, *Baubô: Theological Perversion and Fetishism*.

¹³ As laughter will burst out *infra*, in the context of an analysis of the dynamics of the caress, the following passage from *Was ist Metaphysik?*, in which Heidegger relates the revelation of beings as a whole to a structural moment in our relationship to the beloved, is worthwhile quoting: *Die tiefe Langeweile, in den Abgründen des Daseins wie ein schweigender Nebel hin- und herziehend, rückt alle Dinge, Menschen und einem selbst mit ihnen in eine merkwürdige Gleichgültigkeit zusammen. Diese Langeweile offenbart das Seiende im Ganzen. Eine andere Möglichkeit solcher Offenbarung birgt die Freude an der Gegenwart des Daseins -nicht der blossen Person- eines geliebtes Menschen. Solches Gestimmtsein, darin einem so und so >>ist<<, lässt uns -von ihm durchstimmt- inmitten des Seienden im Ganzen befinden. Die Befindlichkeit der Stimmung enthüllt nicht nur je nach ihrer Weise das Seiende im Ganzen, sondern dieses Enthüllen ist zugleich -weit entfernt von einem blossen Vorkommnis- das Grundgeschehen unseres Da-seins; the Freude we take in the presence of the loved one must therefore be rather instable. It is perhaps through the *Angst heraus* (see n. 15 and 17 below) that *l'éclat de rire* can take over.*

¹⁴ Cf. Sarah Kofman, *L'enfance de l'art*, in particular *La vie comme jeu*, pp. 225-31.

¹⁵ *De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale*, pp. 370-71: *Rire de la philosophie (du hegelianisme) - telle est en effet la forme du réveil - [...] Et encore, par moments privilégiés qui sont moins des moments que des mouvements toujours esquissés de l'expérience, rares, discrets, légers, sans niaiserie triomphante, loin de la place publique, tout près de ce dont rit le rire: de l'angoisse d'abord, qu'il ne faut même pas appeler le négatif du rire [...] Depuis plus d'un siècle de ruptures, de <<dépassements>> avec ou sans <<renversements>>, rarement rapport à Hegel fut aussi peu définissable: une complicité sans réserve accompagne le discours hegelien, le <<prend au sérieux>> jusqu'en son terme, sans objection de forme philosophique, cependant qu'un certain éclat de rire l'excède et en détruit le sens, signale en tout cas la pointe d'<<expérience>> qui le disloque lui-même; ce qu'on ne peut faire qu'à bien viser et à savoir de quoi on rit. The angoisse is further qualified as the absolutely comical: Le comique absolu, c'est l'angoisse devant la dépense à fonds perdus, devant le sacrifice*

our relation to nothing (*das Nichts*); but unlike in *Angst*, one now laughs, *le rire éclate* ¹⁶:

*Und falsch heisse uns jede Wahrheit, bei der es nicht ein Gelächter gab*¹⁷.

absolu du sens: sans retour ni réserve (p. 272). It would seem that this motif of *l'angoisse* could be related to what M. Blanchot, in a fragment of *Fragmentaire*, describes as *l'angoisse de lire*: *The dread of reading: it is that every text, no matter how important and how interesting it may be (and the more it gives the impression of being so), is empty -it does not exist at bottom* (transl. by A. Warminski, *Readings in Interpretation*, p. 183). In *Spurs/Éperons* (p. 132) Derrida relates the suspense of reading to the possibility that the secret *may always fall short*. An affirmative reading demands that one follows a text beyond the possibility of recognition or recollection, of interiorization, towards those corners where it no longer means to say anything at all. In eroticism, the same paradoxical *double movement* (cf. *La carte postale*, p. 34 and p. 156) seems to structure the gesture of the lover (cf. *infra*). It would not seem inappropriate, therefore, to suggest that the motif of the *angoisse*, in *De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale* should be rapproched to the <<*J'ai peur*>> in *Glas*, p. 43 (cf. also *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 112), and the <<*angoisse*>> and <<*peur*>> in the *Envois*: reading and eroticism might be borne by a analogous dynamics, sharing analogous possibilities of aberrations, and sharing equal possibilities of affirmation.

¹⁶ *De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale*, p. 370.

¹⁷ Also sprach Zarathustra, Dritter Teil, *Von alten und neuen Tafeln*, no. 23; cf. *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Erstes Buch, no. 1: *Über sich selber lachen, wie man lachen müsste, um aus der ganzen Wahrheit heraus zu lachen,-dazu hatten bisher die Besten nicht genug Wahrheitssinn und die Begabtesten viel zu wenig Genie; Dann, wenn der Satz "Die Art ist Alles, Einer ist immer Keiner" -sich der Menschheit einverleibt hat und Jedem Jederzeits der Zugang zu dieser letzten Befreiung und Unverantwortlichkeit offen steht. Vielleicht wird sich dann das Lachen mit der Weisheit verbündet haben, veilleicht giebt es dann nur noch "fröhliche Wissenschaft".*

Derrida punctiliously follows the different paths and possible exits in a text. He follows them until they become wrong ways: not paths or ways that would fulfill the promise of arriving at an ultimate bright spot (the transience of *un signifié transcendantal*), but *culs-de-sac*, paths that have a dead end, that come to nothing (*Holzwege?*), a labyrinths of ways in which we hopelessly lose our way. And he

is still there to laugh! He follows tracks till we get off the track. He makes connections that are 'literally in the text', and that undo the logical connections; he radicalizes the possibilities till from within they become impossible and we are faced with

St. Melville, **Philosophy Beside Itself**, p. 82-3: *The central pursuit of our sovereignty can only lead to ever more extreme affirmations of what escapes our discourse, from our projects and our calculations. For Bataille these are affirmations that embrace shit and sacrifice and, above all, laughter -not only as it escapes its submission to discourse and project, but also as it affirms the comic (im)possibility of our sovereignty, intimacy, and communication. With this last "the idea of seriousness itself" is indeed threatened -in, as it were, its own name.*

the impossible. He does not bring a text to its possible completion, or truth, but to its decline, its fundamental impossibility. Derrida repeats and imitates texts. He repeats Hegel and takes him completely serious, *jusqu'en son terme*. He repeats himself; Derrida, a caricature of himself. -How laughable philosophy can be if we take it *very* seriously!

VI. Nabokov, Nikolai Gogol, p. 144: *-and one likes to recall that the difference between the comic side of things, and their cosmic side, depends upon one sibilant.*

Derrida must avoid that philosophy immediately says *Fort* against his writing; but he equally wants to escape the in-taking *Da*. Neither *Fort* nor *Da*; but at the same time both *Fort* and *Da*, outside and inside, here and there. One cannot really localize Derrida; neither repel nor incorporate him. In this undecidable interval Derrida reads and writes, dragging philosophy with him into this abyss. There is nothing we can do with Derrida; and still he haunts us.

<<L'économie abusive>> de la différence (déscolle) les oppositions de l'impropre et du propre (ou du proche), les valeurs de propriété en général, de monument, de garde et de sépulture (oikos, oikésis: mais aussi du même coup, pratiquement, cette démarche brise, fracture ou viole la loi du propre, la clôture de l'économie restreinte et circulante [...]. Effondrement du propre dans toutes les régions où il se produit.

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 377: De ce rire, la <<philosophie>> qui <<est un travail>> ne peut rien faire, ne peut rien dire.

He follows texts in their tracks, as a shadow, *Wanderer und Schatten*, a double, *Doppelgänger*.

The experience of the perfect double is *unheimlich*¹⁸; what is familiar, what is proximal

to us, becomes at the same time disconcertingly strange; the familiar (*le propre*) becomes doubled and halved, disappropriated, both proximal and unrecognizably remote¹⁹.

The tension, the difference from the double cannot be surmounted or sublated. A difference -an inequality to an uncontrollable exterior or an unsublatable absence- that leaves no *traces* in the text, in a philosophical work, in metaphysics, would be a difference that one could not trace. If absence, concealing itself in disclosure, does not draw traces of its absence in the present, then one could not track it down²⁰. It is in and through symptoms that the unconscious announces itself to the subconscious

¹⁸ *La double séance*, p. 300 n56: Dans *Das Unheimliche*, Freud, plus attentif que jamais à l'ambivalence indécidable, au jeu du double, à l'échange sans fin du fantastique et du réel, du 'symbolisé' et du 'symbolisant', au procès de la substitution interminable peut sans contredire à ce jeu, en appeler et à l'angoisse de castration derrière laquelle ne se cacheraient aucun secret plus profond, aucune autre signification, et au rapport substitutif, par exemple entre l'oeil et le membre viril; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 249 n25, and Sarah Kofman, *Un philosophe <<unheimlich>>*, *LsD*.

¹⁹ In *Glas* Derrida successfully occasions effects of unassailable alienation in the text of the philosopher who most radically has worked-over alienation.

²⁰ Cf. *La différence*, pp. 24-7.

(*Vorbewusste*) as that which is not present any more to the subconscious. But then this tie between the interior and the exterior, between absence and

presence, between immanence and transcendence is itself a central issue in metaphysics.

It is, however, characteristic of the metaphysical tradition that this tie, or the trace, has been interpreted as *sign*. The sign is the pre-eminent middle, or means, to think and to dominate the tension with absence, and to neutralize it in this way the menace of absence. Hence Derrida's question: in what respect can the trace be thought as sign? What motivation grounds this project²¹? And in what way, or to what extent, can the analysis of the sign conception allow us to track 'something' that can no longer be understood as *sign* of an absence?

M. Blancot, *L'entretien infini*, p. 390: *Admettons ce que porte cette rupture: rupture avec le langage entendu comme ce qui représente; et avec le langage entendu comme ce qui reçoit et donne le sens, et donc aussi avec ce mixte signifiant-signifié qui a remplacé aujourd'hui, dans les distinctions (il est vrai déjà passées) de la linguistique, l'ancienne division de la forme et du formulé: dualité toujours prête à s'unifier et telle que le premier terme reçoit sa primauté qu'en la restituant aussitôt en second dans lequel nécessairement il se change -aussi Valéry [cf. qual quelle [:]les sources de valéry] caractérise la littérature par sa forme, disant que c'est la forme qui fait le sens ou qui signifie, mais ce signifié propre à la forme fait aussi de la forme ce qui n'a d'autre tâche que d'exprimer ce nouveau sens: la coquille a beau d'être vide, elle reçoit de ce vide la présence qui l'informe. Rupture alors avec le <<signe>>? Du moins, avec tout ce qui réduirait l'écriture à se concevoir, comme le précise Foucault, à partir d'une théorie de la signification.*

²¹ Fr. Nietzsche, *Das Problem des Sokrates*, no. 6,

Götzen-Dämmerung: *Man wählt die Dialektik nur, wenn man kein andres Mittel hat[...] Sie kann nur Notwehr sein, in den Händen solcher, die keine andren Waffen mehr haben*; that Nietzsche is referring here to Socratic rather than Hegelian Dialectics, that - come to that- about Hegel, Nietzsche *ne connut guère qu'une vulgarisation de règle* (G. Bataille, as quoted in *De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale*, p. 369) is perhaps less pertinent a point to observe that the simple and scandalous suggestion that a dynamics of as different kind than a conceptual one might secretly command any discursive move a thinker makes; Derrida takes this suggestion seriously, and will detect, underneath the apparently theoretically motivated subordination of -for instance- writing, a complex *polemos* of forces.

3./Perhaps, in accordance with

Désormais les significations ne convergent pas vers la vérité. Ce n'est pas elle la grande affaire! L'être n'arrive pas à être jusqu'au bout: son train de maison en faillite demande de nouveau délais, un recours aux signes au sein d'une présence qui se dérobe à elle-même; mais dans le signifié de ces signes ne se produisent que des signes. La notion husserlienne de l'itération infinie dont l'«idée au sens kantien» assurait, pour lui, la compréhension, ajourne sans cesse, la contemporanéité du signifié avec une présence. Celle-ci, toujours indiquée, échappe à la préhension. D'où l'usure du signifié. Elle libère un système de signes, de signifiants sans signifié, d'un langage que ne guide aucun plein sens. En guise de dissémination, se dit ainsi la différence en laquelle la présence se déconstruit, un ajournement sans échéances à respecter qu'est le temps ou, plus exactement, qu'est le passe-temps lui-même. Jeu dans les interstices de l'être où les centres de gravitation ne sont pas les mêmes qu'au monde. Mais y a-t-il centres? Y a-t-il gravitation? Y a-t-il? Tout est autrement si on peut encore parler d'être. (E.L.)

Or c'est bien l'essence étrange du supplément que de n'avoir pas d'essentialité: il peut toujours n'avoir pas lieu. A la lettre, il n'a d'ailleurs jamais lieu: il n'est jamais présent, ici, maintenant. S'il l'était, il ne serait pas ce qu'il est, un supplément, tenant le lieu et maintenant la place de l'autre. Ce qui altère le nerf vivant de la langue («L'écriture, qui semble devoir fixer la langue, est précisément ce qui altère; elle n'en change pas les mots mais le génie») n'a donc surtout pas lieu. Moins que rien et pourtant, à en juger par ses effets, beaucoup plus que rien. Le supplément n'est ni une présence ni une absence. Aucune ontologie ne peut en penser l'opération.

a rich metaphysical tradition, one could give the following, rather general, definition of the sign¹. The sign insinuates itself in the place of something else, e.g. an object. We use signs in order to refer to something that itself is not actually present.

¹Main references: *La différence*, *Marges*, pp. 9-10; *La structure, le signe et le jeu*, *L'écriture et la différence*, p. 412; *Sémiologie et grammatologie -entretien avec Julia Kristeva*, *Positions*, pp. 28-35.

We would not have to use signs if the object itself were actually present to us, if it were wholly and immediately, or adequately present to us. The sign insinuates itself as a means, as an extra aid that offers assistance wherever and whenever presence (the

object), of itself, falls short. If the object cannot present itself *in the flesh*, at least it allows for being presented by something other than itself, the sign. In this sense the sign serves in the place of an other; it is a representative replacing something else.

The sign is thus a substitute; yet it is also a supplement: it adds itself to something else; it serves as an additive filling a deficit of presence; it offers assistance and completion where that is needed, making up for that which in itself suffers a deficiency.

The sign is also a material inscription. In that aspect of it that presents itself as a thing, as a *being-present*, the sign is a material presence which induces its own oblivion. Indeed, the sign *should not* draw attention to its own material density; it should obliterate itself to the extent that it should not first of all show itself but, rather, the very thing it is to represent. If one directs one's attention exclusively, or primarily, to the material externality of the sign, then one no longer takes the sign *as* sign.

The sign creates a bond with an absence. It represents the object in its absence. It is in this sense that the sign can ensure that the absent object does not slide into insignificance, on mere account of its being absent. It is by virtue of the sign that what is absent nevertheless remains meaningful to us, and that we can still be interested in and concerned with it.

The sign is evocative; it creates a tension and institutes a lack which we would like to fill up, it arouses a desire for something: namely, to see the

object itself in its liveliness, to touch it, to grasp it, to feel it, to embrace it, to envelop it, to incorporate it or to consume it; the desire to sojourn in the direct proximity of immediate presence. The sign evokes the desire for a no-longer-signifying, naked, pure and self-sufficient presence: the pristine proximity of an object *that itself evokes nothing* (more), that in turn is not itself a sign of something, and that is, thus, fully satisfying, *leaving nothing left to be desired*.

Yet the sign temporalizes, and creates a distance: it defers the moment of direct contact. The desire for an immediate contact with the object has its origin in this deferment of satisfaction. The sign suspends immediacy², and in this suspension consists the experience of meaning. *To take something as a sign is the prototype of the experience of meaning*: the sign puts (us) in motion, stirs (us). It makes us long to attain something. The sign suggests the hidden presence of that which we would like to see with our own eyes; it suggests the hidden presence of that which we would like to grasp with our own hands. It evokes the ideal of a presence without signs; it makes us dream of direct contact with *the real thing* without mediation of surrogates, of signs.

This ideal can be formulated in several ways, depending on the signifying practice in question: a presence without distance, a grasping without words, a body without supplementary signs, a seeing without additional

² *Immediacy* here alludes both to the hegelian *nicht* in which nothing can make its signifying appearance and which the sign, understood as the *death* of the thing, first suspends *and* to the freudian theme of the immediacy of satisfaction understood as the zero-reduction of all psychic tension.

references... It is the ideal which both frightened and stirred Rousseau³: a contact *sans symbole ni supplétif, la jouissance elle-même*.

The classic conception of the sign should be understood against the background of this ideal⁴. It is therefore part of the structure and the essence of the sign *qua* sign that it is conceived of in terms of re-presentation: a presence *that is absent* is re-presented, or made present again.

The absent presence can be understood in two ways:

- as an originary present, the presence of which was lost afterwards. The origin, the originary presence has disappeared, and what is left of it, the remainder, is a sign; yet the original presence, at the origin, was *directly* present to us (or at least to itself). In this scenario the sign is an essential source of sadness: what we really would like to see is no more, it has been lost, and what remains is but a supplement, a poor substitute.

-as a final ultimate presence that we will be in a position to attain, in the future. The sign, in this scenario, raises expectations and *makes us live*: it brings us one step closer to the *real* reality that still hides in secrecy, that lies concealed in the distance, behind the veiling and network of signs.

The direct presentation of the present is, thus, both *arche* and *telos*. Signs can be said to be comparatively better or worse, depending on whether they represent the original more accurately and adequately, and bring us closer to the ultimate presence or, on the contrary, widen the gap that separates us from that presence. It is against this background of an originary presence

³ G, p. 223.

⁴ Pos, p. 30.

that was lost, or a presence that already *is*, an *sich*, but is not yet given to us, that one can or must conceive of signs as either literal or figurative representations, either proper or improper representations, direct or indirect expressions or articulations of an originary and ultimate presence. What is now expressed merely figuratively can and should be expressed literally, with no loss of meaning or presence, in the future. The same signified can be externalized, by means of signifiers, either metaphorically, or nonmetaphorically, and this in such a way that nothing of the proper content and meaning of the original signified gets lost. Improper, figurative discourse can, in principle, always be avoided: there will be a time in which it can be avoided *in all cases*. For the time being, however, it obviously has to be avoided *as much as possible* since direct, unmediated contact is always more desirable and better than a supplementary *détour* through improper figuration -i.e. a guise that conceals far more than it unveils.

However, though signs may be said to be comparatively better or worse they still remain deficient and incomplete: they are a surrogate, an *Ersatz* of what we really would like to see.

As a material inscription the sign can never wipe itself out completely. It can never completely wipe out its own trace. The possibility that the reference to its other *does not* take place, or disappears, or even gets destroyed, can never be *totally* eliminated. Sculptures and pictures may refer to God as a secret, may signify the absence of the sacred; yet instead of worshipping the sacred we are always at risk of worshipping mere pictures *that no longer refer to the transcendent God*. The externals of a text may constantly distract our attention from the originary or ultimate intention of the author, from the proper meaning of the text which the words can

express only poorly. The secret of a woman can *always* be reduced to the signs that evoke that secret.

The sign is not just a subordinate substitute. It constantly threatens to use its function improperly, by insinuating itself into the foreground. In the metaphysical tradition this double and dangerous play of signs has always been warned against: the sign is a necessary aid *and* a dangerous usurper taking chances with its proper function. This imminent threat is a direct consequence of the materiality, the density, the beautiful and gracious appearance, the external play of signs. We may well let ourselves be seduced and misled by the enchanting appearance of a woman, instead of remaining attentive solely to her true nature and real personality that lie veiled behind the fascinating and allegedly superficial play of external signs⁵.

Precisely because of this imminent threat the tradition has always privileged those signs, the materiality of which would be *almost nothing*⁶, would be completely transparent and fugitive -signs, in other words, without density.

In a very detailed and extensive reading of -amongst others- Plato, Husserl and de Saussure, Derrida has shown how metaphysics and structural linguistics⁷ interpret the difference between writing (the written word, the

⁵ Cf. G, pp. 216-17.

⁶ Cf. G, p. 12.

⁷ Cf. *Linguistique et grammatologie*, G, pp. 42-108; *Sémiologie et grammatologie*, Pos, pp. 28-35; Paul Moyaert has analysed the presuppositions of Chomskian-style transformational or generative grammatics from a Derridean/Lacanian perspective in *De grondstructuur van de taal. Een kritische analyse van de vooronderstellingen van Chomski in het licht van de problematiek van Derrida en Lacan*. Since a deconstruction of the sign should go hand in hand with a deconstruction of the linguistic subject -a deconstruction that will not be undertaken here, at least not frontally- mention should be made of Julia Kristeva's *D'une identité l'autre*.

textuality, the materiality of the signifier) and the spoken word (speech, phonè) as a *hierarchically structured* difference, that is: as an *opposition*. From Plato and Aristotle onwards, writing has been defined as a sign of a sign: a sign of the spoken word which, in its own turn, is the sign of the meaning that is expressed. Writing is a double, the representation and reproduction of the sound. Writing serves speech, the living speech-act. What is already present to consciousness in the actual now-moment of the living speech-act is recorded once again in the register of writing. Since writing does not add anything essential -at least, should not add anything essential to the already constituted meaningful content (writing should only repeat)- the material inscription should in fact become superfluous sooner or later.

The subordinate character of writing, in both metaphysics and linguistics, goes together, moreover, with a 'moral' evaluation, that is to say: a 'moral' condemnation. Though writing is but an aid to the actual speech-act, and as a matter of fact an even useful aid, it is still condemned as bad, as dangerous, as threatening and obscuring⁸. It is interpreted as a dangerous supplement, as an inscription that kills, and that threatens the living meaning⁹: writing is the letter that kills the spirit, as the burial vault of living signification.

And not only condemned: as a dangerous supplement writing has to be banished and secluded in a place outside¹⁰ -at a safe and neutral distance from philosophy and language. Writing is banished to a place outside of philosophy, and in such a way that it cannot touch philosophy and language

⁸ Cf. *la tyrannie de la lettre* [etc.], *Cours de linguistique générale*, pp. 53-4; G, pp. 61-2.

⁹ Cf. G, p. 214.

¹⁰ Cf. G, p. 62.

in their essence, that is, cannot touch them from within. Writing is an exteriority, an outside, a body that is added only afterwards to the pure interiority and internal rationality of the concept, the essence, the signified, the living spirit, the soul. The outside, the exteriority always constitutes a threat to the inner purity of the inside¹¹; therefore one has to institute a sharp, clear, and total distinction between both sides. The inside has to be conceived immaculately, in itself, independent of whatever outside may eventually be added to it to corrupt its purity.

Precisely in order to neutralize this possibility of contamination¹², metaphysics has privileged the phonè and speech. The voice, the operation of hearing oneself speak, the act of being-present to oneself at the moment one speaks, should offer a guarantee of the absolute self-presence of consciousness. In the act of hearing itself speak consciousness is still immediately present to itself. It does not run the risk of losing the presence of the signified in the exteriority of a body, of the word and of the gaze of the other. Since I hear the word I utter in the very moment I speak it, no separation from or in myself takes place. The sound is a mere transparent *milieu* in which selfconsciousness can move safely without running the risk of getting separated from or within itself. Moreover, the sound is so fugitive that there isn't even enough time for it to be lost or to be divided and dispersed in space. When I speak solely with and to myself I immediately understand the meaning of what I say and mean. In the soliloquy there is no other, no exteriority that could disturb this tranquility or could alienate it in

¹¹ Cf. G, p. 59

¹² Derrida's work can be said to be a persisting meditation on what it means that contamination is *überhaupt* possible -like Freud's work can be said to be a persisting meditation on what it means that trauma is *überhaupt* possible: what, then, must be the structure of the human psychism for something like trauma to be possible?

and from itself¹³. Exteriority intervenes only in intersubjective conversation or dialogue.

Philosophy thinks, understands, and may also use words and speak for itself, at least when it is present to itself in the very moment that it affects itself verbally. But it should not come to writing and write itself down; or rather, *idealiter*, it should not come to writing at all. Writing is dangerous. He who writes lives on in his writings, even if he is no longer in the position to control his writing, even if he is no longer able to contain his writings within limits. And if philosophy is to institute itself scripturally¹⁴, then the writings should nevertheless be thrown away afterwards. We should forget about writing, for what should remain and *what it is all about* is the transparent concept. Writing constitutes a threat to the ideal of the complete self-presence of philosophical consciousness.

Before indicating in what respect Derrida complicates the sign-conception, let me briefly sketch out how de Saussure, Plato and Husserl respectively struggled with the dangerous supplement.

Writing, according to de Saussure, exists for the sole purpose of representing language¹⁵. The object of structural linguistics is not determined by the combination of the spoken and the written word. It is the former that alone

¹³ Cf. *La voix et le phénomène*, pp. 85-7.

¹⁴ Cf. the French translation of a short piece of Edmund Husserl, with a lengthy introduction by Derrida, *L'origine de la géométrie*, which deals with the constitution of ideal objects that exhibit an ideal objectivity or, in other words, the constitution of science as science, whereby -according to Husserl- the written word plays a fundamental part. For Husserl there can be no science, and no philosophy, apart from texts.

¹⁵ *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 45; G, p. 46.

constitutes its object. The written word falls outside of the interiority of language and is unrelated to its inner systematicity. This inner systematicity is manifest only in the phonè. The true nature of language lies behind the veil of writing¹⁶. The latter is but the figuration of the spoken word¹⁷. To it is attributed the exteriority that one paradigmatically attributes to utensils. Yet though external and subordinate, it is impossible for modern linguistics, whose object of study is, after all, language, *simply* to abstract from the procedure through which language is figured. In this sense writing is a useful and even necessary aid, yet also dangerous and deficient¹⁸. Writing is not simply a guise; it alters, it distorts, it *disguises* what it clothes: *L'écriture voile la vue de la langue : elle n'est pas un vêtement mais un travestissement* ¹⁹, it is a travesty! What is more, writing can rightfully claim the most important place rather than allowing itself to be harnessed in the service of the spoken word. De Saussure speaks in this context of *une usurpation* ²⁰. Writing naturally disrupts the natural course of language²¹. By showing itself the figure conceals the true nature of language. It thereby prevents us from seeing the naked essence and pure form of language.

¹⁶ Cours de linguistique générale, p. 48.

¹⁷ Cours de linguistique générale, p. 44; G, p. 50.

¹⁸ Cours de linguistique générale, p.50.

¹⁹ Cours de linguistique générale, p. 51-2: *On le voit bien, de Saussure continues, par l'orthographe du mot français oiseau, où pas un des sons du mot parlé (wazo) n'est représenté par son signe propre; il ne reste rien de l'image de la langue.*

²⁰ Cours de linguistique générale, p. 45; G, p. 54.

²¹ Cours de linguistique générale, p. 57.

De Saussure wanted to isolate a scientifically justified object that would be free from all sorts of metaphysical suppositions regarding language and that would justify structural linguistics' claim to scientificity. Yet in his condemnation of writing he essentially reaffirms a complex network of those hierarchically structured oppositions, and those moral qualifications that lie at the basis of metaphysics and that are inseparable from it: body (the sensible) vs. soul (the intelligible), external vs. internal, derived vs. originary, re-presentation vs. original presentation, appearance vs. reality, bad vs. good²². What de Saussure intends to -and declares to- exclude thus re-appears in his theory of language, secretly commanding it.

Writing, for Plato, is a *pharmakon*: an artificial aid, an unnatural medicine that one needs, as well as a poison that can damage life. Medicine and poison one should therefore be extremely cautious when it comes to writing! However, one could hardly manage without the operation of writing as a supplement to the *mnèmè*, living and authentic memory -a memory that, in its very act, is present to itself. Writing offers itself as a necessary protection or defence mechanism against the porosity of memory, against the loss of meaning, against the disappearance of the true and living presence of truth, against the possible holes and fissures in the texture of memory. Yet -and precisely herein lies the deceitful character of its assistance- under the pretext of assisting *mnèmè* writing rather consolidates *hypomnèmis*: a memory that remains totally exterior, a blind and literal repetition in which the remembered presence is not really made present in the actual now-moment; a *mimèsis*, an external imitation of true memory, an act of uninspired reproduction of real and authentic knowledge. In writing the moment of original presence is lost. What is repeated is only the letter,

²² *La pharmacie de Platon*, p. 96 and p. 117.

the dead letter. Instead of offering protection against forgetting, writing aggravates forgetfulness of the origin. Writing thus makes us even more forgetful; as a sign, it promotes precisely the loss of direct contact with the represented²³: it aims on the side, *visé à côté*, and reinforces only *hypomnèsis*. And with the introduction of writing -dead repetition- the fissures and the incompleteness in the original presence most definitely break through. In his reading of the myth of Theuth in Plato, Derrida shows how writing comes to occupy the place of the sun, the logos, the light, the father who is the origin of the living word. Writing is the miserable son, *le fils misérable*²⁴, the heretic, the orphan who goes on living without the father; the lost son, *le fils perdu*²⁵ who goes his own way and does not stay in the direct proximity of the father-origin, of the originary meaning, the authentic intention of the author. In writing parricide is committed: writing means the death and the irrecuperable loss of the origin. The father -who should be the immortal representative of the truth of his text- is murdered in and through writing : *All graphemes are of a testamentary nature*, writes Derrida²⁶. Once written down a text is irrecuperably cut off from the proper, original intention of the author. The textuality of a text renders it impossible to go back to, and to be present to the guiding intention of the author. The author cannot but let go of his text and to lose sight of it; he is no longer present to or in his text when the text is read or repeated. At most there remain some traces that refer to his absence -a signature, for instance, the proper mark of propriety. Yet in so far as the signature itself

²³ *La pharmacie de Platon*, p. 113.

²⁴ *La pharmacie de Platon*, p. 167.

²⁵ *La pharmacie de Platon*, p. 168.

²⁶ G, p. 100/69e.

is an inscription, it can be repeated in turn, it can be used improperly and one can abuse its function. Even the signature -the strict proper *marque* by means of which the author immediately refers to himself, impresses his personal hallmark upon his work and wants to keep it for and with himself- can be expropriated. Even the signature is open to quotation, to the operation of dead repetition; it is only *une leurre supplémentaire*²⁷. By signing his work in person the author also signs his own death sentence²⁸. The text renders the return to the origin impossible. This impossibility is the condition of possibility of the text. A text is an inscription that never stops blazing a trail, a trail that repeats and doubles/halves itself endlessly²⁹. What remains is the materiality of the text; no single interpretation can dissolve the materiality of a text. Time and again one has to return to the letter of the text that presupposes and institutes the absence of an originary *vouloir-dire*. The letter remains irreplaceable. Moreover, a text has no proper destination³⁰. No one can fully appropriate a text: a text is the

²⁷ Sarah Kofman, *LsD*, p. 16; M. Blanchot, *L'entretien infini*, p. 629: *Pourquoi donc signons-nous nos livres? Par modestie, pour dire: ce ne sont encore que des livres, indifférents à la signature.*

²⁸ *Signature événement contexte*, p. 391.

²⁹ *Signature événement contexte*, p. 374-5.

³⁰ In an earlier draft of the preface to **Philosophische Bemerkungen** Ludwig Wittgenstein writes: *[...]so bleibt dennoch die Tatsache bestehen, dass Ich dem Strom der europäischen Zivilisation ohne Sympathie zusehe, ohne Verständnis für die Ziele, wenn sie welche hat. Ich schreibe also eigentlich für Freunde, welche in Winkeln der Welt verstreut sind* (**Vermischte Bemerkungen**, p. 21). Such an address will, of course, not prevent the writings from falling in *die Hände den philosophischen Journalisten* (**Vermischte Bemerkungen**, p. 126). But isn't it ironic that Wittgenstein addresses himself (or at least would like to) to his *friends* so as not to meet that sort of resistance or incomprehension he fears his writings will meet in those minds that are *fremd* to him? For friends *always* remain, and *must* remain somehow strange to us; to that extent

property of no one. And the way it goes is never a proper one. Its way is not one of slowly, but surely approaching an ultimate *Ziel* -for instance its proper meaning. With writing begins the never ending play of interpretations; never-ending since the text <<as such>> institutes the absence of an originary intention and an ultimate signification³¹. Time and

we never really know to whom we will have addressed ourselves; cf. *La carte postale*, p. 60: *Que peut signifier cette lettre chiffrée, ma très douce destinée, mon immense, ma toute-proche inconnue?*; cf. also *La carte postale*, p. 156: *Mais c'est toi que j'aime encore, la vivante. Au-delà de tout*; cf. also St. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 353: the theoretical problem that, in analytical philosophy, is referred to as 'The Problem of Other Minds', hides, according to Cavell, a real (*existential*, if you will forgive me) difficulty in the light of which the theoretic reconstruction appears as a cover (cf. *The Claim of Reason*, p. 109: *I think this is something Nietzsche meant when he ridiculed philosophers for regarding life "as a riddle, as a problem of knowledge", implying that we question what we cannot fail to know in order not to seek what it would be painful to find out*). At the core of the difficulty lies the following paradox: the stronger the desire to address oneself intimately to one concrete person the less one knows to whom exactly one addresses oneself. It must be said that, to that extent, intimacy and insignificance go hand in hand: the intensity of the desire to address oneself, in words or in thoughts (cf. Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, I 680), is proportional to an awareness of desorientation. The importance of this paradox lies in what Derrida has described as the structure of destination: see, in particular, *My Chances/Mes Chances*, p. 3 and pp. 15-6 (*le nom de Pierre*). For a direct parallel with Wittgenstein, compare *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, I 691 (*Wie ruft er ihn?*).

³¹ The hermit in *Jenseits Gut und Böse*, 289, at one point vents his doubt as to whether philosophers can ever have *letzte und eigentliche Meinungen*; must one not suspect, *hinter jedem Grunde, unter jeder "Begründung", eine Abgrund?* But then *jede Philosophie* can only be *eine Vordergrunds-Philosophie*, an effect, at most, produced by the structure of a movement, *leurre de réappropriation et de source rejointe* (Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, p. 29), *leurre de clôture*. In the *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (p. 25) L. Wittgenstein airs a similar doubt regarding the possibility of ever saturating, of ever rounding up the process of signification at the level of discourse, as texts are wildly incontinent, each term, each *terminus* constituting a spermatic reserve, a germ multiplying and dividing internally (Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, p. 44): *Denn Ich möchte mit dem der Philosophie gegebenen, den geschriebenen und gesprochenen Sätzen, quasi den*

again the text is at risk of getting lost; this risk is inherent. At any time the text is open to the dangers of the operation of quotation that lift it out of its 'proper' context. Other texts can be inserted in its margins; fragments of other texts can be grafted onto others³². Because of its materiality a text cannot prevent one from reading connections in it which the author has not really (and sometimes simply could not have³³) meant. The rupture with and loss of the proper context is not so much an accidental, or external possibility; it is, rather, constitutive of a text *as text*³⁴.

I summarize : the death of the author and the loss of an original intention, the absence of an ultimate destination or an ultimate truth of the text, the impossibility of a proper meaning-context, and a material remainder that cannot be dissolved or replaced by any meaning or reading, are the four structural features of a text *as text*³⁵. They imply the fundamental

*Büchern, anfangen. Und hier begegnet man der Schwierigkeit des >>Alles fließt<<. Und mit ihr ist vielleicht überhaupt anzufangen. In this context the ancient >>Alles fließt<< comes to signify the dispersing and swelling movement which both feeds and wears the text, never managing to tie up signifier and signified after a uncreased fashion. An unbridled *overflow* time and again lifts reading out of its handles, unsettling its relative stability, turning the process of interpretation into an *endless screw*; compare Pos, p. 62: [*la dissémination*] *marque une multiplicité irréductible et générative. Le supplément et la turbulence d'un certain marque fracturent la limite du texte, interdisant sa formalisation exhaustive et clôturante ou du moins la taxinomie saturante de ses thèmes, de son signifié, de son vouloir-dire.**

³² Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, p. 19: *l'opération de la greffe qui écarte le propre de lui-même.*

³³ -Is Spinoza a marxist? Kant a pacifist? Nietzsche a deconstructionist *avant la lettre*?
-These are, in a way, *essential* and *impossible* questions.

³⁴ *Signature événement contexte*, p. 377: *Cette force de rupture n'est pas un prédicat accidentel, mais la structure même de l'écrit.*

³⁵ Cl. Lévesque, *L'économie générale de la lecture*, p. 187.

impossibility of the ideal of absolute selfpresence of consciousness³⁶. Metaphysics - as (the) philosophy of presence - is possible if, and only if, it excludes its own writing, excludes it or suppresses it, denies it and banishes it to an outside³⁷. The most fundamental gesture of metaphysics consists in effacing itself *as* text or writing: *the philosophical text [...] includes, precisely as its philosophical specificity, the project of effacing itself in the face of the signified content which it transports and in general teaches*³⁸. Yet metaphysics cannot but write (itself down) and continue writing. But in and through (the operation of) writing the ideal of a signified that is not marked textually becomes fundamentally impossible³⁹.

Husserl's *cogito* is evidently given at the moment it dwells in the actual living *now*, in each of its various acts of consciousness. And the 'I' that is apodictically, evidentially given in the acts of consciousness, is mine: it's me; I am the one who -being immediately present to myself in the act of consciousness- is given as evidence at the moment in which I perceive, judge, or phantasize, that is, in the act itself. Yet does the 'I' necessarily refer to the subject I am as being present here-and-now to myself, in the act?

³⁶ Cf. Lévesque, *L'inscription du dialogue*, p. 216: *Aucune immédiateté, aucune identité, aucune présence, aucune subjectivité ne peuvent tenir et se tenir sous les coups martelants, décisifs et répétifs de la lettre incisive et mortelle. L'espacement comme écriture et semence de mort prévient, précède et dissout toute possibilité de rapport personnel et jusqu'à cette possibilité de dire Je: <<Avec quelle mélancholie, mais quelle calme certitude, il sentait qu'il ne pourrait plus jamais dire: Je.>>; (L'attente, l'oubli, Éditions Gallimard, Paris 1962, p. 34).*

³⁷ Cf. *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 293: *refoulement et non oubli*.

³⁸ G, p. 229/160e.

³⁹ Cf. M. Blanchot, *L'entretien infini*, p. vii-viii.

In the *Logische Untersuchungen* Husserl dissolves the personal pronoun 'I' into the rubric of occasional expressions. Characteristic of such expressions (such as: 'here', 'now') is that it is necessary to bind their actual *Bedeutung* or meaning-intention (*Bedeutungsintention; vouloir-dire*) to concrete circumstances. In order to grasp the actual *Bedeutung* of the indexical expression 'here', one has to direct one's attention to the circumstances in which the expression is used. The meaning of an occasional expression is bound to, and dependent upon, the person who uses the expression, upon the spatio-temporal coordinates of the speech-act. The *Bedeutung* of objective expressions, on the other hand, is not dependent upon such context-bound elements, and is, therefore, dubbed by Husserl as 'ideal'.

Occasional expressions can be recognized and identified very easily: it is impossible to substitute such an expression, as it occurs in discourse, by a general meaning-concept. A general meaning-concept for the expression 'I' might be circumscribed as follows: 'every person who, at the moment he says 'I', refers to himself.' Yet if one were to substitute the expression 'I' by its general meaning-concept in the sentence 'I am very well, thanks', the outcome of the substitution would be absurd⁴⁰. In actual discourse the listener can only grasp the actual meaning-intention that inspires these words by identifying -time and again, and at each time *ad hoc* -the locus from whence these words are uttered. The opacity characteristic of occasional expressions -*opacity*, since the sentence in which the expression 'I' is used is not translatable *salve veritate* into a general and non-context-bound concept- in real discourse primarily occurs on the side of the listener

⁴⁰ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 105.

(or reader)⁴¹. According to Husserl, this opacity does not occur on the side of the speaker. As far as the speaker, the user of the expression 'I', is concerned, the *Bedeutung* of the expression -understood as a relationship to the object- is immediately, intuitively fulfilled. The immediacy of fulfilment leaves not a single trace of opacity. When I say 'I' and thereby only speak to and with myself⁴², then the meaning-intention is immediately fulfilled by the direct representation I have of my-self as a person⁴³. In the operation of a speech-act that is merely and solely of and for and with me, *in der Einsame Rede*, the 'I' in the soliloquy directly refers to me-myself as an individualized contingent ego. *I am immediately present to myself at the moment I say 'I', to myself*. Yet -Derrida wonders- is the latter indeed truly the case? Does not the expression 'I' -even as it occurs in *die einsame Rede, den einsamen Seelenleben*- always already function as an ideality, as a repeatable generality? Is not the word 'I' always already⁴⁴ an ideal element that as such remains the same for an I-here-now in general? Is it not always already an ideal element that retains its meaning-intention as such - whether or not I disappear as an empirically given presence? Does not the occasional expression 'I' -as far as we have a use for it, in discourse- presuppose that it won't stop signifying when the object itself -in casu:

⁴¹ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 105.

⁴² According to Derrida we have no idea of what it means, or comes to, to address ourselves to a single person, in casu the self; cf. *My Chances/Mes Chances*, p.2; *La carte postale*, p. 58: *Une fois intercepté -il suffit d'une seconde- le message n'a plus aucune chance d'atteindre qui que ce soit de déterminable, en quelque lieu (déterminable) que ce soit.*

⁴³ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 106.

⁴⁴ For an illuminating account of the *dash* of the *toujours déjà* in Derrida's writing see R. Gasché, *Reading Chiasms: An Introduction*, pp. x-xii.

myself- is no longer present, exactly as holds for objective expressions which remain meaningful even when the object itself is not physically present? When I say, to myself, 'I am', then the expression can only be meaningful -just like any other discursive expression- on the condition that it *remains* understandable in the absence of the object that actually fulfils the meaning-intention of the expression, in casu: *my* absence. The expression 'I am' is meaningful -whether or not I have the actual intuition of myself. 'I am' has meaning, whether or not I am physically present. It is not a necessary condition for 'I am' to be meaningful that the meaning-intention is actually fulfilled, that is, that I actually intuit myself⁴⁵.

In this context Derrida makes use of the distinction Husserl introduces between the *Bedeutung* and the intuitive fulfilment of the *Bedeutungsintention* in the context of objective expressions, in a way that goes against the grain of Husserl's intention, by extrapolating it to occasional expressions. In reference to the priority and the autonomy of the *Bedeutung vis-à-vis* the actual fulfilment of the *Bedeutungsintention* in intuition, Husserl is able to explain how it is that we can understand sentences whose *Bedeutungsintention* could not be fulfilled intuitively, for a priori reasons. A sentence can mean something only on the condition that understanding it is not dependent upon the being-fulfilled of its intention by the actual intuitive perception of that which is intended. The possibility of meaningfulness must be radically dissociated from actual intuitive fulfilment. No direct contact with the object is required in order for the sentence to mean (anything at all). In order to be meaningful the sentence presupposes the possibility of non-fulfilment. The non-presence of the object intended constitutes the prior condition for the possibility of the

⁴⁵ *La voix et le phénomène*, pp. 60-1.

meaningfulness of the sentence. Therein precisely lies the autonomy of the *Bedeutungsintention*⁴⁶. Yet what holds for objective expressions holds equally for occasional expressions⁴⁷. Just as I need not actually perceive in order to understand a statement *about* perception, so there is need to intuit the object 'I' in order to understand the meaning of the words 'I am'. The possibility of non-intuition, of non-fulfilment, constitutes the essence of the *Bedeutung* as such⁴⁸. It is with reference to this possibility that Husserl is able to explain how it is that we can understand the word 'I' as it emerges as a written inscription in the text of an unknown person or anonymous writer, or as it emerges out of the mouth of a fictitious character, or as it emerges in the case of a merely quoted and repeated 'I', in short: as it occurs in all those cases and circumstances in which the word's presumed author is (already) dead or simply non-existent: *la valeur significative du Je ne dépend pas de la vie du sujet*⁴⁹. Whether I'm dead or alive, 'I am' remains -meaningful. The meaning of the expression 'I am' is therefore not dependent upon its truth-value, that is: upon the fact that the propositional part 'I am' is true or false. We should say, rather, that the possibility of my non-presence, and of my uttermost radical absence in death, is a necessary condition for the possibility for the 'I am' to be able to function as a meaningful expression überhaupt: *My death is structurally necessary to the pronouncing of the I*⁵⁰. It is therefore essential that 'I am' -once it is uttered or written down- already functions as an anonymous inscription that goes its way without

⁴⁶ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 108.

⁴⁷ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 107.

⁴⁸ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 107.

⁴⁹ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 107.

⁵⁰ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 108.

myself as living presence, and that is cut off from the living self-presence and even makes this living presence of myself to myself fundamentally impossible. 'I am' has meaning even when I am no longer; and my future, uttermost radical not-being is necessary for the 'I am' to be meaningful at all. *'I am' is first meaningful against the background of my future as radical absence.* By saying 'I am' I inevitably sign my own death sentence⁵¹.

The inscription 'I' which at first seems so proper to me as that which is the most near and the most intimate to me since it refers to me directly, as it were, *now totally expropriates me.* By this familiar 'I', I now find myself sentenced to death⁵²: I am already an anonymous inscription whose identity with my individualized here-and-now is always already lost.

In writing, Derrida tracks a paradoxical exteriority that can neither be resolved nor be controlled. An outside in the inside of philosophical discourse: *irruption of the outside on the inside*⁵³. As writing constitutes a threat to the possibility of the transparent self-presence of consciousness and therefore threatens the guiding ideal of the enterprise of the philosophical concept⁵⁴, it must be banished from the inside and be projected onto an outside. Yet writing is not an exteriority that one can keep outside, at a safe distance from the inside. The outside *exceeds itself* exorbitantly, and is

⁵¹ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 60-1.

⁵² *Je suis veut donc dire originellement je suis mortel. Je suis immortel est une proposition impossible*, *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 60-1.

⁵³ *G*, p. 52.

⁵⁴ Cf. M. Blanchot, *L'entretien infini*, p. vii.

always already outside itself in an inside⁵⁵. It has always already broached the inside from within. The exteriority that confronts philosophy is thus, strictly speaking, not *object-ive*: its modality is not that of an object that confronts the philosophical system. Writing is not an object, not a *Gegenstand* which the subject of knowledge could ever master. The subject that escapes from the *Macht* of consciousness -a consciousness that circles 'in' itself, the quasi-immediacy of auto-affection- is the subject who writes. Once again, the philosopher can never control the effects his writings may produce; *writing is excessive*⁵⁶. The meaning of his texts eludes the power of his selfconsciousness.

Writing is the supplement of the spoken word, the signifier is the supplement of the signified. Whatever one conceives of in terms of guise, appendage, parergon, frame, reproduction, is a supplement of something else. In what does the complex logic of the supplement consist?

The metaphysical logic of the supplement is based on the principal *separation of*, and the originary *distinction between* two levels: the level of the sensible, and the level of the intelligible⁵⁷. The material order of the (sensible) signifier (the externality, the exterior, the corporeal) is added afterwards to the already constituted order of pure presence, to the self sufficient interiority of a spiritual inside, to the intelligible order of a transcendental signified that is meaningful in itself, deriving its meaning from itself. The meaning of the transcendental signified is then

⁵⁵ This structure bears some resemblance to the structural moment of the *Urverdrängung* in the constitution of the (freudian/lacanian) unconscious.

⁵⁶ Cf. Philippe Sollers, *Toit* in *L'écriture et l'expérience des limites*, pp. 105-38; in particular the section called *L'excès*, pp. 133-37.

⁵⁷ Cf. *La mythologie blanche: la métaphore dans le texte philosophique*, p. 269.

hypostasized into the dimension of a higher and deeper reality that is given in and of itself, and that lies behind the corporeal layer of the supplement.

The supplement is added only afterwards to the plenitude of a presence that in itself is not signified, not marked. Unlike the complement which offers an additional completion, the supplement is an external addition, added from outside, itself being outside the positivity to which it is added, as a mere accessory⁵⁸. What is added afterwards is always impure, and is stigmatized as a bad, deficient and sometimes malicious representation of the original. It is inevitable that something of the original is lost. The supplementary inscription is, therefore, to be declared guilty. The supplement provokes a possible loss. By means of the supplement the happiness and glory of the original presence in an innocent paradise gets lost or contaminated. The deficiency of the supplement sharply contrasts with the lost plenitude of the original. The supplement is -like the body is and always has been, from Plato onwards- 'sinful'; it is a perversion of an original purity. In fact we should try to get rid of it and go back to the pure interiority for which there is no corporeal substitute.

This interpretation of the supplement conforms to the logic of identity that attempts to preserve a strict and clear distinction between an inside and an outside, and that situates the *accidental* contamination by an outside in *an afterwards*: the originary interiority gets contaminated as a supplement is added afterwards from an outside that is simply outside⁵⁹. Yet this logic of identity does not conform to the 'properly' paradoxical logic of the

⁵⁸ G, p. 208.

⁵⁹ G, p. 308.

supplement, *which would have it that the outside be inside*⁶⁰. The outside is always already at work *within* the inside.

The supplement adds itself to something else. It is thus a additional appendage. In this sense the supplement constitutes a surplus, a plenitude that enriches or embellishes another plenitude. The supplement constitutes an ornament, an additional enrichment, an extra, an excessive plenitude⁶¹. However, the supplement is also a representative and a substitute. It adds in order to replace: *it intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if it fills a void*⁶². The supplement insinuates itself in-the-place-of something else that cannot be present in its own terms, that suffers from a lack in itself and so falls short of presence itself: *As substitute, it [the supplement] 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. Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy (ne peut se remplir de soi-même, ne peut s'accomplir qu'en se laissant combler par signe et procuration). The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself*⁶³. As a substitute the supplement is not added *on top of*, but it intervenes *in-the-place-of* an anterior default of presence, an absence. The exchange between those two moments constitutes the paradoxical logic of the supplement, a logic that disrupts a metaphysics of presence from within. As an addition

⁶⁰ G, p. 308; cf. also M. Blanchot, *L'entretien infini*, p. 632-33.

⁶¹ G, p. 208.

⁶² G, p. 208.

⁶³ G, p. 208/145e.

the supplement makes up for a deficiency; it compensates for a primordial non-selfpresence⁶⁴.

If presence needs a supplement in order to appear, to come into presence, then this means that presence, in its essence, is always already marked from within by default, infirmity, deficiency, void, lack: *C'est que 'la présence' du sens et de la parole avait déjà commencé à se manquer à elle-même*⁶⁵. If the originary presence had been fully and permanently present, then the supplement would not only have constituted a totally superfluous plenitude and an absolutely useless waste of energy: as a matter of fact, it would have been impossible. The very possibility of supplanting presence already implies that presence is incomplete, and is torn from the outset. If presence cannot do without the supplement then must we not say that it is not presence that is originary but, rather, that the supplement is: the ideal will always already have been -allegedly⁶⁶- *corrupted*. The supplement is the necessary condition of possibility for the presence of the present. The supplement first produces and institutes a being-present. It is firstly with the help of the supplement that the absence of the present can become meaningful. Yet at the same time the supplement is and remains an inscription that defers the being-present (the presence) of presence, and

⁶⁴ Prenons un exemple simple mais révélateur. Soit le Supplément d'un dictionnaire, par exemple celui du Littré: en un premier sens de ce mot le Supplément littéralement s'ajoute aux tomes précédentes: c'est donc un surplus, mais l'existence de ce Supplément nous apprend que dans les quatre tomes précédentes, en dépit de leur volume, certains mots manquaient [...], R. Laporte, *La double stratégie*, p. 243.

⁶⁵ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 97.

⁶⁶ Cf. G, p. 442: *Rousseau veut à la fois maintenir l'extériorité du système de l'écriture et l'efficiencia maléfique [...] Mais disons-nous autre chose? Oui, dans la mesure où nous montrons l'intériorité de l'extériorité, ce qui revient à annuler la qualification éthique et à penser l'écriture au-delà du bien et du mal.*

that makes the latter fundamentally impossible. The supplement is never the 'real' presence -it is the replacement of it. The original evidence, the adequate intuition, and the direct contact with the origin are always already replaced by an originary supplanting substitute⁶⁷. The presence of the absolute beginning is thus -and from the outset- deferred by the original inscription of a supplement: *le concept de supplément originaire*⁶⁸. The supplement is a necessary condition of possibility that -at the same time- creates the fundamental impossibility of that which it makes possible: *Without the possibility of differance [la différance], the desire of presence as such would not find its breathing-space. That means by the same token [du même coup] that this desire carries in itself the destiny of its non-satisfaction [inassouvissement]. Differance produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing it makes impossible*⁶⁹. Presence is possible only by the grace of the supplement that institutes its impossibility. Put otherwise: the supplement itself is only possible on the ground of an originary impossibility that is instituted by the supplement. It -the substitute- makes presence meaningful (and desirable) by deferring it. That is the effect and the result of the paradoxical logic of the supplement.

The original is thus always already substituted; it has always already been lost: the origin is produced afterwards, with delay. It appears or emerges only afterwards, in and through the delay. As origin the supplement adds itself to the origin and at the same time it substitutes a deficient origin. The supplement is *une possibilité qui produit à retardement ce à quoi elle se dit*

⁶⁷ Cf. G, p. 443.

⁶⁸ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 98.

⁶⁹ G, p. 143e.

*ajouter*⁷⁰. It is always only afterwards, in the delay, at the moment in which the origin is already gone, that the relationship to the (lost) origin is instituted and made possible. That the supplement itself is original means that there is no proper origin and no absolute beginning. One can no longer say that -first- there is an original presence which unfortunately was lost or deferred afterwards. Nothing precedes the delay; the supplementary delay itself comes first: *le délai originaire*⁷¹. In the delay a link or relationship to an absence -which remains absent- is instituted. There is no prior something that is deferred (afterwards); it is in the tension of delay itself that the presence of the absent as absence is produced. The supplement is outside from the start,- outside of itself, exceeding itself in the inside that it produces by splitting it: the inside is always already separated from itself, and so divided -doubled and halved (*doublement/dédoublement*⁷²). The supplementary outside can no longer be grounded in an anterior selfsufficient inside -everything begins with the pollution and the besmirchment of an originary exteriority. And precisely herein lies the process of difference.

Differre means both the movement of suspension, deferment, postponement, the movement of temporalization, and the spatial and material articulation of differences, the articulation of interval, the production of a spatial in-between⁷³. Difference is the original space and the temporal movement -spacing of time and temporalization of space- in and through which the perception of meaning becomes or is possible: *il faut poser la question du*

⁷⁰ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 99.

⁷¹ *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 98.

⁷² G, p. 439.

⁷³ Cf. *La différance*, p. 8.

*sens et de son origine dans la différence*⁷⁴; *la signification ne se forme ainsi qu'au creux de la différence*⁷⁵. No experience of meaning is possible without difference. The *creux* of *différance* is originary. Difference no longer refers to an original or ultimate identity (in which it would dissolve into indifference); the different distinctions are no longer held together, are no longer unified in and by a common third term that would remain identical to itself. Rather, differences circle around an absence that can no longer be filled up. What is in question here is no longer the difference between a present reality on the one hand and a supplementary representation on the other hand⁷⁶. What is at issue is, rather, this originary difference that first makes possible and produces, with delay, afterwards, the difference between reality and representation (*Vorstellung*) -a difference by virtue of which any true reality is always already permeated by a *plausibility* that is the effect of a doubling (and halving) reproduction. It all begins with reproduction -the reproduction that evokes the appearance of reality and that produces the reality of appearance.

That the supplementary difference is originary means moreover that there is no true, no proper origin of meaning: *ce qui revient à dire [...] qu'il n'y a pas d'origine absolue du sens en général*⁷⁷; *Aucune intuition ne peut s'accomplir au lieu où <<les <<blancs>> en effet assument l'importance>>*⁷⁸. There can be no question of an originary, proper, or authentic supplement.

⁷⁴ G, p. 102.

⁷⁵ G, p. 101.

⁷⁶ Cf. *La voix et le phénomène*, p. 67: *la différence n'a pas lieu entre la réalité et la représentation.*

⁷⁷ G, p. 95.

⁷⁸ G, p. 99.

For the distinction between proper/improper, literal/figurative, originary/secondary, direct/indirect, authentic/inauthentic supplement is possible only if one posits -somewhere behind the originary difference - the self sufficient presence of a nonsignified or nonrepresented identity that would provide a measure allowing us to evaluate a set of different supplements in terms of property or purity. Yet no supplement is closer to the origin than any other; no one supplement is further away from the origin than any other; no one supplement represents a supplementary deviation in comparison to any other. The operation of distancing, of widening the gap, and of deviation is itself original: it is in and through the gap that the impossible presence of an absence is produced. The supplementary difference gives meaning to a lack-of-being (*un manque-à-être*) that at the same time is produced by and maintained by the supplement. The supplementary difference gives a concrete and tangible form, a material figure to an absence, a form through which the absent becomes present in a substitute and, in the same movement, is put at a distance as substitute - a distance that cannot be bridged. That the supplement itself is originary also means that every supplement always comes in the place of other supplements, and that every supplement inevitably must give up its place to other supplements⁷⁹: *The supplement comes in the place of a lapse, a nonsignified or a nonrepresented, a nonpresence. There is no presence before it, it is not preceded by anything but itself, that is to say by another supplement. The supplement is always the supplement of a supplement. One wishes to go back from the supplement to the source [du supplément à l'origine]: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source [du supplément à l'origine]*⁸⁰. What institutes itself here is an endless process

⁷⁹ *La structure, le signe et le jeu*, p. 423.

⁸⁰ G, p. 429/303-4e.

of substitution -a process that has no beginning and no end. Each additional supplement that intervenes to make up for the originary loss of presence in turn institutes an additional supplementary distance: *Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perceptions*⁸¹. Each supplement at the same time defers what it institutes, and in this movement the experience of meaning originates. The loss that this process of substitution institutes prevents the process from ever rounding itself up: *What broaches the movement of signification is what makes its interruption impossible*⁸². In this endless process of substitution an originary splitting-up of meaning, an originary dispersion of meaning, une dissémination, takes place. With each new substitute, new and unforeseen effects of signification arise, yet at the same time a loss is provoked as well. No single substitute can contain the richness of meaning of other supplements and repeat it literally. The process of signification is not a cumulative gathering of past, new, and future effects of signification. The production of meaning does not accumulate and collect, like the lexicon does, but causes an inevitable loss of meaning. 'Dissemination' refers both to the movement of the fertile dispersion of meaning, and to its the loss and usury. It opposes polysemie. The semantic notion of 'polysemie' supposes that there is an originary correlation between a signifier and a signified, which afterwards is completed and enriched with new effects of meaning (different connotations for instance) that are all held together by the originary

⁸¹ G, p. 157e.

⁸² G, p. 49e.

signified⁸³. Dissemination, on the other hand, rests on the absence of any such originary correlation between signifier and signified: there is no signified that in itself would sum up, collect, totalize, accumulate and possibly reconcile all the secondary effects of signification⁸⁴. The process of signification cannot be totalized. Production and loss of meaning are equiprimordial.

It is no surprise that, for Derrida, the sign as sign constitutes a highly problematic thing that is to be deconstructed: when the relation signifier/signified is conceived of as a sign-relation, one inevitably holds on to the presence of a signified that does not have to be signified and that shields itself from the signifying process of signifiers: *the formal essence of the signified is presence*⁸⁵. A signified that shields itself from the process of signification is dubbed by Derrida a 'transcendental signified': it is the point, the intelligible order, the unity or the center from which everything derives its signification and to which all signifiers are orientated, to which all signifiers refer as their ultimate realization and the fulfilment of the process of signification⁸⁶. The transcendental signified stands on its own; it draws its meaningfulness from itself. Yet once the very possibility of such a transcendental signified is put into question, the radical distinction between the dimension of the signifier and the dimension of the signified -

⁸³ Pos, p. 62.

⁸⁴ Pos, p. 61.

⁸⁵ G, p. 18e.

⁸⁶ G, p. 106-7.

that is, the sign itself -becomes problematic⁸⁷. *C'est donc l'idée de signe qu'il faudrait déconstruire* ⁸⁸.

In the *Cours de linguistique générale* the traditional conception of the sign is still at work. The intrinsic definition of the sign -according to which the sign is determined as a positive entity- implies that the principle of arbitrariness is central. This latter principle means not only that there is no intrinsic or natural bond between the signifier and the signified and hence that the relation is of a symbolic and conventional nature, but also that the same signified can be expressed by quite different signifiers having their home in distinct linguistic systems, and in such a way that no loss of meaning occurs⁸⁹. This possibility of substitution-with-no-loss radically separates the order of the signified from the order of the signifier, and even sublimates the former order into a self sufficient transcendental instance shielding itself from any form of linguistic constitution⁹⁰. Furthermore, in so doing the signifier is reduced to a merely functional inscription representing what is already and fully given in and of itself and, by right, has no need of the signifier to be what it is.

Simultaneously, however, this traditional conception of language and the sign is practically problematized in the *Cours* by the extrinsic conception of

⁸⁷ Pos, p. 30.

⁸⁸ G, p. 107.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 100.

⁹⁰ Cf. *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 100; Pos, p. 30: *En laissant cette possibilité ouverte [...] il fait droit à l'exigence classique de ce que j'ai proposé d'appeler un <<signifié transcendentale>>, qui ne renverrait en lui-même, dans son essence, à aucun signifiant, exéderait la chaîne des signes, et ne fonctionnerait plus lui-même, à un certain moment, comme signifiant.*

the sign. The extrinsic approach to the sign conceives the relation between the two relata in terms of a system of differences that does not suppose any positive entity at all⁹¹. This affirmation of the system of differences as originary affects the selfsufficiency of the signified. The latter's ontological priority is fundamentally contested. This tension in the *Cours* is well known: *Tout ce qui précède revient à dire que dans la langue il n'y a que des différences. Bien plus: une différence suppose en général des termes positifs entre lesquels elle s'établit; mais dans la langue il n'y a que des différences sans termes positifs. Qu'on prenne le signifié ou le signifiant, la langue ne comporte ni des idées ni des sens qui préexisteraient au système linguistique, mais seulement des différences conceptuelles et des différences phonique issues de ce système*⁹².

In essence impossible, the signified no longer precedes the signifier; it is no longer anterior to it but, rather, it is first articulated from a differential network of signifiers onwards. According to Derrida, the signified emerges here in the differential interval between signifiers; it is thus produced by the signifiers. This means *-primo-* that the signified is never given, is never immediately present, *in the flesh*. The signified is an effect, and it emerges as a trace, une trace in the trace (trail) of a difference, a trace with no proper origin and with no proper or ultimate destination, hence destined to (diff-)errance. The signified is a trace that one follows without ever reaching a definitive final term. One always and by necessity arrives too late to encounter the signified itself; it is always already deferred by the presence of a supplementary difference: *The self-identity of the signified conceals itself unceasingly (se dérobe) and is always on the move (se déplace*

⁹¹ *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 160.

⁹² *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 66.

sans cesse)⁹³. This means -*secundo*- that the signified always emerges in a position of, and from the place of the signifier: *qu'il [le signifié] soit toujours déjà en position de signifiant*⁹⁴. In every instance a new and additional signifier is needed in order to reproduce and to produce the signified of a signifier⁹⁵; and precisely in this process the self-sufficient presence of a signified is deferred over and over again. In this deferment the signified emerges as a meaningful trace signifying the absence of an ultimate transcendental signified. Death-knell of phonocentrism: *That the signified is originally and essentially (and not only for a finite and created spirit) trace [...] is the apparently innocent proposition within which the metaphysics of the logos, of presence and consciousness, must reflect upon writing as its death and its resource*⁹⁶.

So much for this rather formal exposition of difference and the originary supplement, in Derrida. This exposition will now be made more specific with an analysis of the economic structure and existential bearing of difference.

⁹³ G, p. 72/49e.

⁹⁴ G, p. 108; cf. Pos, p. 30.

⁹⁵ Cf. *la mythologie blanche*, p. 261-62; the determination or identification of the signified is never saturated; its identity can not be determined without further differentiation which in turn delays identity.

⁹⁶ G, p. 73e.

4./ The endless process of

Jouir ! Ce sort est-il fait pour l'homme ? Ah ! si jamais une seule fois en ma vie j'avais goûté dans leur plénitude toutes les délices de l'amour, je n'imagine pas que ma frêle existence y eût pu suffire, je serais mort sur le fait.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

supplementary differences and substitutive

Nous touchons ici au point de la plus grande obscurité, à l'énigme même de la différence, à ce qui en divise justement le concept par un étrange partage. Il ne faut pas se hâter de décider. Comment penser à la fois la différence comme détour économique qui, dans l'élément du même, vise toujours à retrouver le plaisir ou la présence différée par calcul (conscient ou inconscient) et d'autre part la différence comme rapport à la présence impossible, comme dépense sans réserve, comme perte irréparable de la présence, usure irréversible de l'énergie, voire comme pulsion de mort et rapport au tout-autre interrompant en apparence tout économie ? Il est évident - c'est l'évidence même - qu'on ne peut penser ensemble l'économique et le non-économique, le même et le tout-autre, etc. Si la différence est cet impensable, peut-être ne faut-il pas se hâter de la porter à l'évidence, dans l'élément philosophique de l'évidence..

Jacques Derrida

inscriptions

institutes the

present as the

impossible: *le*

jeu de la substitution comble et marque un

*manque déterminé*¹. What we would really

like to see, what we really would like to

bring into our corporeal or spiritual

proximity in order to appropriate it

completely, is time and again marked as an

impossible, an unattainable ideal.

Impossible not because we fall short in some

respect, but because the present itself is

permeated by a determined lack. The

present itself is always already separated

from and in itself, doubled and halved.

Now difference is not only the condition for the possibility of the perception of meaning. It also lies at the basis of human desire. It makes desire possible by suspending satisfaction and by fundamentally making impossible its ultimate fulfilment. That which could, possibly, fill up the lack-of-being has always already disappeared as a trace in the track of supplementary substitutions. Difference creates an originary negativity within the human *psyché*, and institutes the impossibility of any

¹ G, p. 229.

ultimate signified to resolve it. Yet desire nevertheless remains tied to the dream of an impossible fulfilment which is evoked by *and* made impossible by the supplement. If that tie with an impossible presence disappears then the supplement will no longer be perceived as meaningful. It would then have been reduced to an insignificant material inscription -insignificant, because it no longer evokes anything. Human desire never stops striving to resolve itself as desire: *désir de non-désir*. This impossible fulfilment is desired and feared at one and the same time: perfect pleasure, *la jouissance elle-même*, would be tantamount to a total end, or death itself. The fascination for the total fulfilment is the fascination for death -death which is feared and desired at the same time: *Pleasure itself, without symbol or supplementary [supplétif], that which would accord us pure presence itself, if such a thing were possible, would be only another name of death*². Difference is the movement that suspends death, making life possible by deferring the ultimate fulfilment that it nevertheless evokes. Difference protects life against itself, against its own reduction.

The relationship between desire and difference is not only to be approached starting from a determined lack, but also from an energetic perspective. Without delay the psychic apparatus would ruin itself by going directly to its ultimate end, namely: *non-désir*, a tensionless condition. What difference accomplishes is that not all psychic energy is wasted and used immediately, and that, thus, some energy is left over so that we can continue to live³. Difference makes sure that some energy is kept in reserve, that not all of it is invested or consumed at once but that we deal sparingly with it, that we save some energy for later on. Delay obliges the psychic apparatus to take

² G, p. 223/155e.

³ *La différance*, pp. 19-20.

care of itself, and to consider its self-interest -life is aimed at as an end in itself and any lethal stake is suspended. One will not put one's own life at stake by aiming directly at the impossible. That is the effect and the result of difference. This economic principle is conservative: it wants to conserve and to maintain the present condition. This process constitutes the economic structure of difference⁶.

Yet the psychic apparatus is at the same time -consciously or unconsciously-regulated by a principle or mechanism that fundamentally *deregulates* this game of economic calculation and self-interest: a noneconomic process. This noneconomic process consists in radically putting oneself at stake: to submit and abandon oneself completely, with no thoughts or speculations on additional profit-making, to the impossible, to the lethal play of substitutions, and even to challenge this very play of substitutions by placing it at stake. Not wanting to escape one's own decline at any cost, but putting oneself and one's life at stake. Not keeping some energy in reserve, no longer saving and endlessly accumulating supplements, but submitting to the impossible without reservation: *une dépense sans réserve*⁷. No longer accepting the impossibility of the impossible and avoiding or deferring the lethal confrontation with the impossible, but radically abandoning oneself to it. No longer preferring life at any cost, but preferring a life that fully assumes the risk of death -*death* as the ultimate possibility that is the foundation for all other possibilities and at the same time institutes the impossibility of ever new possibilities.

If the economic principle consists in creating meaning and in bestowing an additional meaning on everything, including the possible loss of meaning,

⁶ *La différance*, p. 8.

⁷ *De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale*, p. 380.

then the issue in the noneconomic principle of difference is to relate oneself to the liminal experience in which everything loses its meaning, that is to say : the extreme experience of death, *Angst* (Heidegger), suffering (Blanchot, Artaud, Levinas), and laughter (Bataille); a radical and irrecoupable loss of meaning, *une perte de sens*, with no hope of any returns or any additional gains of sense.

In the important essay *De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale*, Derrida puts Bataille and Hegel side by side, articulating their relative

position with reference to this

Der Tod, wenn wir jene Unwirklichkeit so nennen wollen, ist das Furchbarste, und das Tote festzuhalten das, was die grösste Kraft erfordert.[...]Aber nicht das Leben, das sich vor dem Tode scheut und von der Verwüstung rein bewahrt, sondern das ihn erträgt und in ihm sich erhält, ist das Leben des Geistes. Er gewinnt seine Wahrheit nur, indem er in der absoluten Zerrissenheit sich selbst findet. Diese Macht ist er nicht als das Positive, welches von dem Negativen wegsieht, wie wenn wir von etwas sagen, dies ist nichts oder falsch, und nun, damit fertig, davon weg zu irgend etwas anderem übergehen; sondern er ist diese Macht nur, indem er dem Negativen ins Angesicht schaut, bei ihm verweilt. Dieses Verweilen ist die Zauberkraft, die es in das Sein umkehrt; Vorrede, p. 36.

problematic of the loss of meaning. Hegel is the

philosopher who most radically assumed the risk of death and the

loss of meaning to the extent of positing that risk as the

grounding principle, the founding dynamics of self-

consciousness. Yet,

simultaneously, an additional

meaning is given to any loss of

meaning on a higher level. Hegel inflects negativity into a productive,

servile force, which is to be taken seriously, that is, into *account*.

Everything is bestowed with meaning; nothing is ever lost in mere

insignificance. Even to the loss of meaning, to death, however painful and

absurd it may be, a meaning is given in the context of a larger whole⁸. The

loss of meaning does not radically put life at stake, but is put at work in the

⁸ ED, p. 377-8

interest of life: *par une ruse de la vie, c'est-à-dire de la raison, la vie est donc restée en vie*⁹. The restrained economy implies a mastering of any loss of meaning. The loss is, by some detour, inflected, turned (*umgekehrt*) into a higher secondary gain, in the service of an ultimate meaning¹⁰.

To this pre-eminently Hegelian economy are opposed Bataille's explosion of laughter (*éclat de rire*¹¹) and the sovereignty (*la souveraineté*) of the general economy whereby one submits oneself to the possible loss of meaning and laughs about it, however dramatic the loss may be, with no hope of any additional gain. The following quote from Derrida clearly marks both positions: *Like lordship, sovereignty certainly makes itself independent through putting life at stake; it is attached to nothing and conserves nothing. But, differing from Hegelian lordship, it does not even want to maintain itself, collect itself, or collect the profits from itself or from its own risk; it "cannot even be defined as a possession." "I hold to it, but would I*

De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale, p. 377: ce qui est risible, c'est la soumission à l'évidence du sens, que rien ne soit définitivement perdu par la mort, que celle-ci reçoive la signification encore de <<négativité abstraite,>> que le travail soit toujours possible qui, à différer la jouissance, confère sens, sérieux et vérité à la mise en jeu;

compare: When I was fifteen years old or sixteen I carried around in the streets of Brooklyn a paperback copy of Plato's Republic, front cover facing outward. I had read only some of it and understood less, but I was excited by it and knew it was something wonderful. How much I wanted an older person to notice me carrying it and be impressed, to pat me on the shoulder and say...I didn't know exactly. I sometimes wonder, not without uneasiness, what that young man of fifteen or sixteen would think of what he has grown up to do. I would like to think that with this book he would be pleased. It now occurs to me to wonder also whether that older person whose recognition and love he sought then might not turn out to be the person he would grow up to become. If we reach adulthood by becoming the parent of our parents, and we reach maturity by finding a fit substitute for parents' love, then by becoming our ideal parent ourselves finally the circle is closed and we reach completeness; Robert Nozick, A Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Man.

⁹ ED, p. 375-76.

¹⁰ ED, p. 374, 376.

¹¹ ED, p. 376.

hold to it as much if I were not certain that I could just as well laugh at it ?"
(Méthode de Méditation)¹².

Hegel and Bataille are not Derrida's only points of reference for the double articulation of difference. In *La différance* he also refers to Nietzsche's and Freud's opposition between the economic drive of life (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos). Derrida has commented on this Freudian problematic in a magisterial reading of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (see *infra*).

It is, however, misleading to speak, *zu reden* [but precisely *-Hegel est ici incontournable*] in this context of two *moments* that are *opposed* to one another, since no dialectical reconciliation or compromise is possible between the two *relata*. A loss of meaning that can be reconciled, *versöhnt*, with the act of *Sinnggebung*, a loss that can be *umgekehrt*, turned *in das Sein*, is not a loss at all. *The two moments do not oppose one another*. They are ineluctably intertwined with one another.

By positing a non-dialectical relationship, Derrida can avoid the possibility that an additional secondary meaning be given to the loss of meaning, on some higher dialectical level. The loss of meaning cannot in its turn be turned, or mastered. One cannot conceive of the loss of meaning that threatens us as *an end in itself*, nor can one conceive of the loss as a *refined means* to create a surplus of meaning. Derrida can therefore rightfully state that difference can neither be aimed at in itself (the loss of meaning as an end in itself), nor be subordinated to something else (the loss of meaning as a means to achieve something else). It follows, moreover, that it is not the phenomenological subject who executes the loss; if the subject could execute it, then the loss would still remain dependent on, and still be in the interests

¹² ED, p. 388/264e-modified.

of, the meaning creative undertaking of the *ego*. Difference would be just another function in some economy of sense. The loss of meaning is, rather, a loss that occurs in spite of me, that executes itself in me and overcomes me beyond any project or anticipation,

and which occurrence never takes place for me: event past narrativity¹³. To desire to

Cinquante-deux aphorismes pour un avant-propos, no. 38: *Il n'y a pas de projet déconstructeur, pas de projet pour la déconstruction*; cf. *Die Frauen und ihre Wirkung in die Ferne, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, section 69: the action in *distans* surprises us, it comes from beyond the horizon of finality and anticipation; it deregulates the order of *Würfen und Entwürfen*, as is Nietzsche's expression, translated by P. Klossowski as: <<jets>> *et projets*; cf. *Cinquante-deux aphorismes pour un avant-propos*, no. 18, on *projet*.

execute the loss of meaning oneself would not only be pure self-destruction but would

constitute a subtle attempt at avoiding really being hit by that loss¹⁴.

My Chances/Mes Chances, p. 5-6: *Is not what befalls us or descends upon us, as it comes from above, like destiny or thunder, taking our faces and hands by surprise -is this not exactly what thwarts our expectation and disappoints our anticipation? Grasping everything in advance, anticipation (antipare, ante-capere) does not let itself be taken by surprise; there is no chance for it. Anticipation sees the objectum coming ahead, by the Gegenwurf in which the movement of the throw (jet, werfen) can once again be perceived. The ob-jetum (ob-jet) is kept under view or hand, within sight or intuitus, while it puts a handle on the hand or conceptus, the Begreifen or Begriff. And when something does not befall us "by accident" ("par hasard"), as the saying or belief goes, then one can also fall oneself. One can fall well or badly, have a lucky or unlucky break -but always by dint of not having foreseen- of not having seen in advance and ahead of oneself. In such a case, when man or the subject falls, the fall affects his upright stance and vertical position by engraving in him the detour of a clinamen, whose effects are sometimes inescapable. [...] No horizon, then, for the event or encounter, but only verticality and the unforeseeable. The alterity of the other -that which does not reduce itself to the economy of our horizon- always comes to us from above, indeed, from the above.*

¹³ Cf. M. Blanchot, *L'entretien infini*; ED, p. 376 and p. 378.

¹⁴ For a literary illustration of a [futile] attempt at mastering or avoiding the iterability in which we are caught see J. Joyce, *A painful case*.

The intimate interweaving of the 'noneconomic' and the economic principle transforms the process of difference into something other than a glorification of the delay in itself, or a gratuitous manipulation and addition of indifferent supplementary inscriptions. Were it not for this interweaving, difference -as *an end in itself*- would make no difference, would be totally in-different.

Derrida has not yet given a concrete 'phenomenological' analysis of this problem. Rather than providing a neutral description or exposition of the complex relations, he brings this intertwining *to realization* through his specific style of writing. His writing itself 'performs' the problem he wants to raise. The style of his writing allows us to read, to notice the problematic. The style of his writing puts philosophy at stake by handing it over to the risk of non-sense. His writing thereby runs the risk of a radical loss of meaning. Putting philosophy at stake, *en jeu*, in such a way that its potency is eclipsed by radical impotence, it no longer being able to be able, which results in and explodes in laughter -that is, succinctly, what Derrida's deconstruction (of 'philosophy') is all about.

In what follows I shall attempt to elucidate in what that peculiar relationship to the risk and loss of meaning, as well as the radical putting-at-stake of meaning consist exactly. The example I shall elaborate is borrowed from *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* by Emmanuel Levinas. Derrida's concern is not limited to philosophy and its relation to writing. His economic analysis of difference hits all practices of meaning-constitution of which we normally say that the signifier is only the guise, only the clothing or expression of a meaning *an sich*; this meaning *an sich* is then hypostasized into a higher resort, a deeper and hence more fundamental

reality that lies behind the beautiful appearance of the material inscriptions *visant à côté*. What Derrida puts into question is the general identification of meaning and being -an identification that is formative, as Nietzsche already noted, of metaphysics <<as such>>¹⁵.

What Emmanuel Levinas wants to track, in *Totalité et Infini*, is an experience of meaning, an appeal, that withdraws from the autonomous meaning-constructive activity or project of the intentional subject, and thereby *thwarts* the *speculative* economy of the phenomenological subject. An experience of meaning which is not evoked by an object but by an alterity; a meaning that cannot be filled by any entity (*étant*) or being (*l'être*), and that refers to an 'otherwise than being, or beyond essence', an '*autrement qu'être, ou au-delà de l'essence.*' It is about an appeal to which the subject must respond yet to which it can never respond adequately, to which it can never respond in a (the) proper way. One of the most important propaedeutic

'phenomenological' analyses that hints at such an experience of meaning is the description of the appeal of the feminine¹⁶ and eroticism.

Milan Kundera

Je voulais poser brutalement la main sur son visage et, en un seul instant, la prendre tout entière, avec toutes ses contradictions si intolérablement excitantes [...]J'avais l'impression que toutes ces contradictions recelaient sa substance : ce trésor, cette pépite d'or, ce diamant caché dans les profondeurs. [...]Certes nous ne sommes pas sûrs que les profondeurs recèlent vraiment quelque chose - mais quoi qu'il en soit, en chacun de nous il y a ce geste brutal, ce mouvement de la main qui cherche à soulever le visage de l'autre, dans l'espoir de trouver, en lui et derrière lui, quelque chose qui s'y est caché.

¹⁵ *La structure, le signe et le jeu*, p. 412.

¹⁶ For an analysis of Levinas' notion of the feminine I refer to Tina Chanter, *Feminism and the Other*.

George Bataille

La beauté négatrice de l'animalité, qui éveille le désir, aboutit dans l'exaspération du désir à l'exaltation des parties animales ! [...] Si la beauté, dont l'achèvement rejette l'animalité, est passionnément désirée, c'est qu'en elle la possession introduit la souillure animale. Elle est désirée pour la salir. Non pour elle-même, mais pour la joie goûtée dans la certitude de la profaner. [...] L'attrait d'un beau visage ou d'un beau vêtement joue dans la mesure que le beau visage annonce ce que le vêtement dissimule. Ce dont il s'agit est de profaner ce visage, sa beauté. [...] La beauté importe au premier chef en ce que la laideur ne peut être souillée, et que l'essence de l'érotisme est la souillure.

The female seduces. Her beautiful appearance and the artful clothing of her body have appeal and fascinate. The external appearance refers to 'something' else to which the glance looks forward; 'something' that one would like to see and yet will never really see. The defiant signs of the

female conceal what they suggest and by so doing are the cause of desire. Of course, one could say that the external is of little importance and that it can be thrown overboard; that it constitutes but a provisional and hence superfluous supplement. What we -in the erotic interest- yearn for is direct contact with the naked truth, *sans symbole ni supplétif*, contact with an unmarked and *unsignified* presence. What lies behind the veil is thought to be meaningful in itself, deriving its meaning from itself.

Yet what would be revealed in such a hypothetical liminal situation (a body with no supplementary seductive signs), what would be left over in this situation, is an anonymous, impersonal body which would not have much appeal and in which one would lose interest - a dead, unsignifying body. One would reach the opposite of what one desires: a body that does not appeal, that does not evoke anything, leaving nothing to be desired. What makes the body attractive is the ordinary tension of the delay, an ordinary play of revealing and concealing. What is evoked by the difference of the delay is not 'something' that one could really see; it is meaningful only in the trace of a difference. And yet, if the body is really to have any appeal, then one

must fail to appreciate this impossibility, that is to say: must fail to appreciate that the secret that is evoked is a secret that cannot bear the light of day.

Contemporary pornography avidly cashes in on this paradoxical desire that - among other things- lies at the foundation of sexual curiosity. Pornography announces itself under the motto: "here you are finally shown without much ado what you have never seen so clearly before and what you in fact have always been most anxious to see." Pornography proceeds with a microscopic glance: *everything* is revealed! Yet, by so doing, pornography is in danger of deteriorating into its opposite, namely: triteness, boredom. What we are shown is an *indifferent* body that cannot appeal. Everything has become real; no longer is anything evoked. *A radical disclosure results in a radical disenchantment and in a total destruction of meaning.*

The feminine, according to Levinas, lies at the undecidable limit of furtive tenderness and an unsignifying, raw and exorbitant ultra-materiality¹⁷. The feminine has appeal in and through its subtle tenderness, its extreme fragility, the vulnerability of its face: *The tender manifests itself at the limit of being and non-being, as a soft warmth where being dissipates into radiance, like the 'pale blush' of the nymphs in the Afternoon of a Faun, which 'leaps in the air drowsy with thick slumbers', dis-individualizing and relieving itself of its own weight of being, already evanescence and swoon, flight into self in the very midst of its manifestation*¹⁸. Nowhere is the female so vulnerable and hence so attractive (Levinas : *Love aims at the Other; it aims at him in his frailty [faiblesse]*¹⁹) as in its face; the other is

¹⁷ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 256.

¹⁸ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 256.

¹⁹ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 256.

even so vulnerable that she does not have the power to protect and to defend her secret. Yet the extra-ordinary fragility of the feminine lies also at the limit of an existence 'without ceremonies', 'without circumlocutions', <<*sans fards*>>, of a non-signifying' and raw 'density', of an 'exorbitant ultra-materiality'²⁰.

The radical fragility and fugitive subtlety of her face -a non-being that is too much to be nothing and too less to be something and that is yet *less than*

nothing ²¹. has an intimate complicity with an anonymous carnal density, a defiant exhibitionism²², a shameless obscenity²³, an overwhelming bodily surplus: a body that gives away its secret, no longer shamefully withdrawing in itself, instead exhibiting itself shamelessly. Yet a body that exhibits itself in this shameless fashion does not receive meaning from the light of day: weight of non-signifyingness [non-signifiante]²⁴. What confronts me is a paroxysm of materiality²⁵ that no longer refers to something else: pure voluptuousness. *The essentially hidden throws itself toward the light, without*

²⁰ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 256.

²¹ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 263

²² *Totality and Infinity*, p. 256.

²³ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 263.

²⁴ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 257.

²⁵ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 256.

*becoming signification. Not nothingness -but what is not yet*²⁶. The feminine as profanation of her secret: the personal face flows into an impersonal body, a nocturnal *there is [il y a]*. *In the effrontery of its production this clandestinity* ['what is not yet': not a this or a that ; non-essence, the essence of which is exhausted by clandestinity] *avows a nocturnal life not equivalent to a diurnal life simply deprived of light*²⁷.

And then this intimate intertwining or equivocation of fragility and indecency²⁸ explodes in a burst of laughter: this is not serious any more²⁹. We reach a level *where seriousness is totally lacking, and where we can only laugh about the futility of all that which we take so seriously and have to take so seriously in order to be able to laugh about it* -because it is all just -, *non-vérité*, less than nothing. *In the feminine face the purity of expression is already troubled by the equivocation of the voluptuous. Expression is inverted into indecency, already close to the equivocal which says less than nothing, already laughter and raillery*³⁰. *The face [...] in its feminine epiphany dissimulates allusions, innuendos. It laughs under the cloak of its own expression, without leading to any specific meaning, hinting in the empty air, signaling the less than nothing*³¹. The secret which the female,

²⁶ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 256.

²⁷ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 257.

²⁸ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 260.

²⁹ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 263.

³⁰ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 260.

³¹ **Totality and Infinity**, p. 264.

or the text³², evokes is not 'something'; it is 'otherwise than being'. *The secret appears without appearing, not because it would appear halfway, or with reservations, or in confusion*³³. 'Appears without appearing': the secret is not 'something' that could fill up our desire.

The movement of the lover who is seized by shameful defiance and who abandons himself to the appeal of the female, is the caress, *la caresse*³⁴. The caress feels and handles, seizes beyond the felt, goes further than the senses; it searches, forages, in search of the secret, the invisible: *marche à l'invisible*³⁵ - *a movement toward the invisible*³⁶. It is driven on by the impossibility of expressing what it wants to express: *In a certain sense it expresses love, but suffers from an inability to tell it*³⁷. Urged on by this impossibility the caress goes on, to the limit: *its movement consists in going beyond the possible*³⁸. The caress is disrespectful, it coerces the untouched

³² Cf. M. Blanchot, *The dread of reading (l'angoisse de lire)*, as quoted/translated in A. Warminski, *Readings of Interpretations*, p. 183; cf. *Spurs/Éperons*, p. 130-32: *Cette restance n'est entraînée en aucun trajet circulaire, aucune itinéraire propre entre son origine et sa fin. Son mouvement n'a aucun centre. Structurellement émancipée de tout vouloir-dire vivant, elle peut toujours ne rien vouloir-dire, n'avoir aucun sens décidable, jouer parodiquement au sens, se déporter par greffe, sans fin, hors de tout corps contextuel ou de tout code fini. Lisible comme un écrit, cet inédit peut toujours rester secret, non qu'il détienne un secret mais parce qu'il peut toujours en manquer et simuler une vérité cachée dans ses plis.*

³³ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 257.

³⁴ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 257.

³⁵ *Totalité et Infini*, p. 235

³⁶ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 261.

³⁷ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 258.

³⁸ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 261.

feminine secret to show itself, it forces an ingress to the impossible. The stroking caress desecrates; nothing is spared; it wants to take possession of everything; the desire that animates it is in pursuit of the impossible. To discover here means to violate, rather than to disclose a secret³⁹. The indiscrete caress is essentially bound to the profanation and tarnishing of the secret of the female.

The profanation which intervenes, which insinuates itself in caressing, and which is inherent in its movement, can be definitive and painful: destroying the secret of the female, a complete tarnishing, radically humiliating the female and reducing her to an insignificant object. The female is therefore really vulnerable in sexuality. The caress can and is to be as desecrating, as disrespectful and as objectifying as the *microscopic impudence* of the pornographer's glance. The female is therefore radically put at stake in eroticism. The risk of destructive tarnishing is a consequence of the appeal of the face. Profanation, disrespect, presupposes the face: it is necessary that the face (*the hard resistance of these eyes without protection - what is softest and most uncovered*⁴⁰) has been apperceived for nudity to be able to acquire the non-signifyingness of the lustful⁴¹. We really want to see the impossible that is evoked because the face has appeal for us; and we thereby run the risk that nothing is left over. The being-without-meaning, non-signifyingness, is already close at hand in the face, lying at wait in the signifyingness of the face: *La non-signifiante se tient dans la signifiante*⁴². *This presence of non-signifyingness in the signifyingness of the face, or*

³⁹ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 260.

⁴⁰ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 262.

⁴¹ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 262.

⁴² *Totalité et Infini*, p. 240.

*this reference of the non-signifyingness to signifyingness is the primordial event of feminine beauty*⁴³.

Yet, on the other hand, profanation, at the moment it goes to the extreme impossibility, can be affected in turn, precisely in and through the failure to filch the secret from the female, by the transcendence of the secret. The caress can experience the hidden as an impenetrable (and essentially inviolable) secret⁴⁴, precisely in its inability to grasp it, in its inability still to be able to.

There is no way of getting around this double possibility or this equivocation of eroticism, of the caress, of the tenderness of the face and the anonymity of the naked body -*where the chastity and decency of the face abides at the limit of the obscene yet repelled but already close at hand and promising*⁴⁵. One has to abandon oneself to this play, and it is to this play that one abandons oneself when the feminine face has a real appeal in eroticism. Yet the risk of a loss of meaning is herewith inevitable. The two moments - experience of meaning and loss of meaning- are ineluctably interwoven with one another: fragility and obscene ultra-materiality, caress and indecent profanation. The point of transition is unmasterable. However, I cannot pursue this tarnishing *for itself* so as to call up the experience of meaning again. Such a tarnishing is calculating and hence is not taking real chances. And that is the non-dialectical intertwining of the noneconomic de-regulation and the economic calculation of difference. Derrida's analysis of difference is not a hysteric glorification of an

⁴³ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 263.

⁴⁴ Cf. *La double séance*, *Diss*

⁴⁵ *Totality and Infinity*, p. 263.

unattainable, idealized and ideal object of love which is so complete that it itself cannot be a sign of desire, and cannot show any such sign. In hysteria there is an unbridgable gap between the 'subject' and the object of love. Yet in hysteria the object of love is idealized to the extent that one never has to engage oneself really: the glorification of the impossible love⁴⁶. In hysteria, the delay is cultivated as such; the difference for the sake of difference, the impossibility of a secret love-relation is aimed at as an end in itself. Hysteria is the desire for desire as an end in itself. By idealizing the object of love as an *impossible*, hysteria *secludes* itself from the possible failure in a love-relation: a pure (impossible) love which no outside, no corporeality puts at stake. In a certain respect, the hysteric love-relation with an unattainable ideal cannot fail; but as a result any concrete love-relation becomes *a priori* impossible and is doomed *in advance* to fail. Real involvement in a love-relation means that one fails to appreciate the impossibility of the impossible by s the impossible at stake sand by defying it; real involvement means that one *accepts* the risk of losing the object of love definitively.

L'aphorisme à contretemps,
no. 17: *Un gage peut*
toujours s'inverser qui
garde la mort.

La carte postale, p. 39: la preuve, mais vivante
justement, qu'une lettre peut toujours ne pas arriver
à destination, et que donc jamais elle n'y arrive. Et
c'est bien ainsi, ce n'est pas un malheur, c'est la vie,
la vie vivante, battue, la tragédie, par la vie encore
survivante. Pour cela, pour la vie je dois te perdre,
pour la vie, et me rendre pour toi illisible. J'
accepte

Das Einer sich nicht
vertheidigen kann und
folglich auch nicht will,
gereicht ihm in unsern
Augen noch nicht zur

⁴⁶ For an more elaborate analysis of hysteria in terms of cultivation of difference for difference's sake I refer to Anton Vergote, **Bekentenis en begeerte in de religie**, in particular the chapter on the structural moments in hysteria.

Schande: aber wir schätzen Den gering, der zur Rache weder das Vermögen noch den Guten Willen hat,-gleichgültig ob Mann oder Weib. Wurde uns ein Weib festhalten (oder wie man sagt "fesseln") können, dem wir nicht zutrauten, dass es unter Umständen den Dolch (irgend eine Art von Dolch) gegen uns gut zu handhaben wüsste? Oder gegen sich: was in einem bestimmten Falle die empfindlichere Rache wäre (die chinesische Rache) -, reads Fähigkeit zur Rache⁴⁷. In a love-relation I always relate myself to the possible death, loss or infidelity of the beloved. An object of love has appeal for us if and only if we can really lose the object. When I am certain that the other will never leave me in the lurch and cannot, and never will, radically say no, then the other ceases to have appeal. A love-relation is impossible without the constant

and painful awareness that my love is

vulnerable and that the other can hurt me. True fidelity supposes the risk and possibility of infidelity. Infidelity and loss of the beloved are no *means* and *ends*, but an inevitable risk that one cannot calculate. The demand for recognition which is, *aforehand*, certain of being recognized and which does not really take chances by

running the real risk of being denied or rejected, is a recognition that means nothing. It is precisely in this possible denial that the other reveals herself in her radical transcendence.

La carte postale, p. 90: Eh oui, c'est là notre lot tragique, mon doux amour, l'atroce loterie, mais je commence à t'aimer depuis cet impossible. [...] Oui, un lot, l'atroce loterie, nous ne pouvons ni nous garder ni nous perdre, et c'est ce qui nous aime, ce qui nous retient <<par coeur>>.

⁴⁷ *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Zweites Buch, section 69.

La carte postale, p. 156: <<Quelque destinataire>> finit alors, à mesure que l'approche, l'approximation, l'appropriation, l'<<introjection>> progressent, par ne plus rien pouvoir demander qui ne soit déjà soufflé par moi. Tout se corrompt ainsi, il n'y a que du miroir, plus d'image, ils ne se voient plus, ne se destinent plus, plus rien. Tu crois que c'est cet épuisement qui nous arrive? Nous nous serions trop aimés. Mais c'est toi que j'aime encore, la vivante. Au-delà de tout, au-delà de ton nom, ton nom au-delà de ton nom.

To be certain at first that the Other will fully understand me so that the possibility of a radical non-understanding is excluded, is an understanding that means nothing at all⁴⁸. True loyalty consists precisely in this willingness to follow the beloved beyond recognition, beyond the grave, beyond reason⁴⁹. *Le plus grand amour naît de la plus grande force de dissociation*⁵⁰, whether it is about texts⁵¹, femmes⁵², *Baubô*.

⁴⁸ Cf. the *experience machine* in R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*; although this experiment was set up primarily to convey the point that, somehow, something *other than how our lives feel from the inside* matters or, in other words, that humans are essentially symbolic creatures, it is very much in line with the experiment to say that the recognition we could get from a soundboard person whose responses are programmed and cannot say *no*, would be worthless. To add to the experiment, one could imagine the despair afflicting a person who's bereft of her lover's affection. Would the *Ersatz* impressions the machine could provide her with satisfy her? No. For our person is not merely in pursuit of the pleasant effects her lover could provide her with: she wants her lover's affection back, not just the impression. And to that extent she must assume the risk that, as I put it, the other will say *no*. Throughout *La carte postale* and *Mémoires: for Paul de Man*, Derrida touches upon the question of the profound impasse of desire directed to alterity: the interiorizing drive tends to reduce the other to a character in a narrative we tell to ourselves (*Envois*, p. 156); yet friendship presupposes the alterity of the other: *Pas de littérature avec ça, pas avec toi mon amour* (*Envois*, p. 34-5). For a literary elaboration on the theme of the impasse of desire I refer to John Fowles, *The Collector*. If this Nozickian analysis of our attachment to the other is correct, one might as well wonder what this might tell us about what we call the love of wisdom, that is, our attachment to something like a discipline.

⁴⁹ *La carte postale*, p. 90-1: *Ce malheur sans fond, le désastre de cette chance, je comprends que les autres n'arrivent pas à le supporter, il est insupportable et moi-*

L'aphorisme à contretemps, p. 523: *J'aime parce que l'autre est l'autre, parce que son temps ne sera jamais le mien. La durée vivante, la présence même de son amour reste infiniment éloignée de la mienne, et cela jusque dans ce que l'on voudrait décrire comme l'euphorie amoureuse, la communion extatique, l'intuition mystique. Je ne peux aimer l'autre que dans la passion de cet aphorisme. Celui-ci n'advient pas, il ne survient pas comme le malheur, la malchance ou la négativité. Il a la forme de l'affirmation la plus aimante -il est la chance du désir.*

In his analysis of the originary supplement (the delay as origin) Derrida shows that the presence of an ultimate signified with no supplementary delay is impossible and remains an unattainable ideal. Moreover, the realization of such an ideal (a thinking without words, a body without supplementary signs, a presence without the mark of absence..) would mean -considered hypothetically- the death of all meaning. Yet such an ideal -which at the same time is no ideal at all- is unattainable not because our human resources fall short of the mark, but because it is intrinsically impossible. Nothing corresponds to this ideal. Derrida's <<philosophy>> of difference is not an unmasking of our desire. It does not tell us that desire, for its finitude, should liberate itself from the illusion of attaining the impossible since the impossible is really nothing (an unexisting shade, a Chinese shade), and that from now on we should content ourselves with mere *Ersatz*-objects (whatever these may be). Derrida does not replace an impossible ideal by another one. Neither does his philosophy have in view a Stoic attitude by which we could shield ourselves from the painful and dramatic loss of meaning so that the difference does not really concern us any more, that is to say, becomes in-different; it does not intend an attitude by which we could mask our impotence and failure. Desire

même je ne cherche pas à le supporter. On ne peut que s'essouffler à en avoir raison (d'où la raison, qui n'est rien d'autre, mais avec elle nous ne nous aimons pas)

⁵⁰ *L'aphorisme à contretemps*, p. 524.

⁵¹ Cf. *Ja, ou le faux-bond*

⁵² Cf. *La carte postale*, p. 34.

remains tied to this impossibility: *rapport sans rapport*. To be really concerned with the radical alterity of this impossibility means to abandon oneself to it, to surrender to it, to put oneself and the secret at stake. Even if it all comes to nothing. *We can only laugh about it, however painful loss may be*. This is the paradoxical interspace in which the Derridean play of difference *joue*. And to this risk of meaning loss we should respond with an *ungeheure unbegrenzte Ja*⁵³.

Da, da -in Russian, that is...

⁵³ Glas, p. 291b.

5./Psychoanalytic discourse

C'est la logique inimaginable, impensable même de ce pas au-delà qui m'intéresse. has always drawn Derrida's interest. In *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, a text which, like *De la grammatologie*, dates from 1966, Derrida describes, in the following rather general terms, the affinity (*Verwandschaft*) between Freud's *oeuvre* and the deconstruction of Western metaphysics: *Notre ambition est très limitée: reconnaître dans le texte de Freud quelques points de repère et isoler, au seuil d'une réflexion organisée, ce qui de la psychanalyse se laisse mal contenir dans la clôture logocentrique, telle qu'elle limite non seulement l'histoire de la philosophie mais le mouvement des <<sciences humaines>>, notamment d'une certaine linguistique¹.*

The Freudian unconscious cannot easily be encapsulated within a philosophy of presence²: *id* is neither something that could ever present 'itself' to consciousness, nor does it constitute a hidden or virtual presence which could be revealed through a patient labor of awakening. The unconscious is not an entity, not a deeper reality or being, but a radical alterity³, or

¹ *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 296.

² Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, p. 55: *Comme l'écriture [l'inconscient] est atopique, comme elle, il dérange l'économie domestique, met la maison sens dessus dessous. L'originalité de la psychanalyse n'est pas d'avoir inventé l'inconscient mais de l'avoir inséré partout et pourtant de ne l'avoir fait apparaître nulle part, en propre, en personne. Une telle notion, comme l'écriture, brise toute limite et toute marge, ébranle donc profondément la métaphysique.*

³ *La différence*, p. 21: *En ce sens, contrairement aux termes d'un vieux débat, fort de tous ses investissements métaphysiques qu'il a toujours engagés, l'<<inconscient>> n'est pas plus une <<chose>> qu'autre chose, pas plus une chose qu'une conscience virtuelle ou*

*différance*⁴. From within, consciousness is forced constantly to confront itself with an impossibility that resists all attempts at *Beherrschung*: time and time again the unconscious kicks over the traces of consciousness, imposing itself as an elusive trace⁵ in the track of certain symptoms.

Symptoms constitute material breaking points wherein consciousness is no longer able to present itself and to shield itself from the signifying activity of the unconscious. Yet symptoms are merely *Abkömmlinge*, that is, descendants, derivatives or *posteriors*, of the unconscious. The unconscious reveals itself in the paradoxical opening of delay, *l'après-coup*; it leaps away at the moment it manifests itself: *le retardement* [*Nachträglichkeit*; *l'après-coup*] is the basic structure of the unconscious⁶. In this sense the unconscious constitutes an originary past that has never been present - a past that can no longer be understood from an originary now-moment. It is always gone, revealing itself only *après-coup*, in and as trace⁷.

Difference, as the production of a spatial interval between distinct inscriptions, directly links up with Freud's metapsychology. From *Die*

masquée. Cette altérité radicale par rapport à tout mode possible de présence se marque en des effets irréductibles d'après-coup, de retardement.

⁴ *La différence*, p. 21; Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, p. 56.

⁵ *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 317: *Nous pensons ici [...] au travail itinérant de la trace, produisant et non parcourant sa route, de la trace qui trace, de la trace qui se fraye elle-même son chemin. La métaphore du chemin frayé, [...], communique toujours avec le thème du retardement supplémentaire et de la reconstitution du sens après-coup, après un cheminement de taupe, après le labeur souterrain d'une impression. Celle-ci a laissé une trace travailleuse qui n'a jamais été perçue [...].*

⁶ *La différence*, pp. 21-2; Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, pp. 60-1.

⁷ *La différence*, p. 22; *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, pp. 317-18, p. 324; Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, pp. 60-1; Emmanuel Levinas, *La trace de l'autre*, pp. 200-02.

Traumdeutung onwards Freud conceives of the psychic apparatus as an ingenious writing machine⁸ that is capable of retaining past traces while continuing to register ever new impressions⁹. Moreover, Freud manipulates a scriptural model for the unconscious [the dream as hieroglyphe, rebus; the unconscious as consisting of pictural object-representations]. The unconscious, in Derrida's reading of Freud, consists of a network of pictographic inscriptions that are not, however, the secondary precipitations of the spoken word, of more originary acoustical word-representations: the unconscious as *archi-écriture*¹⁰.

To the extent that the unconscious consists of material inscriptions, it can never be translated or deciphered exhaustively, that is, without loss. No doubt, Freud at several places affirms his belief in the generality and fixedness of some code for oniric writing. Does he not state that there exists a relation of translation (*Übersetzung*) and transcription (*Umschrift*) between, on the one hand, the manifest content of a dream and, on the other hand, the unconscious dream-thoughts¹¹. But from what Freud is able to do with a dream, as he interprets, it appears that no perfect decoding of a dream is possible, that there always remains an untranslatable supplementary remainder, the trace of which cannot be effaced or left *out of account*¹². So

⁸ As regards logocentrism and *machineries*, see *tympan*, pp. xxi-xxii; *le puits et la pyramide*, p. 126.

⁹ Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, pp. 62-3.

¹⁰ Sarah Kofman, *LSD*, p. 64; *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, pp. 312-14.

¹¹ S. Freud, *Le Moi et le Ça*, p. 615, as quoted in *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 313.

¹² What thus cannot, should not be left out of account is the unaccountable, what enters no accounts- the condition for the possibility of interpretation *and* its limit.

a tension seems to arise between what Freud *says* (*eine vollständige und gesicherte Übersetzung*) and what he *does* (leaving the remainder): what he *does* makes it impossible to conceive of the relation between the manifest and the latent text as a falsifying translation which would be returned or restored to its proper truth, through some analytical maieutics.

To translate, then, would be to drop the remainder -which precisely makes up the specificity of the dream: for the manifest content does not relate to unconscious thoughts as a deficient expression or an abridged representation of an unconscious content that would be constituted of itself and that could be represented literally; the unconscious is not the storage place of a literal signification that, once constituted, could then be expressed -after a deformed, deflected or disguised fashion- in a symptom¹³. Psychoanalysis does *not* search for a literal interpretation of symptoms: no proper interpretation of symptoms is possible. The unconscious reveals itself only in the originary *écart* of an originary deviation¹⁴. The unconscious is *text: déjà tissé de traces pures, de différences où s'unissent le sens et la force, texte nulle part présent, constitué d'archives qui sont toujours déjà des transcriptions. Des estampes originaires*¹⁵. The unconscious is already an unsurveyable web of inscriptions repeating other inscriptions: *Tout commence par la reproduction*¹⁶. The reproduction produces the meaning of the unconscious traces: *l'appel au supplément est*

¹³ *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, pp. 312-14; Sarah Kofman, *LsD*, pp. 63-4.

¹⁴ Cf. *la mythologie blanche*, p. 273.

¹⁵ *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 314.

¹⁶ *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 314; Sarah Kofman, *LsD*, p. 64.

*ici originaire et creuse ce qu'on reconstitue à retardement comme le présent*¹⁷.

Psychoanalytic labor does not aim at rendering the symptom superfluous by presenting the unconscious content in a nonfigural way to consciousness. For no literal signification could replace the symptom. Moreover, a symptom has no proper meaning: its signification is endlessly overdetermined. But *in* the symptom the affect-laden process of signification has come to rest, to a dead end. To put that process back in motion, that is what the psychoanalytic labor aims at: the symptom might lose its obsessive pressure, its stifling squeeze by being repeated in different contexts. Far from interpreting symptoms, in the sense of giving meaning to the apparently meaningless, the effect of analytic labor is ultimately one of ridicule: the symptom is dissolved for *rendered futile*.

Freud -together with Fr. Nietzsche and G. Bataille- is an important reference for understanding the economic structure of difference¹⁸. What is of particular interest in Freud is the interlacing of *Eros* and *Thanatos*.

Spéculer-sur <<Freud>> is Derrida's reading of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, a text that must be read or translated as *Pas au-delà du principe de plaisir*. Each step which Freud undertakes in pointing out 'something' that transcends or deregulates the pleasure principle is then, in a second move, reinterpreted as constituting a detour (*ein Umweg*¹⁹) in the service of the pleasure principle. Each step (*pas*) beyond hence constitutes *un ne pas au-*

¹⁷ *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 314.

¹⁸ *La différance*, pp. 13-20.

¹⁹ *La carte postale*, p. 304.

delà: Freud does not get any step further²⁰: no position can be pointed out that would be contrary to the pleasure principle, or that would be dialectically opposed to it. Freud's text is fundamentally *a-thetic*²¹. This failure or impossibility constitutes the basic structure of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. Yet this inability has a curious repercussion on the style, on the writing of this text. What Freud wants to, but cannot describe, accomplishes itself, behind his back, in his writing, there where neither Freud nor the pleasure principle would have expected it. The text itself takes the (impossible) form of a *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. What takes place as Freud writes *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* is, hence, an example of a *Jenseits* that cannot be mastered. Freud's text takes the form of the examples he puts forward and that should have put him on the track of a *Jenseits*; the text becomes *an example of an example*. And so the demoniacal character of Freud's text is itself the best example of the demoniacal efficacy of that 'something' which the text aims at mastering.

One of the best known access routes to get on the track of an impossible *Jenseits* is the *Fort/Da* game. Now, the text itself takes the structure of a *Fort/Da*. For instance, Nietzsche and philosophy time and time again crop up in Freud's argumentation, and are time and time again thrown away²².

Through this unexpected reading of Derrida we can get an idea of the originary interlacing of *Eros* and *Thanatos*: the death-drive is essentially not the dialectical antipole of *Eros*; *Thanatos* is, rather, an intrinsic possibility at work in *any* drive: *Mais par quel bout que l'on prenne cette*

²⁰ La carte postale, p. 357: *les pas au-delà du principe de plaisir, tous ces pas qui n'avancent pas.*

²¹ La carte postale, p. 279.

²² La carte postale, p. 323.

*structure à un-deux-trois termes [deux principes plus ou moins la différance, that is] , c'est la mort. Au bout, et cette mort n'est pas opposable, elle n'est pas différente, dans le sens de l'opposition, des deux principe et de leur différance. Elle est inscrite, quoique non inscriptible, dans le procès de cette structure [...] Si la mort n'est pas opposable, elle est, déjà, la vie la mort*²³.

The economic deregulation which the death drive causes can, hence, in no way be mastered or dominated. In that way Derrida can clarify the nondialectical, incalculable economic structure of *différance*.

The affinity with Freud does not reside in what Freud explicitly says in his metapsychology. On the contrary: Derrida reads, uses, abuses Freud against Freud, to the extent that Freud still allows for, if not promotes a dialectical interpretation of certain binary oppositions. The affinity may consist in what Freud does when he analyses symptoms.

Derrida shows how that which philosophy excludes, suppresses and represses, in order to safeguard the distinction between itself and other nonphilosophical practices of meaning (literature, rhetoric), to protect its ideal of pure rationality and of a perfect adequation between the order of expression and the order of the expressed, always returns *in* the writing itself of philosophy. This implies that, from within, this ideal is made impossible by writing and, hence, that the separation or distinction itself is *impure*²⁴. Through its own materiality which always returns within philosophy, the purely rational activity which philosophy aspires to be, becomes impossible.

²³ La carte postale, p. 305.

²⁴ Cf. *La loi du genre*, pp. 178-79.

Repression, according to Freud, can never be completely successful: that is precisely why repression is meaningful. Traces of the repressed mark the psychism, as symptoms. Symptoms are the traces of an unsuccessful repression. Derrida too searches for traces of an unsuccessful repression²⁵. The separation of -for instance- rhetoric and philosophy can only be successful (and meaningful) if it, simultaneously, fails. Since philosophy is not able to suppress its own material frame definitely, Derrida in turn is able to read a philosophical text as a symptom²⁶.

In this sense philosophy, from within, always enters into a relation with a material exteriority that transgresses the distinction between the inside and the outside. As writing, philosophy transgresses, in spite of itself, its own borders, and is put in touch with an exteriority that it cannot really control.

A text is always written with a double hand, whereby the one effaces what the other writes down and means, whereby the one appears as the inevitable slippage of what the other wants to say, takes back what the other throws away, keeps what the other forgets. A philosophical text is unrolled on a double scène, whereby that which is expelled from one scene returns on the other, through some backdoor. What is logically, grammatically composed on the one scene is decomposed on the other. As writing, philosophy is recorded on two registers, the one making impossible what the other -failing to appreciate this impossibility and constituted by this failure- wants to attain²⁷.

²⁵ Cf. *Freud et la scène de l'écriture*, p. 293.

²⁶ *Pos*, p. 15.

²⁷ *Pos*, p. 14; *Pos*, p. 56 note 4.

In writing it is inevitable that there appears, in the text, puns and metaphors, fortunate and unfortunate choices of word, badly chosen examples which the author afterwards declares he did not really want to introduce, unnecessary digressions, rhetorical changes in tempo, references that are made but not elaborated upon for so-called economic reasons, footnotes, semantic ramifications, details that leap to the eyes and kick over the traces... All these things are part of the external frame through which something can be said and within which a text can present itself as a self-contained unit, a rounded-off whole: the material frame that is external to the ideal of an internal, logically consistent exposition. Such exclusions, failures, condensations and shiftings are part of the ritual of a text -a ritual that draws a line which one should not transgress, and that links up with an exterior that eludes the internal logic. Derrida reads these phenomena as symptoms: they lie on the brink, on the border between the inside and the outside of a text. They round off a text; but they are also marginal indentations that put a text out of its logical joints. They are marginal notes and details which force open a text, and precisely there where it apparently manages to seclude itself. They institute the opposite of what a metaphysical text wants to achieve, namely: a perfect adequation between the order of the signifier and the order of the signified. They cause an irreducible and untranslatable imbalance between the two levels. The *exterior* of a text: there where a text no longer intends to, nor can say anything. The points where a link is made with the unthought and unsaid of a text. Although they are also *in* the text, they constitute an untranslatable surplus of inscriptions that cannot be paraphrased and recuperated in and by a literal, general, homogeneous interpretation. For all these futile, ludicrous details in the external frame, a text can never completely be substituted by, and dissolved in another text. This surplus which a text produces does not consist in an

abundance of signification that would lie *behind* the text, but in a network of irreplaceable material inscriptions. It is through these marginal notes that a text *continues* to signify. Remove the external frame -so as to establish a perfect adequation between the expression and the expressed-, and what one ends up with is a dead, insignificant fossil, about which nothing can be said. These symptoms are the last living witnesses of an irresolvable tension occurring between the inside and the outside (the unsaid, the unthought), that is: of the failed separation between the inside and the outside. It is through these edging notes that the outside -in its absence- remains at work, and keeps on signifying, appealing²⁸.

A literal interpretation would like to protect and overprotect a text against all possible misunderstandings and misuses, against all possible bordercrossings and superfluous details which *threaten* the pure internal logic of a philosophical text and put it at stake, *en jeu, en feu*. Through an exaggerated, or cramped, faithfulness to the text one would like to exclude all that through which the proper meaning of a text could be lost. A literal interpretation wants to realize the ideal of a philosophical text: throwing overboard all material details and everything that is part of the frame, retaining only the proper literal meaning. But the outcome of this operation would be, rather, that there remains nothing of the fascinating appeal of that text. Derrida, on the other hand, does not want to protect a text and render it invulnerable: he confronts a text in its weak moments -moments in which a text avows its inability and impossibility. A text only appeals in so far as it fails and is unable to realize its own ideal. A text *donne à penser* in its *impouvoir*. In his commentary on Rousseau, in *De la grammatologie*, Derrida writes that the double scene of a text consists in -among other

²⁸ Cf. G, p. 441.

things- the distinction between, on the one hand, that which an author wishes, says, explains, declares and wants to achieve and, on the other hand, what he accomplishes as he writes²⁹. What Rousseau wants, is the originary origin, pure presence, the pure voice, pleasure itself, *la vie moins la mort*. But what he describes is the lethal supplement, the loss of the origin, the impossible presence, *la vie la mort*. Now Derrida does not resolve the tension between those two texts -the doubling or repetition of a text within a text: for the text in the text is not the bearer of the truth, the *as yet hidden* literal meaning of the first text. The text in the text institutes, rather, the definitive impossibility of the other -an impossibility which the manifest text attempts to hide as much as possible. On the other hand, Derrida does not want to unmask Rousseau's impossible desire either. He rewrites and repeats Rousseau's text and desire in a syntax, in a textual movement without beginning nor end, and it is in this way that Rousseau's textual desire is *overflowed* by its own impossibility. The desire for the origin and ultimate fulfilment is meaningful *only* against the background of an irresolvable impossibility. The double bottom of a text is rewritten in a textual movement without ground, *sans fond, sans origine* : *Parler d'origine et de degré zéro commente en effet l'intention déclarée de Rousseau [...] Mais en dépit de cette intention déclarée, le discours de Rousseau se laisse contraindre par une complexité qui a toujours la forme du supplément d'origine. Son intention déclarée n'est pas annulée mais inscrite dans un système qu'elle domine plus. Le désir de l'origine devient une fonction indispensable et indestructible mais située dans une syntaxe sans origine*³⁰.

²⁹ G, pp. 325-26; pp. 441-42.

³⁰ G, p. 345

Derrida plays with philosophy; he engages himself, putting himself and philosophy at stake -because he loves philosophy. He cannot desist from responding to an appeal -<<viens, oui>>, <<le désir de rouler vers la mer>>³¹- to which he has no real response. He goes along, not knowing where he will end up³²-he has accepted. He loves the texts which he reads, tries to understand and, indeed, tries to master³³. In this way he relates himself -*rapport sans rapport*³⁴- to the ineffable (what cannot really, not literally be said), the unthought of a text: to that which *in* a text *donne à penser*, and which the text cannot dominate; that which is absent, and must remain absent in a text³⁵. Only a number of symptoms of this absence are left in the text. To try and think through what a text attempts to grasp means to dwell in, and to concern oneself with, that which inevitably eludes the potency or ability of that text. To write means to engrave in the margin(s) of that text, in those spots where the text does not and cannot mean to say anything any more. Really to relate oneself to the unthought does not mean to withdraw oneself timorously, lowly, respectfully before that impossibility and that secret which the text refuses to give away. To relate oneself to the unthought means to challenge the text, to do violence to it, to force and coerce it, to use and abuse it, making it say what it cannot say; to tie a text from within to its own inability, *impouvoir*. And then to release the text, stained and tarnished, to let it loose again, to return it to itself. Were that tie

³¹ *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 112; cf. Fr. Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe*, section 423, *Im grossem Schweigen*.

³² Cf. *Entre crochets*, p. 109.

³³ *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 112.

³⁴ *Entre crochets*, p. 106.

³⁵ *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 99.

with the impossible to disappear, then a text would become insignificant, unappealing, uninteresting: indifferent³⁶. One really relates oneself to the signifying strength of a text only at the moment that one experiences one's inability to make the text say what it cannot say, the moment one can no longer follow and control the text: <<J'ai peur>>: *ce n'est jamais tout à fait moi, ni la peur la mienne. Ce sont aussi des fonctions dans le texte, dans la logique de la scène qui s'y joue. Peur parce que sans cesse le cheval que j'enfourche, le texte, la force textuelle sur laquelle je monte doit être plus forte que moi, ne pas se laisser dominer, dompter, maîtriser par le mors qu'elle a ou que je lui mets ou que je lui prends dans la bouche. Sans quoi, aucun intérêt. J'ai peur parce que ça me regarde, parce que l'autre chose me regarde faire et m'entraîne au moment même où je multiplie les gestes de maîtrise. [...] Ne pas le brider: j'ai déjà dit pourquoi (forme et sens) brider s'imposait et de ne pas brider. C'est qu'aussi, au moment où je lis et travaille tel ou tel texte de Genet, il est tout à fait ailleurs, loin de ces textes-ci, loin de la littérature, etc., me fait faux-bond, et que j'aime ça, l'admire et m'en réjouis. J'essaie aussi de faire la même chose*³⁷.

Yes, *le plus grand amour...*

³⁶ *Entre crochet*, pp. 108-09; *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 113.

³⁷ *Ja, ou le faux-bond*, p. 112-13; Moira Gatens drew my attention to the following section in S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p. 25: *The functional importance of the ego is manifested in the fact that normally control over the approaches to motility devolves upon it. Thus in relation to the id it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own.*

6./The line which philosophy

Vielmehr ist das Charakteristische der rituellen Handlung gar keine Ansicht, Meinung, ob sie nun richtig oder falsch ist, obgleich eine Meinung -ein Glaube- selbst auch rituell sein kan, zum Ritus gehören kann.

L. Wittgenstein

wants to draw, and to safeguard, between itself and other nonphilosophical practices of meaning, is based -among other things- on a number of hierarchically structured and axiologically tainted oppositions. If one is to

repeat this conceptual framework, and to rewrite

it in a text or movement *without ultimate ground*, then one will have to be careful that the 'concepts' with which deconstruction operates are not lapped up and neutralized by the logic of *das Begriff*. Moreover, one will have to take care that these unmasterable concepts do not remain *external* to the text that is rewritten, but instead are brought to the fore *within* the text itself: an exteriority *within* the text¹. Deconstruction must hence accomplish a double gesture²: *primo*, it must risk an *ex abrupto changement de terrain* and force a brutal outbreak; time and time again it must affirm and mark the break with, and difference from metaphysics. *Secundo*, it must repeat the unthought within the material of a text -the unthought, which is to say: that which can no longer be thought and dominated within the conceptual network of a text.

If one is to penetrate and intervene effectively within the grounding structure of metaphysics, then one should not just neutralize one's basic concepts by writing a protest letter in the form of a 'neither..nor..'³. In so

¹ Cf. R. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, p. 163: *deconstruction must be intrinsic; it must remain within the texts or discourses under examination.*

² *les fins de l'homme*, pp. 162-63.

³ *Pos*, p. 57.

doing one still leaves a text untouched and assumes that better concepts might be possible to articulate the originary and ultimate sense of *Being*. Deconstruction does not just cross a border so as to *definitively* leave behind itself what it has supposedly gone beyond without ever looking backwards. The less one touches metaphysics, leaving it untouched and putting it at a distance, the greater its silent strength⁴. One should not neutralize oppositions but violently reverse their logical, axiological and ontological hierarchy, thus letting the conflict burst out in all its vehemence and intensity. Still one should not settle for reversal only since by merely reversing oppositions one retains them⁵. Rather, one should simultaneously mark the rupture which accomplishes itself in that reversal and in so doing clear room for the outbreak of a new 'concept' that can no longer be thought *within* the traditional categorial schemata. *Par analogie* (Je le souligne),⁶ Derrida calls these new 'concepts' the non-localisable undecidable concepts: *les indécidables*. An example.

<p>Metaphysics institutes a distinction between a literal, proper discourse which approximates presence as nearly as possible, and a figural, improper discourse which deliberately deviates from that ideal. It</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>, IV, 2, 1003, 33ff: <i>We speak of being in many senses but always with a view to one sense and to one nature. Not in the way we use identical expressions but in the way everything healthy is related to health, inasmuch as it preserves or restores health or is a sign of health. [...] In precisely this way we speak of being in many senses but always with a view to one dominant sense. [...] And just as there is one science of the healthy so it is in all such cases. [...] Obviously therefore it is proper for one science to study being insofar as it is being.</i></p>
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⁴ Pos, p. 60; cf. *de l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale*, p. 369-70: *le réveil as une ruse du rêve*.

⁵ Pos, p. 57.

⁶ Pos, p. 58.

does so, and has to do so in the name precisely of the *proper sense of Being* which, as *logos*, metaphysics aspires to articulate, *aussagen*. The problem of metaphor arises from the positing of an ultimate or originary sense of *Being* -a positing that is informative of ontology. The concept of 'metaphor' is an elaboration *within* a metaphysical frame of thinking⁷. There is a primordial *sense of Being* in itself which can then be represented either properly or improperly. However, since improper talk is secondary it, in principle, can be translated into proper terms. The difference between proper and improper discourse could hence be dominated by and within the conceptual frame of metaphysics. In *la mythologie blanche* Derrida has shown how it is that metaphysics can never become an adequate metaphorology. Schematically the argument can be reproduced as follows:

⁷ M. Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 89: *Das Metaphorische gibt es nur innerhalb der Metaphysik*. Many people would qualify the style which *das andere Denken* requires as -precisely- metaphorical -, a qualification which Heidegger would reject. *Das andere Denken* is a thinking that withdraws itself from the metaphorical as the latter belongs to an *epoche* from which *das Sein* has withdrawn, to be present only as a *Seiendes*, for instance as *eidos*. Derrida, in *Le retrait de la métaphore*, has tried to show how any thinking that attempts at completely effacing the metaphorical in itself will in fact be a thinking that keeps on introducing the metaphorical in itself. The effacement of metaphor is at the same time a return, drawing the trace of a new metaphor. The law of supplementarity, which Derrida had already verified with regard to metaphor in *la mythologie blanche*, hence still holds for *das andere Denken* which attempts at radically effacing the metaphorical: *in* the effacement a new metaphor is traced. Metaphoricity is the yield precisely of a thinking that destroys metaphysics by thinking its *Wesen*. This is perhaps why Derrida would not argue in favor of a *Destruktion* of the history of ontology, as Heidegger had called for in *Sein und Zeit* (p. 39), but for a deconstruction: and never underestimate the return of metaphor and metaphysics.

-primo: the concepts with the help of which metaphysics attempts to dominate the metaphorical production of meaning are precisely those that have called into existence -so to speak- the concept of metaphor;

-secundo: there will always exist one metaphor that eludes the grip of that conceptual apparatus namely the metaphor of metaphor;

-tertio: the metaphorical production of meaning can never be dominated since any so-called literal interpretation is in turn overdetermined by the metaphor⁸. The semantic slit which metaphor produces can never be stopped up by the identity of a homogeneous interpretation of meaning. *The slit carries on endlessly: le champs n'est jamais saturé*⁹;

-quatro : metaphysics cannot keep metaphor at a safe distance from itself since its own discourse is the sediment of solidified metaphors. Metaphysics cannot dominate the effects of the concept that it produces. In this way metaphysics is faced with its own impossibility.

Metaphor is a possibility that is equiprimordial with the ideal of a literal signification. Moreover, it is a possibility that cannot really be dominated by literal discourse. Literal discourse is brought about through precisely the exclusion and suppression of the heterogeneous production of meaning of the metaphor: *La métaphysique -relève de la métaphore*¹⁰. The metaphorical time and time again returns, there where one would no longer expect it.

⁸ *la mythologie blanche*, p. 291/243-44e: *déterminée sans fonds*.

⁹ *la mythologie blanche*, p. 262.

¹⁰ *la mythologie blanche*, p. 308.

What is paradoxical in Derrida's analysis is that any analysis of metaphor can bring to the surface the problematic character of the conceptual frame of which metaphor itself is an effect. Metaphor is, in this sense, the symptom of the impossibility of a literal discourse on the *proper sense of Being*, or ontology¹¹.

Now, the outcome of Derrida's deconstruction is *not* that the distinction between the metaphorical and the nonmetaphorical is destroyed or becomes indifferent¹². Derrida *does not say* that everything is just metaphorical, and with good reason¹³. Deconstruction does *not* boil down to a regress into indifference. What Derrida shows is *that the distinction has no firm footing*¹⁴; that it can no longer be supported by or grounded in the priority of one of the two terms, or more particularly in the identity of a self sufficient literal sense that can then be expressed either directly or figuratively¹⁵. The distinction is now repeated and inscribed in and as a difference without origin and end term. It is in this way that in deconstruction something like the paradoxical concept of an originary deviation, of an *écart sans origine*¹⁶ can be set free. It is not a *proper meaning in itself* that corresponds to literal discourse -but the gaping absence of any such originary or ultimate meaning: each literal meaning is itself already a deviation, a deviation of a deviation, or a supplementary

¹¹ Cf. R. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, pp. 307-08.

¹² Cf. R. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, pp. 308-10.

¹³ *la mythologie blanche*, pp. 254-57.

¹⁴ Cf. *la mythologie blanche*, p. 273.

¹⁵ *la mythologie blanche*, p. 323.

¹⁶ *la mythologie blanche*, p. 256.

deviation. What supports the production of meaning is a difference *without ground*. And this difference (*la différance*) is a 'concept' that cannot be thought by a metaphysics of presence¹⁷.

The supplement too -the originary supplement and the supplement as origin- has the structure of an undecidable concept. It is never inside nor outside, and is at the same time inside and outside; neither a plus nor a minus and both surplus and lack. In this sense the supplement is an undecidable concept that cannot be integrated within the system. As an undecidable, the supplement has no proper place in the system: it signals the impossibility of any definitive separation between the inside and the outside. The supplement is an inscription slitting the text as the latter secludes itself. The impossible border between an inside and an outside inscribes itself *within* metaphysics, that is to say: within metaphysics as *text*. The undecidable concept is hence not a *versöhnende* middle term. Moreover, the undecidable concept also has a circular structure. The supplement, for instance, is both an example of an undecidable concept and the name of the undecidable concept: the undecidable concept is itself a supplement *vis-à-vis* a traditional text. The *pharmakon* too is both an example and the name of the undecidable. Finally, undecidable concepts are not universal concepts: in keeping with the particular text another undecidable space is to be torn open.

Because of the outbreak of an undecidable concept, a text time and time again may be reread and rewritten as a text that can never really dominate itself. The undecidable concepts cause a permanent imbalance between the order of the signifier and the order of the signified.

¹⁷ Pos, p. 58.

As a reflexion on itself philosophy must think its own limit and limitation. For it is only through making this reflexive move that philosophy can ever hope to completely dominate its own activity, and to keep it within rigidly determined limits. In the name of its ideal -that is to say: *as* the place-keeping representative of universal truth, true reality, the ultimate signified, absolute rationality and the perfect adequation between the expression and the expressed- philosophy aims at a clear separation between itself and other nonphilosophical practices of signification. This distinction is grounded in a transcendental signified that is meaningful in and of itself, that is to say: independently of any external and supplementary frame. In order to safeguard and protect its ideal, philosophy insists on a clear separation. It is therefore crucial that this distinction is explained and justified on the basis of essential intrinsic criteria, that is to say: criteria that carry their own justification in themselves. All practices of signification that do not conform to this ideal or these criteria must be kept at a distance; whatever might put that limitation at stake, *en jeu*, must be put *hors jeu*, out of it -, must be warded off. One would like a clear distinction to be installed [sic] between philosophy proper and an improper decoction, between good and bad philosophy, between philosophy and literature, between philosophy and rhetoric. Now what Derrida allows us to note is that -as it comes to delimit a philosophical text and a philosophical *oeuvre*- one must in fact appeal to *extrinsic* criteria, that is to say: criteria that are part of the materiality, the margin(s), the ritual of the external frame, and that *as such*, have nothing whatsoever to do with the very reason why philosophy attaches such importance to the distinction. Although these criteria are necessary, they are accidental and arbitrary too! They are arbitrary *in the light of* the ideal of philosophy: they do not explain *why* it is that so much seems to be at stake as philosophy wants to defend that distinction. And

precisely because this distinction -in the name of a transcendental signified- also depends on the practice and ritual of the extrinsic frame, it threatens to become a little futile and ridiculous, which is to say: to lose its meaning.

D. Giovannangeli, *La question de la littérature*, p. 81: *Peut-on concevoir une philosophie ou une science, qui, en tant que telle, préserve la différence dans son étrangeté, sans la subordonner à l'identité? Quand Hegel, par exemple, opère le passage à la différence essentielle -intrinsèque et non plus extérieure-, il conclut que la différence <<est ainsi opposition>>. Dans cette réduction de la différence, la diversité fait place à la dualité, où chaque terme s'oppose à son autre (non à l'autre en général).*

Take the demarcation of a philosophical text. What could be, in this connection, the *intrinsic* criterium on account of which Hegel would be a *real* philosopher, Nietzsche would be *out* of the game, and Heidegger say somewhere in between, at times *in*, at times *out*. *Gesetzt*: to clear the field one appeals to the *internal logical consistency* of a philosophical exposition. But then: will one *a priori* label all those texts that are not logically consistent with the epitaph 'non-philosophical'? This seems hard to maintain. And what about the texts by one author that are internally contradictory and cannot be reconciled with one another? Shall one banish those texts from philosophy? And what about the nonphilosophical references, the poetic

turns of phrases, the badly chosen examples -in

M. Foucault, *What is an Author?*, pp. 103-04: *When undertaking the publication of Nietzsche's work, for example, where should one stop? Surely everything must be published, but what is <<everything>>? [...] The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a laundry list: Is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum.*

short: all the unintegratable nicks and notches in the margin(s) of a text?

And what about a detached sentence like Nietzsche's "*ich habe meinen Regenschirm vergessen*"¹⁸.

Should this sentence be considered to be part of Nietzsche's philosophical *oeuvre*? What could or

¹⁸ *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1880-1882*, Bd. 9,

would prevent the principle of iterability, which is inherent to a text as text, from using this sentence in a philosophical argument? Is there something like a proper context for such a sentence? In other words: does philosophy have a proper context, a proper place and a rigorously determined frame?

Perhaps, in an attempt generally to delimitate the different, internally conflicting texts of an author or the texts in the history of philosophy, one

P. de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, pp. 9-10: *But suppose that it is a de-bunker rather than a "Bunker", and a de-bunker of the arche (or origin), an archie De-bunker such as Nietzsche or Jacques Derrida for instance, who asks the question "What is the difference" -and we cannot even tell from his grammar whether he "really" wants to know "what" difference is or is just telling us that we shouldn't even try to find out. Confronted with the question of the difference between grammar and rhetoric, grammar allows us to ask the question, but the sentence by means of which we ask it may deny the very possibility of asking. For what is the use of asking, I ask, when we cannot even authoritatively decide whether a question asks or doesn't ask?*

will appeal to something like the proper

J. Culler, *On Deconstruction*, pp. 127-28: *My intention is the sum of further explanations I might give when questioned on any point and is thus less an origin than a product, less a delimited content than an open set of discursive possibilities linked to the consequences of iterable acts and to contexts that pose particular questions about those acts.*

are we supposed to get on the track of such a unique intention? What if it appears that this intention changes and shifts?

Perhaps that one will go for something like an ultimate and basic intuition, which could be grasped in and of itself, apart from any

supplementary exposition. But what, *alors*, if

that intuition appears to crumble away, in an

unsurveyable network of texts? What

it- about those texts that parody the philosophical

formulas that are *supposed* to bear witness of an

honest, *real* interest in truth?

If Hegel is quoted -is that still Hegel or *already* a

Cf. Nietzsche's use of the word *folglich*, *Werke. Dritter Band*, p. 844: *Es gibt vielerlei Augen. Auch die Sphinx hat Augen: und folglich gibt es vielerlei >>Wahrheiten<<, und folglich gibt es keine Wahrheit.*

caricature, a parody?

Perhaps one could say that all that which is part of the external frame is *totally unimportant and superfluous*: the only thing that matters is what is expressed through it, apart from any

supplementary enframing. Yet the question <<vérités>> *ne serait qu'une surface, elle ne deviendrait vérité profonde, crue, désirable que par l'effet d'un voile: qui tombe sur elle.* then is whether such a literal, naked signification would still be able to appeal and not,

rather, lose its appealing or signifying strength

Fr. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe*, section 4: *Wir glauben nicht mehr daran, dass Wahrheit noch Wahrheit bleibt, wenn man ihr die Schleier abzieht.* and become insignificant, making no difference at all. Supposing, however, that the naked does not lose its pertinence

-why is it, then, that time and time again we have to revisit the text and *read it to the letter*, which is to say: to direct our attention precisely to all sorts of details and supplementary inscriptions *that cannot be translated or integrated in a general signification, an ordinary intention or ultimate intuition?* And if a text *as such* were indeed but a superfluous cloth -why is it, then, that *no one* is willing to replace a text by Hegel with a commentary that explains better and more clearly what Hegel himself once wanted to say? Is it that important, then, that a text bears Hegel's signature?

When it comes to demarcating a philosophical *oeuvre* one inevitably has to fall back upon *extrinsic* criteria. A text is part of the philosophical *oeuvre* of an author on the ground of the signature it bears, that is to say: on the basis of a causal connection with his or her handwriting. Data and biographical details too are important when it comes to ascribe a text to a

J. Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p. 194: *(To sign something is to attempt to detach it from a context and by so doing to give it a unity. The signature has [...] the structure of a parergon, neither wholly inside nor outside the work.)*

philosophical author¹⁹. Yet the contingency of the data and the materiality of the signature are criteria that, *as such*, do not have anything whatsoever to do with the reason *why* we attach so much importance to the distinction. A text can be part of philosophy on account of particular words, phrases and a style of writing. Needless to say, this may be dependent on the institution in which texts are read²⁰: for much of what is regarded as philosophy proper at the Sorbonne is disregarded as (bad, of course) literature in Oxford. That a text is recognizable philosophically is always in part determined by the ritual of writing which is arbitrary in respect to the ideal to which philosophy would like to conform. The outcome is that the very distinction always already bears the traces of an arbitrariness and contingency that resists interiorization: the distinction becomes fragile and vulnerable. And that is why *überhaupt* we can be attached to it.

Derrida's deconstruction is not a destruction. He does not destroy the distinction between philosophy and nonphilosophical discourse. Derrida *does not say* that the distinction makes no sense, and he *does not deny* that there are criteria for making the distinction. But these criteria remain arbitrary and are not themselves completely transparent and rational; they are part of the external frame, of the ritual of philosophy. Derrida respects the distinction and loves the distinction. He treats the philosophical institution, the text with its signature, its biographical and bibliographical indentations, with an enormous respect, modesty and diffidence. *Each*

¹⁹ Cf. for instance the debate as to whether the middledutch copy of *De Imitatione Christi* was written before or after the 'original' (Thomas A Kempis) started circulating; see the *Inleiding* to *De Middelnederlandse Vertaling van De Imitatione Christi (Qui sequitur)* van Thomas A Kempis.

²⁰ Imagine my surprise as I found out that Jean Baudrillard's *America* was stored in the Travel section of the bookshop on campus!

*reading involves the required reserve and scrupulous questioning: what is his place and where is the peculiar place of philosophy? He loves the distinction, and that is why he submits himself to the ritual of philosophy. He loves the philosophical frame. But he loves it as one can only and truly love a ritual, that is to say: no longer in the name of an ultimate truth. One does not love a ritual because it is the expression of something else. The meaning of a ritual cannot be traced back to something that lies outside or behind the ritual*²¹. There is no transcendental signified that could stop the repetition of the ritual from ever losing its meaning. The ritual signifies a break with the ordinary profane frame of the everyday. It institutes a distinction with an absence that could not possibly enter into presence. At the same time the ritual transgresses the very distinction that it institutes. Derrida submits himself to the ritual of a philosophical text, out of respect for the institution. Nowhere is philosophy so vulnerable and *hence* so fascinating as in its external frame. Through that frame *le sublime et le ridicule*, the cosmic and the comic, the philosophical and the literary, philosophy proper and improper decoction are *always already* intimately related. The very distinction is *impure*. Philosophy, as a ritual, transgresses of itself its own borders. But then, *that* is why philosophy can remain meaningful or lose its meaning. Derrida challenges the frame of philosophy for love of philosophy, for love of the ritual of philosophy.

²¹ Cf. R. Scruton, *Emotion and Common culture*; H. de Montherlant, *La fête à l'écart*.

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