

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БАЊОЈ ЛУЦИ
ФИЛОЛОШКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

ФИЛОЛОГ

ЧАСОПИС ЗА ЈЕЗИК, КЊИЖЕВНОСТ И КУЛТУРУ



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DECONSTRUCTION, LOGIC, AND 'ORDINARY LANGUAGE': DERRIDA ON THE LIMITS OF THOUGHT

Abstract: *This essay argues – contra received opinion amongst disciples and detractors alike – that Derrida's work is centrally concerned with issues in philosophy of logic and language that have been a main focus of interest for philosophers in the 'other', i.e., analytic or mainstream Anglophone tradition. Moreover, it engages them in such a way as inescapably to raise further issues of an epistemological and ontological character that are also very active topics of debate on the analytic side. They include the ongoing dispute between realists and anti-realists with respect to the question whether truth can properly or intelligibly be conceived as transcending the limits of available evidence, present-best knowledge, or attainable proof. My essay sets out the opposing arguments and then makes the case – again strongly counter to the standard view of his work – that Derrida espouses a realist position not only in logico-semantic terms (the terms on which this discussion is most often conducted nowadays) but also as a matter of ontological commitment.*

Indeed, if this were not the case, then there could be no justification for the claim – implicit throughout his work – that a deconstructive reading can discover (rather than project or invent) hitherto unrecognised complexities of sense and logic. These in turn serve to indicate hitherto unrecognised problems or shortfalls in the current state of knowledge concerning one or other of those numerous topic-areas that Derrida addresses by way of such a reading. Hence his insistence, as against the routine charge, that he is not for one moment rejecting or ignoring the referential component of language but rather pointing up the kinds of complication – the uncertainties of scope or instances of contextual under- or over-determination – which tend to escape notice on other, more simplified or doctrinaire accounts. My essay thus seeks to re-situate Derrida's work with regard to some of the most prominent debates within present-day analytic philosophy.

Key words: *epistemological, ontological, deconstruction, realists, anti-realists, logic, knowledge.*

I

Over the past few years I have written a number of books and essays arguing the case for Derrida as a realist in matters epistemological and a stickler for the requirements of classical (bivalent) logic despite his frequent – almost trademark – aptitude for showing how that twin commitment comes up against its limit in various specific contexts.¹ If this has been decidedly

uphill work then the gradient has been set more by the weight of received opinion concerning his work, amongst disciples and detractors alike, than by anything about that work that bears the stamp of anti-realism or a lack of concern (let alone a quarrel) with standards of truth and falsehood classically conceived. Indeed – so I have argued – were it not for his honoring these commitments in practice well as in his various statements of principle then

deconstruction could not make good its claim to demonstrate the moments of aporia induced by a classical-realist philosophy of language, logic, and representation when confronted with certain problematic passages in certain philosophical and other kinds of text. That is to say, those aporias can only show up against a default presumption that language does (normally) fulfill its expressive and communicative role in a jointly referential, truth-functional, and hence for the most part knowledge-conducive way.

Thus it is a precondition for Derrida's meticulous tracings-out of the deviant logics of supplementarity, *différance*, paragonality, and so forth, that they register primarily by contrast with – or as deviating from – those same referential and logical norms that alone provide the necessary backdrop to a deconstructive reading.² Nor is this, as opponents like Searle would have it, just another clear sign that Derrida is out to subvert every standard of serious, reputable philosophic thought by affecting to turn on their heads a whole bunch of self-evident normative distinctions (literal vs figural sense, concept vs metaphor, 'serious' vs 'non-serious' discourse, sincere or genuine speech-acts vs those cited, spoken in jest, uttered out of context, etc.) whilst surreptitiously taking for granted the necessity of making those distinctions and their normative force.³ On the contrary: what Derrida brings out to remarkable effect is the way that the exception neither proves nor disproves the rule but shows up with sufficient regularity and rule-questioning or rule-complicating force as to require a careful reconsideration of how we should think about particular rule-governed (e.g., referential or logical) modes of discourse and representation. Like Austin and Ryle – the two 'analytic' philosophers with whom he evinced the greatest degree of intellectual as well as temperamental sympathy – Derrida takes it that supposedly marginal cases (whether speech-acts

or passages in texts) might turn out upon closer inspection, and when viewed without the customary kinds of prejudice, to have a far from marginal and perhaps philosophically crucial significance.⁴ Hence his affinity with those two doyens of the post-war Oxford scene: through a shared idea that analysis may have its most rewarding work cut out in beating the bounds of intelligibility, or in trying to show just why – by what seemingly perverse but far from idle or trivial compulsion – philosophy is so often driven to query its own more settled or routine habits of thought.⁵

Where Derrida differs from them is in his always, rather than occasionally, allowing for the extent to which so-called 'ordinary language' may exhibit quite extraordinary powers of inventiveness, creativity, or resistance to treatment in a systematizing manner. This goes a long way toward explaining his *Ausseinandersetzung* with Searle and also his sense of a genuine, even in some ways a deep but all the same distinctly qualified kinship with Austin and Ryle.⁶ Most significant here – and what explains this complex interplay of kinship and difference – is Derrida's rare ability to combine passages of analysis that display the utmost degree of formal, conceptual and logical precision with passages of textual exegesis that exhibit the utmost acuity in matters of linguistic implication and nuance. Thus Searle got the picture exactly upside-down when he charged Derrida with invoking rigorous criteria of bivalent logic merely in order to show how 'ordinary language' (and 'ordinary language philosophy') failed to meet such wholly inappropriate since non-context-sensitive standards of performative warrant or 'felicity'. So it was – again according to Searle – that Derrida could claim the liberty to play fast and loose with Austinian distinctions such as those between constative and performative speech-acts, sincere and insincere professions of intent, or good-faith

performatives uttered in the appropriate (uptake-conducive) kinds of circumstance and those uttered in various sorts of non-standard and hence invalidating context. Yet it would take a fairly cloth-eared or linguistically unresponsive collocutor either to deny the force of those examples that Derrida adduces in support of his case or else to disregard his further point about the vocabulary of speech-act theory itself. For that lexicon includes a number of crucial terms – among them ‘performative’ and ‘speech-act’ – that partake of a curious ambivalence between actually ‘doing’ and rehearsing, citing, mimicking, feigning, or more-or-less ‘sincerely’ imitating things (deeds) with words.⁷

Nor is this, as critics like Searle would have it, just the sort of muddle that is sure to result if one mixes a strain of ethical nihilism (‘promises have no binding force’) with a likewise far-gone strain of epistemological and logico-linguistic relativist doctrine. For it is just Derrida’s point, here as elsewhere, that we shall make no progress in the attempt to think through the classical antinomies of free-will and determinism or – what might be deemed another formulation of the same basic problem – moral autonomy and moral obligation unless and until we take adequate account of the aporias that tend to arise with particular force in the context of Austinian speech-act theory.⁸ Moreover, if those problems are going to receive anything like an adequate treatment then they will need to be approached on some basis other than the strict demarcation between natural-language utterance and formal (speech-act theoretical) discourse that passes pretty much without question on Searle’s account. All of which compounds the irony when Searle makes that point about Derrida’s having revealed his proclivity for playing frivolous games at the expense of serious (reputable) philosophic argument by dragging in examples of deviant, fictive, contextually inept, ‘parasitical’, ‘etiolated’,

or otherwise sub-standard speech-acts by way of support for his deconstructive project. Where Searle’s assumptions most conspicuously come to grief – most clearly run up against the line of counter-argument suggested by his and Austin’s working terminology as well as by their choice of examples – is through the constant tendency of language to ‘go on holiday’, as Wittgenstein put it, or to throw up the kinds of anomalous or deviant case that resist the best efforts of categorization by tidy-minded speech-act theorists. In this respect Austin is much closer to Derrida than to Searle since he not only makes allowance for that element of unruliness in language – his own language included – but seems to take pleasure in its power to unsettle the best-laid plans of those, like himself, who also have a taste for taxonomies.

Thus it is a fair (if not quite a safe) bet that Austin would have found himself more in tune with Derrida’s theoretically-informed but far from system-bound approach to topics in philosophy of language than with Searle’s resolute efforts to keep the vagaries of performative utterance from working their mischief on the constative discourse of a well-regulated speech-act theory. Still I should not wish to exaggerate the depth of this kinship or the likelihood that, had Austin not died so young, there might have developed an *entente cordiale* rather than the current almost routine state of hostilities between analytic philosophy and everything ‘French’, or anything coming out of France that doesn’t make a point of disowning that stereotyped label. In Austin there is still a certain conflict of allegiance between his outlook of principled and no doubt genuine respect for the claims of everyday usage or commonsense wisdom and the way that those claims – and the verbal usages wherein they find their most natural expression – tend to come under strain when subject to the pressures of conceptual analysis.

The former leaning is most apparent in that well-known passage from his essay 'A Plea for Excuses' where he writes that 'our common stock of words embodies connections and distinctions [that are] likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you and I are likely to think up in our armchairs of an afternoon – the most favoured alternative method'.⁹ The latter inclination comes out in a previous passage from the same essay where Austin seems to take a far more instrumentalist view of language and one that would seem to have more in common with the other, *echt*-analytic line of descent from logic-first or language-reformist types like Frege and Russell. Thus:

words are our tools, and, as a minimum, we should use clean tools: we should know what we mean and what we do not, and we must forearm ourselves against the traps that language sets us. Secondly, words are not (except in their own little corner) facts or things: we need therefore to prise them off the world, to hold them apart from and against it, so that we can realize their inadequacies and arbitrariness, and can relook at the world without blinkers.¹⁰

Austin appears either not to have noticed this conflict of aims or to have thought it quite possible to switch perspectives as and when required without compromise to either. However there is a real problem here for anyone, like Searle, who wants to tidy up Austin's loose ends and put speech-act theory on a systematic footing while none the less professing a due respect for the authority of 'ordinary language'.

As concerns Ryle, the equivalent tension is that which will strike any reader of *The Concept of Mind* who notes its rhetoric of commonsense, person-in-the-street appeal – most of all when it pillories philosophers from Descartes down for endorsing that absurd idea of the mind as an immaterial 'ghost in the machine' – while itself

promoting a massive, philosophically-inspired revision of what, for better or worse, is just the kind of moderate dualist outlook that most non-philosophers take pretty much for granted.¹¹ Of course this is not to say that they (the persons-in-the-street) are right in so believing and that philosophers should put aside their copies of Ryle – along with their copies of Wittgenstein and numerous other subscribers to the nowadays standard anti-dualist line – and revert *en masse* to Cartesian ways of thought. Rather it is to say that Ryle, like Austin, is caught up in that same tension between a will to analyze, criticize, or correct the deliverances of ordinary language or commonsense doxa and a belief that, since philosophy has got us (philosophers) into this mess, we had better look outside the seminar-room for alternative, better sources of guidance. Nor is that problem by any means confined to the discourse of 'ordinary language' philosophy or the sorts of issue that typically arise when philosophers bring their specialist interests to bear on non-specialist topics or modes of expression. In fact, as Richard Rorty remarked in his Foreword to a 1967 anthology of essays, it marks the fault-line that has run through successive phases of the broadly 'analytic' enterprise and which separates logicists and language-reformers on the one side from appealers to the bed-rock of commonplace usage on the other.¹²

Still one may accept Rorty's diagnosis of this dilemma at the heart of analytic philosophy as practiced then and since without for one moment endorsing the solution that he first sketched out in that Foreword and went on to elaborate in various writings over the next four decades.¹³ In particular, two aspects of his project offer a useful contrastive index to the chief significance of Derrida's work in the present context of discussion, that is, its capacity to point a way beyond the stalled predicament that Rorty pinpoints yet fails resolve in any adequate manner. First is his

well-known neo-pragmatist recommendation that philosophy should learn the lesson of its failure to clear up any of the big problems that had dogged it from Descartes down and had merely taken a more technically geared-up or linguistically formulated guise amongst adepts of the analytic turn. In short, it should desist from any version of its old claim to raise questions of a distinctly 'philosophical' character and to furnish them with answers or putative solutions of a likewise 'philosophic' kind. Rather it should try to be as inventive, creative, provocative, edifying, or life-transformative as possible while turning its back on all those vain attempts – from Descartes, *via* Kant, to the analytic mainstream – to carve out a region of special expertise where philosophers alone may tread without fear on account of their privileged access to a range of uniquely privileged intuitions, concepts, categories, grounds, 'conditions of possibility', and so forth. Only thus could it escape the self-imposed isolation into which it had been driven by those narrowly specialized concerns and hence have a decent claim to re-join the wider 'cultural conversation of mankind'.

Along with this – second – goes his widely influential view of Derrida as a writer who at best exhibits all the above virtues but who at worst manifests a sad tendency to slip back into bad old 'philosophical' habits of thought. Even though he gives them a negative spin – as by using terms like *différance* or 'condition of impossibility' – nevertheless they are the sorts of metaphysically loaded vocabulary that he should have left behind once and for all through his own demonstration of the benefits on offer from treating philosophy as just another strictly non-privileged 'kind of writing'. If Rorty gets Derrida flat wrong (as I think he does) then the wrongness can be shown to have its root in a failed because basically defeatist attempt

to escape from that same dilemma that he pinpoints so adroitly in the discourse of late-sixties analytic philosophy. Where his 'solution' is simply to give up on it and herald the advent of a different, radically transformed, 'post-philosophical' culture Derrida's response is to think the dilemma through with maximum conceptual and logical rigor though always with a readiness to accept that *at the limit* – at the point where thought is driven up against certain classically intractable blocks or aporias – it may need to adopt some alternative, e.g., non-bivalent or 'deviant' logic.¹⁴

This is not the place for a detailed rehearsal of the various forms that it takes, or the various kindred logics of the *pharmakon*, 'supplementarity', 'parergonality', *différance*, and so forth, that Derrida discovers in (rather than projects or foists onto) the texts of Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Husserl, and a good many others.¹⁵ Suffice it to say that his readings – and the arguments conducted in and through his practice of intensely close-focused critical reading – are such as to discountenance any interpretation of Derrida, like Rorty's, that takes him to have come out on the far side of those old-style philosophical concerns. Thus where Rorty sees him as showing the way toward a post-philosophical culture where notions like truth, knowledge or logic are traded in for notions like self-creation through the endless powers of creative 're-description' offered by language Derrida conversely insists on the need for maximal rigour and conceptual precision in our dealing with philosophic texts. Indeed he would fully subscribe to Paul de Man's precept that

'[r]eading is an argument... because it has to go against the grain of what one would want to happen in the name of what has to happen; this is the same as saying that reading is an epistemological event prior to being an ethical or aesthetic value'.¹⁶ Moreover that claim holds good even if, as de Man goes on to say, '[t]his does not mean that

there can be a true reading, but that no reading is conceivable in which the question of its truth or falsehood is not primarily involved'.¹⁷

Every word of these carefully phrased sentences has a direct bearing on Derrida's work and, more specifically, on the various ways that it resists assimilation to the jointly neo-pragmatist, postmodernist, and pan-textualist movement of thought that Rorty is so keen to promote. The resistance comes chiefly from that formal or logico-syntactic dimension of Derrida's readings that enables him – again like de Man though unlike post-structuralists and others who adopt a radically language-first approach – to register the kinds of anomalous, discrepant, or aporetic detail that run counter to normal, acculturated habits of expectation and hence require some more or less drastic change of interpretative tack. Even if (in de Man's qualifying clause) there is 'no true reading' in the sense, as I take it, 'no reading that could truly or justifiable claim to have got the text right once and for all', that doesn't in any way conflict with his subsequent dictum that there cannot be a reading – at any rate one conducted according to his own (and Derrida's) stringent protocols – 'in which the question of its truth or falsehood is not primarily involved'. Thus truth-values will always be in play, along with an appeal to the standards of classical (bivalent) logic, as soon as it is allowed – in keeping with the basic deconstructionist premise – that texts beyond a certain level of semantic and logico-syntactic complexity may well turn out through immanent critique to generate resistance to readings of a routine, fideist, orthodox, over-simplified, doctrinally driven, or ideologically collusive character. Otherwise, were it not for that possibility, there could be no question of detecting and pursuing those various deviant or non-classical logics that Derrida brings out to such striking effect.

What typifies his mode of engagement – and gives his writing a peculiar per-

tinence *vis-à-vis* the split that Rorty identifies within the analytic tradition – is its way of combining an Austinian acuteness and sensitivity to nuances of (so-called) 'ordinary language' with a high degree of logical-conceptual precision in the analysis of philosophic texts. This is why he is fully justified in taking Searle to task *both* for the latter's over-readiness to lift or relax the requirements of bivalent logic in the context of speech-act theory *and* for his failing to acknowledge how far such a theory must negotiate unlooked-for complications of sense and logic – especially concerning the categorization of speech-act types and modalities – that may very well create problems for any attempt to achieve a clear-cut, definitive, or logically regimented theory.¹⁸ Despite their seemingly disparate or downright contradictory nature these criticisms both find warrant in Derrida's ability to do otherwise, i.e., to read not only Austin's but a great variety of philosophic texts in such a way as to explore both their furthest, very often most deeply problematic logical entailments and their subtlest nuances of verbal implication. Here again de Man puts the case programmatically in terms that Derrida could pretty much accept as describing his own deconstructive project and, more specifically, his aims in seeking to rescue Austin from the kind of systematizing approach brought to bear by a speech-act theorist like Searle.

II

Thus when de Man writes of the 'resistance to theory' in his essay of that title he alludes to the way that a close rhetorical reading of certain texts may 'disturb the stable cognitive field' that is classically taken to extend from logic, *via* grammar, to epistemology conceived as providing a securely grounded 'knowledge of the world'.¹⁹ What he here has in mind is the tendency of theory to self-deconstruct or, more pre-

cisely, to reveal complexities of verbal implication or logico-semantic sense that find no place within its own categorical mapping of the field. This process is best helped along, so de Man argues, by an attentiveness to the rhetorical dimension of texts that takes the term 'rhetoric' not in its drastically restricted or diminished present-day sense but rather as specifying that element, aspect, or constituent factor in language that resists accommodation to prevalent ideas of coherent or acceptable sense. Thus: '[t]o empty rhetoric of its epistemological impact is possible only because its tropological, figural functions are being bypassed'. And again: '[i]t is as if . . . rhetoric could be isolated from the generality that grammar and logic have in common and considered as a mere correlative of an illocutionary power'.²⁰ His main point here is to rescue the concept of rhetoric from those, like Rorty or (de Man's more immediate target) Stanley Fish, who would treat it as wholly and exclusively a matter of language in its suasive or performative aspect.²¹ For them it functions as a means of pressing their neo-pragmatist case against theory or philosophy in so far as those disciplines purport to transcend such 'merely' rhetorical devices and thereby offer access to truths above and beyond the currency of in-place communal belief. For de Man and Derrida, conversely, the 'resistance to theory' is something that arises only in consequence of theory's having been pursued with the greatest dedication right up to that point in the reading of a text where it encounters certain rhetorical complexities beyond its power of conceptual resolution. It is at this point also that logic runs up against moments of aporia beyond its capacity to order or contain within the classical (bivalent) calculus of truth-values.

Nothing could be further from that Rortian notion of Derrida as one who practises philosophy as just another 'kind of writing', and whose best efforts in this

post-philosophical vein are those that most thoroughly renounce the old craving for method, logic, and truth.²² Of course – as he readily concedes in his rejoinder to Searle – a deconstructive reading would scarcely count as such if it didn't raise certain problematical issues or discover (rather than create or invent) certain far-reaching questions with regard to the scope and limits of logic as classically conceived. However – to repeat – this questioning should in no way be taken to indicate a Rortian attitude of indifference, disdain, or just plain boredom as regards such erstwhile core philosophical concerns. Thus, in Derrida's words, '[n]ot only do I find this logic strong, and, in conceptual language and analysis, *an absolute must (il la faut)*, it must . . . be sustained against all empirical confusion, to the point where the same demand of rigour requires the structure of that logic to be transformed or complicated'.²³ One is tempted to remark of a clarion statement like this that any background rumblings the ear may catch are most likely the sound of whole schools of Derrida interpretation collapsing as the impact spreads. Among them are the two, as it might seem antithetical modes of response – exemplified by Searle and Rorty – one of which reviles him for having rejected or betrayed the baseline standards of philosophical debate while the other holds him up as a culture-hero on just that same account. What they have in common is a failure to perceive (or reluctance to conceive) how writing of so markedly idiosyncratic and 'literary' a kind can none the less exhibit an acuity of logical-conceptual grasp fully equal to that which analytic philosophers take as their governing ideal.

Between these extremes are other, more temperate responses which again divide between those who find some (but not enough) of the 'analytic' virtues in his work and those – very often philosophically-minded literary types or philosophers of a more 'continental' persuasion – who stop

well short of Rorty's position but still tend to fight shy of Derrida's more 'technical' early books and essays. However these commentators – both sorts – can also be said to get him wrong in so far as a distinctive and, I think, a strongly motivating aspect of his work is just that combination of keen analytical insight with a high, indeed a preternatural degree of linguistic inventiveness or creativity. This is perhaps the best way to understand what de Man means, in the above-cited passage, when he disavows the claim that 'there can be a true reading' but insists all the same that 'no reading is conceivable in which the question of its truth or falsehood is not primarily involved'. On the one hand it is wholly unsurprising that he like Derrida – not to mention the great majority of present-day literary critics and theorists, along with not a few philosophers – declines to endorse the kind of ultra-conservative hermeneutic creed that would view the interpreter's proper task as that of divining, ascertaining, or recovering the work's true (i.e., authorially intended and aboriginally fixed) import.²⁴ On the other, what sets him and Derrida apart from the company of post-structuralists, postmodernists and celebrants of open-ended textual 'free-play' (together with its usual corollary, the 'death of the author') is that countervailing stress on the absolute necessity that truth-values – standards or criteria of truth and falsehood – be recognized to play an adjudicative role in every case where there occurs some doubt as to the purport, meaning or significance of some particular passage.

It is precisely this emphasis, I would claim, that marks the crucial (philosophical) distinction between deconstruction as exemplified primarily by Derrida's canonical texts and those other, broadly post-modernist schools of thought with which it is so often and damagingly confused.²⁵ There is a much-quoted passage from *Of Grammatology* that states the case with

such crystalline clarity and precision that I cannot forebear citing it yet again here. To deconstruct a text, Derrida writes,

obviously cannot consist of reproducing, by the effaced and respectful doubling of commentary, the conscious, voluntary, intentional relationship that the writer institutes in his exchanges with the history to which he belongs thanks to the element of language. This moment of doubling commentary should no doubt have its place in a critical reading. To recognize and respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always only protected, it has never opened, a reading.²⁶

What 'opens' a reading, as we are able to conclude from an attentive perusal of Derrida's texts, is exactly that vigilant awareness of conflicts between overt and covert or express and logically implicated sense that requires the possession in equal measure of a fine sensitivity to verbal nuance and a keen power of conceptual or logico-semantic analysis. The nearest thing to this within the broad confines of analytic philosophy is Austin's singularly well-attuned ear for the subtleties (and often the vagaries or dubieties) of what ordinarily passes for 'ordinary language'. If Derrida is able to press beyond Austin's typical appeal to the tribunal of everyday or common-sense linguistic judgment it is, I think, mainly through his bringing to bear a philosophical-critical perspective informed by the 'conflict of interpretations' that loomed so large over his early intellectual development, namely that between phenomenology and structuralism.²⁷

This conflict he saw as by no means confined to its modern (mainly French post-1960) manifestation but rather as having been a constant feature of philosophical thought wherever – as for instance in Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Husserl,

or Saussure – it encountered certain recurrent since deep-laid antinomies, chief among them those of genesis and structure, diachrony and synchrony, or language in its expressive-creative and its purely indicative aspects. Hence Derrida's otherwise puzzling, not to say perversely anachronistic claim that 'a certain structuralism has always been philosophy's most spontaneous gesture', and moreover that 'what I can never understand, in a structure, is precisely that by means of which it is not closed'.²⁸ Here we should recall his equally cryptic assertion, in the above-cited passage from *Of Grammatology*, that the 'indispensable guardrail' of a decent respect for authorial intention and the protocols of scholarly method 'has always only protected, it has never opened, a reading'. 'Phenomenology' and 'structuralism' are for him not simply the names of two, well-defined and geo-chronologically located movements of thought but rather, beyond that, a pair of terms that between them capture the single most pressing and perplexing aporia confronted by philosophy of mind and language. They evoke the problem that arises – at least for the more linguistically sensitive or self-aware practitioners of these disciplines – when philosophers seek both to specify the structural determinants or conditions of possibility for thought, language and experience in general and somehow to convey or articulate that which by very definition transcends any such account. This is not, as Rorty would have it, because philosophy is simply played off the field by any showing of linguistic creativity but rather because such language belongs to a pre-predicative or expressive dimension beyond the grasp of those structural concepts that analysis requires in order to achieve some kind of descriptive or explanatory purchase. What thinking comes up against here is the root dilemma of any philosophy that would claim to delve back into the *sources and conditions* (taking each of those terms in a

carefully specified sense) of our being-in-the-world as sentient, sapient, linguistically creative and responsive subjects.

This is the same dilemma that Kant shied away from when he followed Aquinas in saying that even if angels might be thought of as possessing a singular and undivided faculty of 'intellectual intuition' then certainly this lay beyond the cognitive powers of mere human mortals. For the latter, subject as they are to the scope and limits of a physically embodied intellect, knowledge must always involve the more prosaic since indirect or non-immediate process of bringing sensuous (phenomenal) intuitions under concepts of understanding.²⁹ As it happens a number of analytic philosophers, notably John McDowell, have lately homed in on other passages of Kant's *First Critique* where the pesky dualism of intuition and concept – source of so many subsequent problems for thinkers from the German idealists to the logical positivists – assumes the more harmless-sounding guise of a distinction between 'spontaneity' and 'receptivity'.³⁰ McDowell spends a good deal of time trying to persuade us that any appearance of a sharp dichotomy here, or any notion that these terms might be mere stand-ins for 'intuition' and 'concept', is unwarranted since Kant himself insists on their absolute, in-principle inseparability and on his having resorted to such misleading dualist talk only as (so to speak) a *faute de mieux façon de parler*. However, as I have argued in detail elsewhere, this reassurance is somewhat undermined by the fact that McDowell (like Kant) cannot do without that particular line of talk and in this respect seems to be in much the same position as those – logical positivists and their varied progeny – whose predicament he claims to have escaped or transcended by the switch of elective vocabulary.³¹ My point is that analytic philosophy even in its less hidebound or more speculative, i.e., 'continentally' oriented forms still bears the mark of that

dualist mindset which after all – by a curious twist of reception-history – it inherits from none other than Kant. Indeed another shift of perspective from the German to the French line of ‘continental’ descent – thus taking phenomenology from its Husserlian source to its subsequent encounter with Saussure *via* Merleau-Ponty and Derrida – could help analytic philosophers to think their way beyond the kinds of dilemma still visible in those, including ‘post-analytic’ types like McDowell, who perpetuate the old dualism in notionally different terms.

What might then come more clearly into view is first the missing dimension of bodily and affective experience so central to Merleau-Ponty’s re-envisioning of Husserl’s ‘intellectualist’ project, and second a more productive and creative way of approaching the antinomy of genesis and structure, that is, the problem of steering a philosophically viable course between diachronic and synchronic modes of understanding.³² Along with this very often goes the further problem of doing justice on the one hand to language and thought in their creative-expressive-inventive aspect and on the other to those powers of conceptual grasp that have for so long – and especially in the context of ‘analytic’ *versus* ‘continental’ debate – been taken to characterize a sharply opposed conception of philosophy’s proper role. That difference is one that goes all the way back to Plato’s wielding of the philosophic cudgels in what he already saw fit to describe as the ‘ancient quarrel’ between philosophy and poetry. More recently, it surfaced once again with a kindred force of entrenched disciplinary prejudice in the logical-positivist case, most forcefully enounced by A.J. Ayer, against ‘literary’ (pseudo-)philosophers like Sartre and Camus who were supposedly making dramatic or emotive capital out of certain elementary confusions with regard to basic matters like the fact/value distinction.³³ Where that attitude shows

up as a product of narrowly parochial thinking is in the failure to conceive that such issues might not have been resolved or effectively laid to rest with anything like the conversation-stopping finality envisaged by hard-line logical positivists such as Ayer. Nor do they show much sign of disappearing when approached by thinkers on the opposite wing of the broadly analytical approach, that is, by therapeutically-minded followers of Wittgenstein who seek nothing more than to cure us of all those needless philosophical worries by supplying a deflationary dose of common-sense linguistic medicine.³⁴ What stands in the way of these putative solutions – or dissolutions – of the concept/intuition or structure/genesis antinomy is their failure to engage philosophical issues at the level of creative, linguistically self-conscious, but also analytically acute and conceptually resourceful investigation exemplified by Derrida’s best work.

Again, it is Austin who at times comes closest to achieving that particular combination of virtues, although in his case it results more from a somewhat quirky intellectual temperament – one that combines a certain hankering for system and method with a certain resistance to it in the name of ‘ordinary language’ – than from the kind of intensely theoretical reflection that Derrida deploys in addressing the issue between phenomenology and structuralism. What distinguishes these otherwise close-kin thinkers is the way that Derrida, unlike Austin, manages to do both things at once, i.e., exhibit a singular gift for catching at the subtlest nuances of verbal implication even while he raises issues of a far-reaching philosophical character. He is able to do so mainly through practicing a mode of intensely close-focused and self-reflexive commentary on the texts of philosophers, from Plato to Husserl, who may not have brought those issues so sharply into focus – who might indeed have been largely or wholly un-

aware of the logico-semantic complexities involved – yet whose texts all the same bear striking witness to Derrida's claims. Oddly and tantalizingly enough it was Austin who coined the term 'linguistic phenomenology' as a handy description of his own approach to philosophical issues through a constant hearkening to 'ordinary language' and its endlessly varied shades of implication.³⁵ However he used that phrase only once and in a typically offhand, noncommittal way which reveals something of his general discomfort around the more openly speculative tendencies of (typecast) 'continental' thought. Derrida takes the approach to a different level through his deployment of an 'answerable style' – Geoffrey Hartman's useful term – in which, through which, and with the creative-exploratory aid of which he brings to light linguistic-conceptual implications that would otherwise escape notice.³⁶ They are simply inaccessible to any way of reading, like Searle's, that treats speech-acts as falling into certain categorically distinct types, genres, or classes and therefore as coming with clearly-marked felicity-conditions or standards of appropriate usage attached. Such a theory is bound to ignore or unwittingly suppress the more complex, ambiguous, or problematic instances of performative as well as constative utterance in so far as it is heavily mortgaged in advance to some particular conception of what counts – properly, sincerely, aptly, successfully, paradigmatically counts – as a normal or genuine case of the kind.

III

In an interview entitled 'That Strange Institution Called Literature' Derrida remarks that '[g]ood literary criticism, the only worthwhile kind, implies an act, a literary signature or countersignature, an inventive experience of language, in language, an inscription of the act of reading in the field of the text that is read'.³⁷ Of

course it might be said – almost certainly would be said by the majority of analytic philosophers – that if this goes for literary criticism, or for some (perhaps stylistically overweening) kinds of literary criticism, then it doesn't or shouldn't go for philosophy, at least in so far as philosophers retain a sense of their proper calling. From their viewpoint it is precisely the hallmark of philosophic discipline and competence that it keep a tight check on any such untoward tendencies by ensuring that its own discourse should observe certain standards of conduct or certain kinds of self-denying ordinance. Among the most basic is just that demand that it not give way to the seductive possibilities of a language – in the strictest sense, an idiomatic language – that would lack the conceptual power or the generalized scope to count as properly philosophical. Nor is this aversion to excessive 'creativity' by any means confined to thinkers who identify with the *echt*-analytical branch of analytic philosophy, that is to say, the line of descent from Frege and Russell which is often thought of – and thinks of itself – as holding fast to the values of logic and method against the adepts of an 'ordinary language' approach with its source in Wittgenstein or Austin. After all, Wittgenstein in his later writings was just as suspicious of the waywardness of language once allowed its creative-expressive head, or once permitted to 'go on holiday' – his own curiously disapproving phrase – and exploit the full range of its metaphoric or other such 'literary' resources.³⁸

Indeed Wittgenstein's notorious failure (or refusal) to see what it was that people so admired in Shakespeare appears to have stemmed very largely from this deep-laid suspicion – one that he shared with, amongst others, a conservative classicist like Dr. Johnson and a finger-wagging Christian moralist like the aging Tolstoy – that when language got out of touch with everyday or 'common-sense' usage then nothing good could possibly result.³⁹ As I

have said, Austin was far more alive to those aspects of the extra-ordinary that inhabit (so-called) ordinary language when approached with an ear well attuned to its less obvious, at times distinctly problematic or paradoxical implications. Still he stopped far short of any allowance that philosophy of language, or speech-act theory, might continue to do its work – to cast a revealing *analytical* as well as appreciative light on our modes of verbal-communicative practice – if it allowed those ‘deviant’ implications to count on a par with the evidence supplied by various instances of straightforward, ‘normal’, or everyday usage. It is just this claim that Derrida makes when he shows how far the actual (logico-semanticly specifiable) meaning of a text may diverge from its manifest purport, or again, how deep the fault-line may run between what an author expressly means to say and what s/he ends up by saying as a matter of logical entailment despite and against that overt intent. Where Derrida goes beyond Austin is in raising this issue to a high point of visibility – *via* the encounter staged in his work between phenomenology and structuralism – while none the less remaining closely in touch with those idiomatic nuances or unlooked-for turns of semantic implication that likewise go beyond anything accountable *either* by the recourse to system or method *or* by the appeal to established or accustomed (‘ordinary’) usage.

This is why ‘[r]eading,’ as Derrida says, ‘must give itself up to the uniqueness [of the literary work], take it on board, keep it in mind, take account of it. But for that, for this rendering, you have to sign in your turn, write something else which responds or corresponds in an equally singular, which is to say irreducible, irreplaceable, “new” way: neither imitation, nor reproduction, nor metalanguage.’⁴⁰ What so divides his commentators, at any rate the philosophers among them, is the question as to whether this kind of responsive-cre-

ative or critical-creative-exploratory writing has its place – a proper or legitimate place – in philosophy as well as (perhaps) in the more hermeneutically adventurous modes of literary criticism. To *echt*-analyticals and Wittgensteinians alike, although for somewhat different reasons, it has to appear a dereliction of philosophy’s primary concern with the business of resolving those various problems or dilemmas that mostly arise through our allowing language to lead us off the path of logical rigour, conceptual clarity, or plain common-sense wisdom. Where they differ, of course, is with regard to the issue of how philosophy can best hope to remedy that potent source of confusion, or whether (as the former party would have it) such deliverance might come through a more exacting logical analysis of the various muddles that typically result from an over-reliance on everyday language or unaided linguistic intuition. For thinkers of the latter type, conversely, it is just that overweening idea of philosophy’s corrective, prescriptive, or legislative role that has created those problems in the first place by encouraging philosophers to use words in non-customary, overly technical ways and thus lose touch with the sense-making virtues of ordinary usage.

My suggestion, in short, is that Derrida’s work responds to this (as he would see it) pseudo-dilemma not so much by seeking to split the difference and offer some notional third-way alternative but rather by pressing as far as possible with the project of conceptual or logico-semantic analysis whilst also deploying his remarkable powers of linguistic inventiveness or creativity in order to explore where that project might encounter certain limits to its scope of consistent application. Thus when he writes of the ‘singularity’ of literature as that which cannot be subjected to any ‘metalanguage,’ his comment no doubt refers primarily to those formalist or structuralist schools of literary criticism that

have indeed sought, from Aristotle on, to devise some means of placing that enterprise on a more systematic or scientific footing. However it can also be taken, in the present context, as alluding to that which distinguishes literature from philosophy, literary criticism from philosophical commentary, or – perhaps closer to Derrida's thinking – the most aptly responsive and 'answerable' way to read literary texts from the most fitting, i.e., analytically acute and logically precise as well as hermeneutically sensitive way to read those texts that are generally counted as belonging to the philosophic genre. Nor is this merely a matter of convention or of what just happens to count as such according to a range of historically and culturally shifting generic markers. For it is very much Derrida's *philosophic* point in an essay like 'White Mythology' that there will always turn out to be something strictly nonsensical or self-refuting about any claim to supplant or supersede philosophy, as for instance by pressing the vulgar-deconstructionist idea that (quite simply) 'all concepts are metaphors' and hence all philosophy just another 'kind of writing' or sub-genre of literature.⁴¹ Then again, as he argues in 'The Supplement of Copula', the same problem arises for a linguist like Emile Benveniste who seeks to put philosophy in its proper (subaltern) place by arguing that ever since Aristotle it has always derived its most basic logical concepts and categories from the range of syntactic and other resources available within this or that particular natural language.⁴²

Thus in the one case, promoted most vigorously by Richard Rorty, philosophy's role and its erstwhile high standing as a discourse of truth-seeking enquiry would give way to the alternative, un-self-deluded since non-truth-fixated discourses of literary and cultural criticism, or – better still – of poetry and fiction.⁴³ In the other, philosophy would yield to linguistics as the discipline best equipped to make sense of those various sense-making forms, struc-

tures, codes, and culture-specific conventions which constitute the bottom-line of enquiry or the ultimate horizon of intelligibility for any attempt to understand the character of various natural languages.⁴⁴ This doctrine of cultural-linguistic relativism, along with the close-kin notion of radical inter-lingual or inter-cultural 'incommensurability', has been subject to a good many strongly argued critiques, among them Donald Davidson's (to my mind) convincing demonstration that they themselves fail to make sense by the most basic standards of conceptual and logical accountability.⁴⁵ However what is not so widely known – whether amongst analytic philosophers or deconstructionists of a more 'literary' bent – is that Derrida argues a similar case in the two above-mentioned essays and indeed goes yet further in exposing the self-contradictory or self-refuting character of claims to discredit philosophy by exposing its reliance on linguistic, metaphorical, narrative, or suchlike (supposedly) prior constituents of every philosophical thesis or statement. For if one point emerges with maximal force from these and other writings of Derrida's early period it is the fact – not merely a contingent fact about human thought and language but a condition of possibility for all productive enquiry into the relationship between them – that proposals concerning that order of priority *cannot but* go by way of a discourse beholden to philosophic concepts and categories. Thus it must take properly critical account of issues that have received their most adequate treatment in the texts of theorists, from Aristotle down, whose ideas in this regard belong squarely to philosophy or to the history of varied conceptualizations that philosophy has brought to bear on such topics.

So when Nietzscheans, Foucauldians, post-structuralists, postmodernists, Rortian neo-pragmatists, Wittgensteinians and others propound their kindred theses with regard to the precedence of language over thought – or of various other disci-

plines over philosophy – they cannot but be closing their minds to the crucial role played in their own arguments by modes of reasoning that again cannot but draw upon distinctly philosophical resources. The force of those repeated ‘cannot but’s’ is of course the kind of force that philosophers typically claim for their discipline or discipline-constitutive ways of proceeding, and will therefore strike the above-mentioned range of opponents as nothing more than a particularly blatant way of finessing the main issue. However it is just Derrida’s point in the above-mentioned essays – and also implicitly throughout his work – that thinking cannot possibly abandon (or affect to abandon) those basic protocols of right reason or logically articulated thought without thereby falling prey to some demonstrable form of aporia, paradox, or downright self-contradiction. I place these terms in ascending order of negative-demonstrative power since ‘aporia’ is clearly, on Derrida’s (as likewise on Kant’s) reckoning, a condition that certain kinds of speculative reason are intrinsically prone to, while paradox claims (but had perhaps better not be granted) special exemption from the ground-rules of rational thought, and self-contradiction only gets by if one adopts a dialethic or paraconsistent logic that rejects what most philosophers – revisionists like Quine included – would accept as the bottom-line or *sine qua non* of rational thought.⁴⁶ For it is only by espousing that radical alternative – denying the principle of non-contradiction, albeit with certain caveats attached – that one can deem Aristotle to have got it wrong when he declared this to be a nonsensical or self-refuting position since any endorsement of a statement and its contrary entailed the simultaneous truth and falsehood of any other statement whatsoever.

My point is that Derrida operates with a strong sense of the distinction between these three kinds of challenge to the dictates of classical or bivalent logic. Moreover, it is precisely by so doing – by main-

taining a keen and context-sensitive awareness of their different conditions of applicability – that he achieves the combination of logical rigor with extreme responsiveness to nuances of natural-language implication that has proved so elusive (and such a dividing-point) for thinkers in the mainstream analytic line of descent. That is to say, Derrida holds out against any (e.g., postmodernist or post-analytical) claim to have done with the standards or constraints of classical logic while none the less testing that logic against a whole range of particular cases – arguments, concepts, idioms, passages, texts – where it comes up against different degrees or strengths of contestation. What he never sees fit to endorse is the kind of wholesale revisionist outlook with respect to those standards or constraints that is a notable feature of thinking across some large tracts of philosophical country, large enough (that is) to accommodate thinkers of an otherwise thoroughly diverse set of persuasions. Least of all would he yield any ground to the argument, put forward by Quine and Putnam amongst others, that classical ‘laws’ such as bivalence and excluded middle might – indeed should – be deemed revisable if they get into conflict with the kinds of evidence produced by the physical sciences, or if they can be squared with that evidence only by means of such more-or-less drastic revision.⁴⁷ For in that case, as with his objection to Searle, one has effectively renounced any claim to decide on rational or logically accountable grounds just what sorts of evidence might warrant such a change, or what sorts of change to the (supposed) logical ground-rules are required in order to put right the anomaly in question.

Besides, on the epistemological view taken by Quine and his successors, there is a basic problem about maintaining this logical-revisionist doctrine which could only be sidelined by doing what even he considers well beyond the pale of rational acceptability, i.e., renouncing the law of

contradiction and going dialethic *sans* all the customary caveats. Thus the argument runs (to repeat) that empirical evidence might conceivably trump the axioms of classical logic along with any other such well-entrenched commitments, among them those normative constraints that lie so deep as to pass for *a priori* 'laws of thought', or even – as these thinkers are willing to allow – the most seemingly secure or unquestionable 'laws' of the physical sciences.⁴⁸ Yet another main plank in their argument is that twofold doctrine, the so-called 'Duhem-Quine thesis', according to which theories are always 'underdetermined' by the best evidence to hand while the evidence is always 'theory-laden' and hence not available for the kind of work here envisaged, i.e., that of plainly and straightforwardly refuting theories or putting up resistance to received modes of theoretically-informed observation or conceptually structured perceptual experience.⁴⁹ That is to say, the Duhem-Quine thesis, if valid, is enough to rule out any notion of sensory inputs or physical stimuli – to adopt Quine's favored ultra-behaviorist terms – as having anything like that archimedean capacity to challenge, resist, obstruct, or controvert the deliverances of logic or physical theory. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, this basic contradiction is enough to capsize a whole raft of strong-revisionist or paradigm-relativist doctrines, many of which have their source in Thomas Kuhn's working-out of the Quinean thesis in the context of a more thoroughly historicized approach to the process of scientific theory-change.⁵⁰ For it is here more than anywhere – in the kind of thinking typified by present-day 'science studies' or the strong sociology of knowledge – that one finds this curious failure to remark how flatly inconsistent are the two chief premises (radical empiricism and theory-ladenness) that purportedly constitute its chief philosophic (or anti-philosophic) pillars.⁵¹

Yet it is here also that the programme comes up against two major difficulties, namely (1) the normative deficit entailed by its having relativized logic and reason to a ill-defined notion of empirical, observational, or (in post-Kuhnian versions) linguistic and socio-cultural warrant, and (2) the fairly blatant self-contradiction that results if one takes that claim in conjunction with the Duhem-Quine thesis. As I have said, Derrida is fully alert to both problems and to the fact that any argument premised on the relativity of logic to language or of truth-conditions to conditions of assertoric warrant in this or that context will end up by confronting both in the form of a disabling or self-stultifying paradox. Moreover, his response to Searle makes it clear that Derrida rejects any notion of logic as subject to certain empirical constraints or as needing to be somewhat relaxed, adjusted, or rendered more context-sensitive in response to its various (e.g., natural-language-applicable) modes of deployment. Nor is this merely, as might be thought, a result of his adhering to the well-known prejudice of French philosophers – even those who most vigorously claim to have thrown off the heritage of Cartesian rationalism – against any version of that other, typically British, empiricist way of thought which they tend to regard as naïve or downright anti-philosophical. On the contrary: for Derrida, as likewise for a thinker such as Deleuze, it is just that predominant rationalist bias in so much of the philosophy that defines their national as well as the wider (mainstream-European) tradition of thought which enables empiricism – or a certain kind of empiricism – to take on a radically heterodox or contestatory character.⁵² However that kind has nothing in common with the inertly behaviorist, phenomenalist, or sense-data-based conception that leaves the Quinean approach so strikingly bereft of both normative resources and a logically cogent or consistent basis for its more ex-

travagant revisionist claims. Rather it involves the typically Derridean way of reading texts with maximal regard to their long-range as well as localized structures of logico-semantic implication but also with a highly receptive, responsive, or sensitive awareness of problematic details opaque to any reading premised on conventional ideas of what counts as a faithful or competent philosophical account.

A fairly obvious candidate for next position in the adjectival series 'receptive, responsive, or sensitive' is perhaps 'creative', which Derrida's literary disciples would no doubt embrace with great fervor, along with those on the analytic-philosophical wing who would take it as an adequate and welcome reason to ignore his work, or those (like Rorty) who wish to recast the entire philosophical enterprise in a style very much like that promoted by the literary types. It seems to me that 'creative' is an adjective that properly applies to Derrida's work just so long as one bears in mind the degree of logical, analytic, and conceptual acuity involved in a practice of textual close-reading that is able to expose such a range of hitherto occluded meanings – most often unexpected twists of logico-semantic entailment – beyond the grasp of any reading premised on conservative ideas of exegetical fidelity or truth. Perhaps the term 'inventive' is a better alternative in so far as it carries an echo of 'invent' in the ancient rhetoricians' usage of that term, i.e., 'discover', 'happen upon', or 'find out' through procedures that require a certain creativity (call it 'ingenuity') but also an attentiveness to that which shows itself ready or apt for the purpose. It is here – with respect to that which supposedly offers itself as a matter of empirical self-evidence – that Derrida's thought goes furthest toward deconstructing the root presuppositions that have held the philosophical project together across and despite all its sundry fallings-out to date. What 'empiricism' signifies in this context is once

again a matter of heightened receptiveness to details that remain invisible to other, less alert modes of reading or analysis.

To be sure, these are usually textual details in the first instance but 'textual' in precisely the expansive, world-involving, or realist sense that Derrida has so often stressed in response to his critics. On this account texts – or those that lend themselves most aptly to deconstructive treatment – must be taken to possess a referential bearing and an implicative reach that give deconstruction its critical purchase on various real-world topic-domains. Hence, I would suggest, the impression so often given by deconstructive readings of literary (fictive or poetic) texts that there is ultimately nothing at issue here – that they lack any such purchase – since it scarcely needs showing that although these texts may indeed create a sense of verisimilitude or logical argument we should none the less always make adequate allowance for their belonging to a different, generically distinct, non-truth-functional mode of discourse.⁵³ For there is, to say the least, something rather off-the-point about the regular practice amongst Derrida-influenced literary critics of displaying such extreme ingenuity in order to reveal, over and again, how the texts in question can be seen to self-deconstruct – to lay bare their own rhetorical structures or forms of narrative contrivance – and thereby implicitly subvert or disown any such realist illusion.⁵⁴ Indeed I would go so far as to claim that this is what constitutes the chief difference between deconstruction, properly so called, and those varieties of post-structuralist and postmodernist thought with which it is very often lumped together by proponents and detractors alike.⁵⁵

IV

No doubt it is a defining feature of deconstructive readings that they involve the discovery of certain referential or logical

aberrations, and moreover that this discovery comes about through a mode of textual close-reading that has to do with rhetoric in one standard sense of that term, i.e., the analysis of language in its tropological or figural dimension. Still it is equally important to recognize that rhetoric in this sense – what de Man terms the ‘epistemology of tropes’ – is a critical enterprise fully responsive to the requirements of logical reasoning and also fully cognizant of the extent to which language must, if it is to serve any useful purpose, have a referential function or point beyond itself to a real-world object domain. For de Man the best way to retain this sense of the centrality but also the problematic status of reference is by returning to the classical model of the *trivium*, that is, the inherently unstable or problematic meeting-point of those three disciplines – logic, grammar, and rhetoric – that made up the core of a traditional humanistic education.⁵⁶ Where the model most notably serves his deconstructive purpose is in allowing for the role of rhetoric, i.e., of rhetorical theory and analysis as that which discovers certain complicating factors that prevent any smooth or self-assured passage from the structures (propositions) of formal logic, via their analogue in the sentences of well-formed grammar, to veridical states of affairs. Only by ignoring those disruptive factors – or by treating them as ‘merely’ rhetorical and void of epistemological import – can language be thought of as affording a reliable, precise, logically exacting, or referentially dependable source of knowledge.

There is no problem for this basic conception of language, logic and truth so long as ‘rhetoric’ is taken in the narrow and often derogatory sense of that term which equates it exclusively with the arts of persuasion or with the non-cognitive aspect of discourse where values of truth and falsehood simply don’t apply. On that account, as de Man phrases it, ‘grammar stands in

the service of logic which, in turn, allows for the passage to knowledge of the world’.⁵⁷ And again, with particular reference to Kant’s variation on the theme: what we find in this model is ‘a clear instance of the interconnectness between a science of the phenomenal world and a science of language conceived as definitional logic, the precondition for a correct axiomatic-deductive, synthetic reasoning’.⁵⁸ However the model turns out not to function so smoothly when that narrow and prejudicial understanding of rhetoric is exchanged for a more adequate sense of its epistemocritical dimension. What then becomes apparent is the standing possibility that certain kinds of text – those that engage such issues with the greatest insight or power of analytic grasp – will turn out to contain passages that resist assimilation to any straightforward or problem-free conception of language, truth, and logic. For, according to de Man, it is the peculiar virtue of readings in the deconstructive mode to show just where and how this resistance occurs and also to point up its crucial bearing on various, often deeply-entrenched ideologies which derive much of their persuasive force from a naturalized or ‘commonsense’ version of the scholastic model described above. Thus ‘[t]o empty rhetoric of its epistemological impact is possible only because its tropological, figural functions are being bypassed. It is as if rhetoric could be isolated from the generality that grammar and logic have in common and considered as a mere correlative of an illocutionary power’.⁵⁹

That is to say, the term ‘rhetoric’ has to be conceived as involving two functions or aspects – on the face of it sharply distinct but in truth strictly inseparable – and no longer thought of as restricted to a persuasive or ‘merely’ rhetorical role. On the one hand, rhetorical theory exerts a power of epistemo-critical grasp resulting from the rigorous analysis of linguistic effects that might otherwise exert a misleading,

seductive, or downright pernicious influence on our thinking in various topic-domains. Among them, not least, is literary theory but only in so far as it opens up into regions of enquiry that extend from philosophy of language and logic to epistemology, ethics, and political theory. On the other hand that very rigour may always prove to be in some sense its own undoing, or – so as not belabor the paradox – lead up to a point where thinking encounters the need to question or qualify (rather than reject or abandon) some of those precepts that have so far acted as rules or directives for its own proper conduct. Hence de Man's double-aspect theory of rhetoric as that which raises the critical power of thought to its highest degree yet at the same time reveals the liability of thought *even then* to suffer forms of ideological delusion or misrecognition that can be rectified only through a further, more strenuous effort of rhetorical analysis. Thus the ultimate insight of deconstruction 'may well concern rhetoric itself, the discovery that what is called "rhetoric" is precisely the gap that becomes apparent in the pedagogical and philosophical history of the term. Considered as persuasion, rhetoric is performative but when considered as a system of tropes, it deconstructs its own performance'.⁶⁰

What I wish to emphasize is the extent of convergence between Derrida's and de Man's projects, at least as regards this shared insistence on the epistemological dimension of rhetoric and the error of supposing that 'rhetoric' denotes an aspect, component, or modality of language that eludes any kind of rigorous analysis since it has to do only with 'persuasion' or 'performative' (illocutionary) force. De Man makes the point by contrasting the potential of a deconstructive reading in this critical-rhetorical mode – its power to expose blind-spots of prejudice or deep-grained 'commonsense' ideology – with the 'dreary prospects of pragmatic banality' opened

up by an impoverished notion of rhetoric that acknowledges only its performative aspect and thereby results in 'the equation of rhetoric with psychology rather than epistemology'.⁶¹ Here his chief target is Stanley Fish and the 'against theory' school of thought which takes a lead from Fish in arguing – or urging – that arguments or reasons can never be more than persuasive since rhetoric (persuasion) goes all the way down.⁶² From this it follows that theories or principles are merely otiose when it comes to winning people over, and hence that a thinker like de Man must be sadly deluded when he tries to make the case that rhetoric possesses that other, more searching or rigorously consequent epistemo-critical dimension. Indeed it is a main plank in Fish's programme to show that theory is wholly inconsequential, at least in so far as it can have no consequences – no results brought about by some additional measure of logical, rational, or argumentative force – beyond its straightforwardly suasive efficacy.⁶³

Moreover this applies not only to the kind of 'positive foundationalist theory-hope' displayed by those who seek to back up their favored beliefs by appeal to various grounding precepts or principles but also to 'negative anti-foundationalist theory-hope', e.g., the deployment of theory-talk by Marxists, feminists, and deconstructionists in order – as they fondly suppose – to lend their discourse a greater degree of mind-changing or world-transformative leverage. Neither project has the least chance of success, he asserts, since both stake their claim on the twin delusion first that rhetoric might be theorized in such a way as to engender resistance to its own suasive effects, and second that this theory might amount to more than another kind of rhetorical persuasion that wraps itself in theoretical colors as a source of – what else? – enhanced persuasive power. No theory whether positive or negative can avoid the need to seek assent amongst a

certain group of readers – an ‘interpretive community’, in Fish’s phrase – who will either endorse or reject its claims but will do so out of a predisposed leaning in either direction or through their having come to it in a frame of mind that renders them sufficiently attentive and engaged to respond in a sympathetic or an adverse way. On this neo-pragmatist view it is nonsense to think that any theory could possibly change anyone’s mind about anything, or – to state his case more exactly – that it could do so *through and by means of* theory rather than through a rhetorical-suasive strategy that falls back on theory-talk as a handy resource when addressing those with a taste for such things.

So for Fish there can be no question but that negative theory-hoppers like Derrida and de Man are kidding themselves and others when they claim such a radically transformative role – such a power to resist received or naturalized ways of thought – for what is, in the final (rhetorical) analysis, just another instance of more or less well-judged suasive rhetoric. For them, on the contrary, it is no exaggeration to say that the whole point of reading and the very possibility of thinking to any critical (positive or negative) effect about what one has read depends upon Fish’s being wrong in all this and on theory’s possessing just the kind of critical and mind-changing power that that neo-pragmatism rules out of court. De Man makes the point in his customary tight-lipped, rigorist style when he lays down the deconstructive requirement that textual exegesis not go the way of a rhetorical reading in the Fishian performative or illocutionary mode. Rather it should take the more difficult path of an engagement that resists those seductive options – those various well-tried means of fulfilling the interpreter’s desire for a perfect, unimpeded, problem-free communion with the text – which typify mainstream philosophical as well as literary-critical practice.

Thus (to repeat): ‘[w]hat makes a reading more or less true is the necessity of its occurrence, regardless of the reader’s or of the author’s wishes Reading is an argument . . . because it has to go against the grain of what one would want to happen in the name of what has to happen.’⁶⁴ This can occur only on condition that rhetoric be thought of as manifesting that crucial duality between language in its suasive-performative mode and language as the register of logico-semantic tensions, conflicts, or aporias that demand a more strenuous activity of critical thought – of reading as ‘argument’, in de Man’s laconic formulation – than finds any room in Fish’s account. Moreover the resistance to simplified, naïve, or ideologically complicit ways of reading can itself take rise only through the break with that notion of a seamless continuity between logic, grammar and rhetoric which, according to de Man, finds its perfect (though ultimately unrealizable) formula in the model of the classical *trivium*. Thus ‘[d]ifficulties occur [for this model] only when it is no longer possible to ignore the epistemological thrust of the rhetorical dimension of language.’⁶⁵ This would be the point at which Fish’s idea of reading as always, inevitably bound to follow the dictates of in-place conviction or communally shared belief comes up against a countervailing need to explain how we could ever, in that case, achieve any kind of intellectual advance or succeed in breaking with routine, habituated modes of thought. What enables us to do so – and shows the neo-pragmatist /‘against-theory’ line to lack all credibility – is the fact that reading can indeed be an ‘argument’, or (the same thing if translated out of that deconstructive-textualist idiom) that thinking can indeed muster critical resources against the effects of doctrinal adherence, ingrained prejudice, or sheer cultural inertia.

This is not at all a trivial matter or (as some philosophers would have it) merely

the kind of problem thrown up when literary theorists – along with theory-obsessed anti-theorists like Fish – indulge their penchant for affecting to doubt all manner of otherwise obvious or common-sense truths about language. These would include, at the most basic, its referential capacity for putting us reliably in touch with a great range of real-world objects and events and also its power to put us in touch with each other through various modes of inter-personal discourse involving the conveyance and uptake of speakers' (and authors') intentions. Of course this presupposes that the speech-acts in question are uttered and interpreted under normal conditions, 'normal' then requiring – for philosophic purposes – some contrastive spelling-out of what might on occasion get in the way of such a smooth communicative passage, e.g., through certain irregularities of context or purport that render the utterance abnormal. Nor would Derrida for one moment deny that this is the case, or that language does – at any rate for the most part – function in just such a well-regulated way with the parties to any given speech-act possessing a reasonably clear sense of the difference between normal and abnormal instances of the kind. However, as we have seen, he also makes the point *contra* Searle that philosophy – philosophy of language more specifically – can and should bring its critical focus to bear on a range of complex, difficult, borderline, marginal, disputed, or exceptional cases. For these can then serve both to challenge our more settled (or complacent) habits of thought and to sharpen our sense of the possible complicating factors that might always turn up in the course of what had seemed perfectly normal or straightforward verbal transactions.

Hence no doubt the widespread interest in deconstruction amongst critically-minded legal scholars who likewise take it that 'hard cases', i.e., cases with no clear precedent or unambiguous provision in

statute law are sometimes the best spurs to reflection on the sorts of complexity that might lie concealed in other, supposedly routine instances where such reflection seems uncalled for.⁶⁶ When I said that these are not trivial matters I had in mind chiefly this question as to whether, how far, and by what critical means it is possible for thought to exercise its powers *despite and against* the normalizing force of received ideas, consensus belief, common-sense judgment, or other such conformist and criticism-stifling forms of the Fishian 'interpretive community'. I was also picking up on the particular issue between de Man and Fish as regards the possibility – the impossibility, as Fish thinks it – that reading might indeed be 'an argument' in so far as it goes against the grain of existing interpretive norms (and even against the persuasive force of certain passages of the text in hand) and claims to discover the source of such resistance in a counter-logic intrinsically at odds with the text's manifest purport.

Such, as we have seen, are Derrida's deviant or paraconsistent logics of 'supplementarity', 'différance', 'parergonality', and so forth, all of them emergent from a close-reading that nowhere renounces the most exacting standards of bivalent (classical) reasoning but the upshot of which is to show how their application may run into problems that cannot be resolved on classical terms. Although he doesn't make explicit reference to the *trivium* model his entire approach is premised, like de Man's, on the standing possibility that rhetoric may create problems for logic and for any theory of knowledge entailing some version, however qualified or nuanced, of the idea that mind becomes acquainted with world through a structural correspondence between thoughts, propositions (or statements), and veridical states of affairs. So there is a need to recognize how rhetoric may work to disrupt the 'stable cognitive

field' that supposedly grounds the isomorphic relation between logic, grammar, and the structure of phenomenal appearances. Yet there is also the need for an epistemology of rhetoric – a rigorous accounting for that same disruptive force – that is able to reveal its critical power as an undoer of various highly appealing yet false or tententious ideologies that often take effect through a seductive assimilation of thought and language to notions of organic or quasi-natural development and growth.⁶⁷ It is through analogies like this, according to de Man, that the *trivium* model in its naïve, literalist, or dogmatic form comes to dominate a good deal of 'common-sense' thinking about language and also to leave its distinctive stamp on some highly influential (and in one case catastrophic) ideas of the intimate and privileged link between language, culture, and national identity.⁶⁸

V

However my main concern here is not with these overtly political dimensions of de Man's thought but rather with its relatively 'technical' bearing on issues in philosophy of language and epistemology. For in fact, as he remarks with a sidelong glance at certain Marxist critics of deconstruction, '[w]hat we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism'. From which it follows that 'the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence'.⁶⁹

If the latter assertion seems like a piece of willful paradox-mongering then that impression may be lessened by recalling the double-aspect character of rhetoric as de Man conceives it. Such is also the ambivalent status of literature – along with the 'linguistics of literariness' – in so far as it represents on the one hand a potent

source of cultural-ideological mystification and on the other, conversely, a powerful means of undoing or resisting the effects of that widespread 'aesthetic ideology' that became the chief focus of his critical attention in the essays of his final decade. Hence, de Man writes,

the need for a phenomenalized, empirically manifest principle of cognition on whose existence the possibility of such an articulation [that between mind and world or thought and reality] depends. This phenomenalized principle is what Kant calls the aesthetic. The investment in the aesthetic is therefore considerable, since the possibility of philosophy itself, as the articulation of a transcendental with a metaphysical discourse, depends on it.

This is why the epistemology of rhetoric (or tropes) comes to occupy such a privileged place – or to bear such a singular weight of critical responsibility – as regards the 'unmasking' of certain 'ideological aberrations'. For it is de Man's express view, and one implicit throughout Derrida's work, that these latter achieve their greatest since most natural-seeming effect through a failure, on the part of readers and thinkers, to exercise the kind of vigilant attentiveness to the workings of rhetoric in its suasive aspect that is exemplified in their own deconstructive readings.

Such vigilance acts as a salutary check on the tendency – the 'eudaimonic' tendency, as de Man puts it in his markedly ascetic or Kantian-rigorist tone – to simply go along with those seductive opportunities that language offers for avoiding the labor of critical thought. That is to say, they provide an escape-route from the effort of analysis required to keep thinking alert to the various pitfalls that will otherwise leave it prey to forms of ideological bewitchment. It will then be prone to indulging the false sense of transcendence that results from the seductive (rhetorically insinuated) claim to overcome the various prosaic dichotomies of subject and object, mind and world, or phenomenal

experience and that which purports to lie beyond the bounds of mere sensory cognition. For de Man, as for Derrida, this is one of the respects in which present-day philosophy – ‘continental’ and ‘analytic’ alike – is still striving to work its way through a good many problems and challenges bequeathed by Kant. In particular it has yet to settle accounts with the legacy of unresolved issues in Kantian epistemology that were first raised in the *Critique of Pure Reason* but then re-addressed, albeit more obliquely, in certain passages of the *Critique of Judgment*. These were issues that Kant regarded as falling safely on the side of humanly attainable knowledge – or the bringing of sensuous intuitions under concepts of understanding – but which also involved, problematically, an appeal to certain knowledge-transcendent ‘regulative ideas’ that took thinking beyond that relatively secure epistemic ground into speculative regions where knowledge could achieve no cognitive purchase.⁷⁰

De Man pursues the resultant problems through a strenuous critique of that ‘aesthetic ideology’ which he takes to have exerted a powerful and, in many ways, a powerfully distorting impact on subsequent thought about mind, language, and representation. In Derrida’s case they are taken up into a project that again has much in common with various strands of recent analytic philosophy since it can basically be seen as translating the metaphysical and epistemological themes of Kant’s original enterprise into a linguistic or logico-semantic register that yields fewer hostages to sceptical fortune. These are essays that pursue an inventive, speculative, highly original yet cogently argued path through that Kantian ‘conflict of the faculties’ which effectively mapped out in advance a whole range of present-day disputes around the issue of disciplinary competence or whether any one discipline can or should lay claim to priority over others that are then taken to lie within its ju-

ridical domain.⁷¹ More specifically, it is an issue as to just how far other disciplines should be held accountable to standards of truth or logical rigor laid down by and for philosophy, or just how far other branches of philosophy should themselves be subject to the sorts of constraint laid down by the ground-rules of formal logic.

The writings of Kant in question range over various boundary-disputes – principally between the ‘higher’ faculties of law, theology and medicine and the ‘lower’ faculty of philosophy – which need not concern us here save to note that philosophy preserves its right to raise questions of the deepest import with respect to every aspect of human existence just so long as it refrains from claiming any kind of executive power or seeking any kind of direct influence over those charged with exerting such power.⁷² This trade-off – which Derrida construes by analogy with Austin’s distinction between constative and performative speech-acts – is one that he subjects to an intensely critical yet far from dismissive or condemnatory treatment.⁷³ For present purposes its chief relevance is that Kant here rehearses a version of the issue between reason in its ‘pure’, i.e., circumstantially unencumbered exercise and reason in its various practically engaged, hence more socio-politically powerful and yet – in ‘purely’ philosophic terms – less accountable modes of deployment. The conflict thus works out as a close analogue – not just a fanciful allegory – of the sorts of dispute that typically arise when it is a question of the relative priority between logic and commonsense, or analytic philosophy in its purebred Russellian form and the claims of ‘ordinary’, natural, or everyday language.

Derrida’s point is that analysis will get us nowhere if it doesn’t remain closely in touch with the various real-world contexts of enquiry that alone provide a basis for its equally various projects of investigation. That those contexts must be thought of as

jointly and inseparably textual-linguistic-discursive on the one hand and material-concrete-experiential on the other – that it is an error and the source of endless philosophical bewilderment to suppose otherwise – is the true (intended) sense of that notorious but widely and mischievously misconstrued passage where he declares that ‘there is nothing outside the text’ (more precisely: that ‘there is no “outside” to the text’).⁷⁴ What must otherwise sound like a far-out textualist variation on Kantian idealist themes can then be understood rightly, i.e., as a thesis that stands directly opposed to any such doctrine and which holds on the contrary that thought and language cannot be conceived as developing, functioning, or possessing any of their properly distinctive attributes except on condition that they do refer to such none the less language-independent realities. So much is plain enough if one considers the variety of referential-thematic concerns – from language to music to civil society to a great range of highly specific political and ethical *topoi* – that Derrida took up across his four decades of intensely productive writing. Any notion of his having gone along with the wilder claims of post-structuralist theory and elected (impossibly) to sever the tie between signifier and signifier or, more aptly, sign and referent comes to grief on the straightforward evidence that Derrida is writing very pointedly and forcefully *about* these things. Moreover, his way of doing so is one that discovers certain aspects of them – problematical aspects when viewed from a ‘normal’, received or orthodox perspective – that are not (*pace* Searle) just so many products of an errant or perversely skewed deconstructive approach but which pertain to the topic in hand as a matter of strict demonstrative warrant.

In short, deconstruction engages with language in a productive and critical way *just to the extent* that language is taken to possess a referential function simply in vir-

tue of its normal informative-communicative power. However it must also be taken to possess a power of revealing the symptomatic blind-spots or aberrant passages where that function is subject to logical-conceptual strain by an emergent disparity between what the author manifestly means to say and what the covert logic of their argument constrains them obliquely to acknowledge or concede.⁷⁵ Hence, as I have said, the necessity that any properly deconstructive reading – any reading with a claim to adequate conceptual rigor – will likewise acknowledge the binding force, at least up to a point, of theoretical (constative) criteria whereby both to specify the relevant norms of veridical discourse and to pinpoint the stage at which those norms encounter a textual-thematic crux that resists being held to a classical account or brought within the compass of a bivalent true/false logic. The criteria in question have to do with truth-conditions or standards of validity for the conduct of rational enquiry that can be relinquished only at the cost of inviting the above-mentioned charge of manifest self-contradiction. Yet they are also prerequisite to the business of showing how certain kinds of text – ranging all the way from Husserl’s meditations on the origins of geometry to writings of a primarily historical, ethical, or political character – may generate extreme complications of sense that could not be discovered or even entertained as a matter of conceptual possibility without having first been subject to the most exacting process of analysis on bivalent terms. Quite simply, any striking out into country beyond the safe confines of classical logic will need to do so from the relatively secure base-camp of a first reading – or a first stage in the reading-procedure – that accepts those terms not only as its point of departure but also thereafter as its constant point of reference. They act as a salutary check against the possible temptation of an ultra-textualist (whether Rortian or ‘literary’) approach

that would exploit the hermeneutic or interpretative freedoms opened up by a disregard for such logical constraints but would thereby forego any genuine claim to conceptual, philosophical, or critical insight.

Here we might recall a well-known passage from *Of Grammatology* where Derrida reflects on the way that deconstruction is obliged to take stock of an author's express or implied intent while none the less allowing that texts may harbor some deviant or 'supplementary' logic that blocks any straightforward appeal to intention as the lodestone of responsible commentary. Thus: [t]o recognize and respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything'. However, as the passage very pointedly goes on, 'this indispensable guardrail has always only protected, it has never opened, a reading'.⁷⁶ The same passage could just as well apply to the role of bivalent logic in so far as it functions not merely as a handy heuristic device or methodological convenience, but rather as the sole means by which deconstruction is able to establish both the way that certain texts disrupt or complicate that logic and its own entitlement – or working credentials – as a discourse equipped to reveal just how such anomalies occur. So there is nothing in the least contradictory about Derrida's maintaining a principled regard for the requirements of classical truth/falsehood while discovering bivalence to meet its limits and give way to more complex ('deviant', 'paraconsistent', 'supplementary', or 'parergonal') logics when confronted with various problematical passages in texts.

Here it is worth noting – by way of close analogy – that one major development in modern mathematics and logic involved the seemingly bizarre combination of extreme formal rigor with an up-

shot that pointed to the inbuilt limits of any such reasoning. This was Kurt Gödel's famous undecidability theorem to the effect that any formal system of sufficient complexity to generate the axioms of (say) elementary arithmetic or first-order logic could be shown to contain at least one axiom which could not be proved within that system or by using its own logical-conceptual resources.⁷⁷ What is strange about this is that the theorem is itself set out and proved by means of a highly complex and extended formal-logical sequence of argument which cannot but depend upon just those resources that it shows to fall short of such probative warrant or ultimate demonstrative force. Gödel espoused an objectivist and classical – in this context what amounts to a Platonist – approach since he thought that it offered the only way to save his argument from just that charge of manifest self-refutation, as well as affording the only adequate ontology and theory of truth for mathematics and the formal sciences. Unless it were the case that there existed truths beyond the limits of purely formal demonstration or procedural proof, and unless our minds could have access to them by some non-empirical means, then there could be no accounting for our grasp of a theorem which requires such a highly elaborate structure of logico-mathematical argument yet the truth of which, on its own submission, cannot be derived by any purely axiomatic-deductive or rigorously formalized means.

This Platonist claim has been widely discussed by logicians and philosophers of mathematics, and is very far from enjoying general acceptance. However it is one that has a clear advantage over rival (e.g. intuitionist, formalist, constructivist, or fictionalist) accounts according to which mathematical 'truth' is best treated as merely a convenient *façon de parler* or else most plausibly construed in anti-realist terms as coming down to a matter of epistemic warrant or whatever lies within the

scope and limits of our current-best methods of proof.⁷⁸ That advantage lies in realism's making due allowance for the always possible discrepancy between truth and present-best knowledge, a discrepancy to which we can find ample witness by consulting the entire history to date of advances in knowledge – that is, of progressive approximations to truth – in every discipline where the question arises as to whether what presently counts as knowledge is objectively or veridically so.⁷⁹ Indeed I would venture to define this as the hallmark of a properly deconstructive reading as opposed to one which exploits a vaguely Derridean rhetoric of *différance* or, on occasion, a quasi-Gödelian rhetoric of undecidability. The former kind of reading entails a claim to discern or detect certain non-manifest textual structures – most often logico-semantic structures leading to a point of classically irresolvable aporia or contradiction – that are demonstrably there in the text under scrutiny even though they had hitherto passed unnoticed when subject to other, less exacting modes of analysis. The latter kind, conversely, makes liberal use of those terms and their various cognates but does so in a loose and approximative way, or through a broadly analogical (even metaphoric) mode of thought that lacks anything remotely comparable to Derrida's practice of close-reading as a form of immanent critique.

Of course its proponents could object to this on the grounds that Derrida has surely shown, in his essay 'White Mythology' and elsewhere, how the distinction between concept and metaphor – along with those between reason and rhetoric, philosophy and literature, and sundry affiliated pairs – falls prey to a deconstructive reading that would challenge philosophy's self-appointed role as a discourse uniquely privileged in virtue of its logical probity and truth-telling warrant.⁸⁰ However, quite apart from his numerous avowals of un-

swerving commitment to philosophy as a vocation and a discipline of thought, it is also very clear from an attentive reading of 'White Mythology' that Derrida in fact goes out of his way to disown or repudiate any such account of his work. So far from simply 'deconstructing' the concept/metaphor distinction – at least in the vulgar-deconstructionist sense of 'inverting', 'rejecting', or just plain 'rubbishing' – his essay goes a long and highly complex argumentative way around to make the point that we should have no critical resources for raising this question of metaphor's role in the texts of philosophy were it not for philosophy's having provided every last concept and category whereby to raise it or render it a topic capable of intelligent, focused, and productive discussion. Indeed there is an obvious affinity between the misconstrual of Derrida's essay which takes him to hold that 'all concepts come down to metaphors', that 'logic is just a sub-species of rhetoric', or that 'philosophy is just another kind of literature' and the Fish-derived or Rortian neo-pragmatist idea of rhetoric which recognizes only its persuasive (illocutionary) aspect and not its other, epistemo-critical dimension. It is here that Derrida is most closely in accord with de Man's cardinal precept: that reading be conceived as a process of 'argument' with, in, and through the text that is being read and also – strictly correlative to that – with, in, and through the text that is being written by way of critical exegesis.

Such a reading is possible only on certain rather stringent conditions which are most clearly and strikingly exemplified in Derrida's early and middle-period work. Among them is that finely-held, sometimes tensile or knife-edge balance between a genuine respect for the demands of scholarly, philological, and interpretative rigor – along with a due regard for whatever can be fairly conjectured in respect of authorial intentions – and the need for that precise degree of exegetical

departure from orthodox (fideist) protocols of reading which opens the way to fresh sources of critical insight. This in turn involves a certain implicit ontology of the text or conception of its rightful claim on the reader-interpreter, one that holds out (again *contra* Fish) for its capacity to mean something other than might be wished upon it by the reader or his/her 'interpretive community' and which thus maintains that crucial margin wherein deviant or non-canonical readings can establish their claim to attention. Here we should recall that a concern with such questions of textual ontology was something that Derrida imbibed early on from his intensive studies of Husserlian phenomenology, that figured centrally in his (uncompleted) doctoral thesis on 'The Ideality of the Literary Object', and that continued to occupy his thinking despite – or rather by reason of – the complications that arose through its subsequent exposure to deconstructive analysis.⁸¹ What is most relevant in this context is the fact (one that Derrida often states as a matter of principle but which is also borne out in a practical way through the detailed conduct of his readings) that texts make certain demands upon those who would claim to comprehend, interpret or indeed deconstruct them and moreover that the kinds of constraint in question are none the less stringent when the upshot is to challenge or contest some mainstream-orthodox mode of understanding.

In which case there is clearly an onus on any competent, qualified, or good-faith interpreter to acknowledge the text – if not perhaps the 'work', since by now that term is often thought to bear unwanted connotations – as a multiplex, challenging, often contradictory, ontologically elusive but none the less *independently existent* verbal construct that cannot be wished away through some assertion of creative autonomy on the reader's part. Such assertions have been issued with great regularity in re-

cent years and range all the way from Roland Barthes's celebration of the 'death of the author', *via* Foucault's more historically nuanced reflections on the shifting role of 'the author' as a function of various discursive regimes, to Stanley Fish's dissolution of text and author alike into mere products of this or that 'interpretive community' which will always willy-nilly project them in its own image.⁸² That Derrida comes out firmly against this relativization of textual meaning to readerly or interpretative predilection is one sure sign of his standing apart from those post-structuralist, postmodernist or neo-pragmatist trends that have worked so hard to promote it. To that extent his is an objectivist conception of the text – of its status and demands on the reader – which does have significant features in common with a realist ontology in the physical or formal sciences, despite all the caveats that need to be entered when proposing an analogy between such otherwise disparate orders of discourse.

VI

In philosophy of science this whole line of argument can be turned around, as it often is by anti-realists, and refurbished as the so-called 'sceptical meta-induction' according to which it is the merest of delusions to suppose that science is closer to truth now than at any stage in its previous history.⁸³ After all, so it is said, if we are now apt to think that scientists have been either flat wrong or very partially informed with respect to the vast majority of theories, hypotheses, and even confident truth-claims put forward throughout the entire history of the physical sciences to date then how can we suppose – without manifest hubris – that our own situation is decisively different? To which realists just as often respond that this argument is self-stultifying since the sceptical meta-induction depends on our now having adequate warrant to claim – as a matter of rational

self-evidence – that those previous beliefs didn't amount to knowledge, or that the earlier state of knowledge was limited in certain to us now manifest respects. Besides, they may add, were it not for this character of science as a cumulative, truth-oriented and (for the most part) epistemically progressive enterprise we should have to count the various working technologies that it has hitherto managed to devise as so many products of 'cosmic coincidence' or sheer serendipity.⁸⁴

Of course this disagreement goes as deep as any in epistemology and philosophy of science, and is therefore unlikely – as with most such disputes – to achieve resolution through the sudden arrival of some knock-down argument on either side. Still it is one that at any rate divides the contending parties along clear-cut philosophical lines and thus allows for meaningful debate not only in those disciplinary quarters but also with regard to the deconstructive claim, as stated most forcefully by de Man, that 'reading is an argument... because it has to go against the grain of what one would want to happen in the name of what has to happen'.⁸⁵ Moreover, in his carefully specified terms, 'this is the same as saying that reading is an epistemological event prior to being an ethical or aesthetic value. This does not mean that there can be a true reading, but that no reading is conceivable in which the question of its truth or falsehood is not primarily involved'.⁸⁶ These statements make the point in a typically forthright, even (some would say) authoritarian or doctrinaire style. All the same they can be seen as setting forth what is likewise implicit throughout Derrida's work, in particular those earlier writings where the emphasis falls more squarely on just how it is that texts can be found to put up resistance – formal, structural, logico-semantic and conceptual resistance – to readings that would seek, wittingly or not, to conceal or dissimulate the various anomalies revealed by a decon-

structive account. It is here that issues of interpretative theory join up with those debates in epistemology and philosophy of science that turn on the question whether truth can be conceived, in realist terms, as always potentially surpassing or transcending our present-best or even best attainable state of knowledge. That is to say, it is the question – much discussed by philosophers in recent years – as to whether it can make any kind of sense to think of some optimal state of knowledge as none the less potentially falling short of, or coming apart from, objective (i.e., mind-independent or recognition-transcendent) truth.⁸⁷

One useful way of linking those debates with the kinds of issue typically posed by the deconstructive reading of texts is to consider the role played by thought-experiments, that is to say, by fictive or imaginary goings-on in the 'laboratory of the mind'.⁸⁸ These are procedures that can act not only as handy 'intuition-pumps' (in Daniel Dennett's equally handy phrase) but also, on occasion, as the means of some decisive conceptual advance that could not yet have been achieved by any other method. Such instances range historically all the way from Galileo's classic refutation of the received (Aristotelian) doctrine that the rate of gravitationally-induced free fall would vary proportionately with the weight of different bodies to those thought-experiments conducted by Einstein in order to establish the theories of special and general relativity, or those devised by Einstein, Bohr and Schrödinger to investigate the implications of quantum physics.⁸⁹ What they all have in common – a feature exemplified most strikingly in Galileo's case – is the deployment at some crucial stage of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument which shows the existing or prevailing (soon-to-be-rejected) doctrine to harbor some pair of contradictory entailments which, once revealed, are sufficient to discredit that doctrine and open the way to its plainly superior since

non-self-contradictory successor. It seems to me that this mode of argument is identical in point of formal or logical structure to that in which de Man casts his various critiques of 'aesthetic ideology'.⁹⁰ That is to say, it works in a manner precisely analogous to his deployment of a critical rhetoric – an 'epistemology of tropes' – that derives its deconstructive or demystifying force from the discovery of textual contradictions, aporias, or logical non-sequiturs that had hitherto passed unnoticed through the power of received ideas to impose their own, canonically endorsed or conformist habits of response. It is also germane to Derrida's practice of drawing attention to the various kinds of anomaly, discrepancy, paradox, or suchlike indices of deep-laid logico-semantic tension that are there to be exposed – 'there' in the text, as he is keen to establish, rather than projected onto it – through a sufficiently alert deconstructive reading.

Here we might recall that crucially important passage in *Of Grammatology* concerning what he sees as the complex, over-determined, sometimes conflictive yet at just those moments symptomatically revealing order of relationship between author's intent and textual meaning. Thus, 'the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely' since '[h]e uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system'.⁹¹ Nevertheless, as Derrida also makes clear, the extent of that linguistic or discursive governance can be grasped only in so far as we register the countervailing extent to which an author's expressive or purposive intent is able to work both *within and against* the 'system' and thereby convey something not laid down in advance, or not always already to be found amongst the standing beliefs of some existent Fishian 'interpretive community'. Hence his stress on the requirement that a deconstructive reading be at

least as respectful of authorial intention as those other, more orthodox or fideist readings that are naturally apt to proclaim their superior credentials in this respect. Thus '[t]o recognize and respect all [these] classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism'. However the effort is strictly indispensable since '[w]ithout this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything'.⁹² Here one might note the implicit rebuke to any line of thought, like that of Barthes and his post-structuralist disciples, that plainly rejoices in the 'death of the author' and – what is taken to follow from this – the reader's being henceforth 'authorized' to assume just the kind of creative-expressive license that once belonged strictly to the author *ipse* as source and guarantor of meaning.⁹³

As I have said, it was Derrida's intensive early engagement with issues on the disputed border between phenomenology and structuralism that seems to have left him with a sharpened awareness of this question concerning the scope and limits of interpretative freedom or, more precisely, the kind and extent of that margin for an immanent (deconstructive) critique that both respected and went beyond the requirements of a strict regard for authorial intent. Indeed, the ambiguity of the phrase 'went beyond' in that last sentence – as between 'excelled or surpassed according to the same criteria' or 'established other, more exacting or rigorously critical standards of right reading' – is one that perfectly catches the double (though by no means contradictory) claim implicit throughout Derrida's work. The above-mentioned passages from *Of Grammatology* have been cited to varied effect by commentators with equally various ideas about the scope and limits of legitimate interpretation.⁹⁴ What emerges clearly enough – *contra* the adepts of infinitized 'freeplay'

or unrestrained hermeneutic license – is Derrida's conviction that truly productive critical reading can take place only on condition of respecting those 'classical exigencies' that must be thought to include a certain, albeit qualified regard for the claims of authorial intent and a readiness, where needed, to employ the best 'instruments' of philology or textual scholarship. However what the passage also evokes – unavoidably so if one construes it in relation to his *modus operandi* in this most ambitious and tightly organized of Derrida's early texts – is the jointly constraining and liberating power of those structural, conceptual, and logico-semantic complexities that a deconstructive reading sets out to reveal.

Taken out of context it might well appear to be the statement of a cautious, even shuffling and evasive middle-ground position. Thus it seems delicately poised between a somewhat conservative hermeneutic outlook acknowledging the need to respect authorial intentions up to a point and, on the other hand, a likewise moderate or qualified endorsement of the new-found interpretative license on offer from a typecast deconstructive (for which read 'textualist' or wholesale libertarian) stance. But when its context is taken more adequately into account – that is, its very pointed relevance to Derrida's subsequent readings of Rousseau, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss in *Of Grammatology* – then this imputation becomes hard to sustain. Instead one is likely to conclude that it is not so much the 'indispensable guardrail' of straightforward respect for authorial intent that keeps interpretation from going wildly astray but rather – as those readings show with such consummate subtlety and skill – the complex intertwining of overt and covert sense, manifest and latent implicature, or intentional purport and counter-intentional import. The 'indispensable guardrail' of authorial *vouloir-dire* is best envisaged as a kind of protective barrier

standing well to one side of a zone within which the most significant constraints are those that define exactly that margin of play – in the high-precision engineering-related rather the pseudo-deconstructive ludic sense – which engenders the kindred Derridean logics of supplementarity, parergonality, *différance* and their various cognates. Thus it simply refuses the terms laid down by that all-too-familiar notion of a choice between respecting author's intention as a kind of quasi-Kantian injunction to treat the text as an end-in-itself rather than a means to the interpreter's revisionist self-gratification and rejecting that idea *tout court* in favor of an outlook of free-for-all hermeneutic license.

However what chiefly concerns us here is not so much Derrida's way of reconceiving this particular false dilemma but rather his address to a distinct though closely-related issue. This is the question of just how it is that critical reading can discover truths about a text – and also truths about that which the text takes as its topic-domain – that may potentially transcend both anything plausibly attributable to the author's conscious intent and anything that has yet figured in that author's reception-history. Here again there is a more than suggestive link with the epistemological issue between realism and anti-realism, or the current debate – most often addressed in logico-semantic terms – as to whether truth can possibly transcend the compass of expert opinion, optimal judgment, or best attainable knowledge.⁹⁵ Moreover it suggests another main reason for Derrida's outraged response to Searle concerning the latter's causal suggestion that standards of rigorous (classical or bivalent) logic ought to be relaxed in the context of speech-act theory since the latter requires a more nuanced, flexible, and context-sensitive approach.⁹⁶

What Derrida finds so objectionable here – so downright 'shocking', especially when it comes from a self-appointed

spokesman for the 'analytic' virtue of conceptual precision against the 'continental' vice of willful obscurity – is that Searle fails to distinguish with anything like sufficient clarity between the various modes of speech-act usage or implicature as they occur in everyday language and those same modes as they figure in the discourse of speech-act theory. Thus he seems to require that this easygoing recommendation extend to the domain of philosophical semantics or philosophy of language in so far as they treat the kinds and conditions of performative utterance, rather than restricting it to the first-order, natural-language domain where speech-acts can (supposedly) be known to function in a straightforward communicative way. With respect to this latter – 'ordinary language', as Austin dubbed it, whatever its more *extraordinary* aspects when viewed close-up in Austin's (or Derrida's) manner – there are no doubt large allowances to be made for the fuzziness of certain distinctions or the difficulty (even impossibility) of holding such everyday talk to standards of clear-cut logico-semantic precision. However, as Derrida protests against Searle with more than a touch of ironic relish, there is no conceivable justification for counting philosophy – especially analytic philosophy of language – as subject to the same inherent limits on its scope for the precise articulation of its working concepts and categories. 'Not only do I find this [classical or bivalent] logic strong, and, in conceptual language and analysis, *an absolute must (il la faut)*, it must . . . be sustained against all empirical confusion, to the point where the same demand of rigour requires the structure of that logic to be transformed or complicated'.⁹⁷

If he comes out strongly in defence of such standards – and in a way that is liable to disconcert those who take him to have 'deconstructed' them once and for all – his purpose is neither just to outflank Searle, nor to flummox his numerous detractors on the

analytic side, nor again (though this is somewhat nearer the mark) to stake out his distance from both main parties in that pseudo-confrontation of 'analytic' rigour versus 'continental' license. Rather it is to situate his own work in precisely that region of logico-semantic-conceptual space where there exists the possibility of truths that surpass any presently available means of clear articulation yet whose failure to achieve such overt form may be signaled by the various tensions, non-sequiturs, dilemmas, aporias, and other symptomatic blind-spots that Derrida is so adroit at bringing out. This is why, in the above-cited passage, he states it as a precondition for the capacity of a deconstructive reading to 'transform and complicate' the protocols of classical logic that it must start out by respecting those protocols and only at the point of maximal resistance – as they prove incapable of accounting for certain anomalous or recalcitrant features of the text in hand – be willing to suspend them and explore alternative (i.e., non-classical, non-bivalent, or paraconsistent) logics.

It is also why Derrida is properly described as a realist in this regard, that is to say, as one who maintains the possibility (indeed the conceptual necessity) that some statements, propositions, or hypotheses be thought to possess a truth-value beyond whatever is capable of recognition on received or currently accepted terms. More than that, their truth-conditions must be somehow legible – 'there' to be described though not in any mode of direct, explicit, or punctual presentation – through a deconstructive analysis which thereby brings about a changed understanding of how those terms should be construed. If truth-conditions are epistemically or evidentially unconstrained – if indeed (as the realist holds) they transcend the conditions for assertoric warrant or 'truth' to the very best of our knowledge – then this need not be taken (as the anti-realist would have it) to show realism up as an unsustainable, self-contradictory, or

strictly nonsensical position. Rather it shows, in a manner analogous to Alain Badiou's mathematically-based arguments, that when truth exceeds knowledge or finds no place in the range of accredited truth-procedures it may then assume a 'subtractive' dimension whereby its very absence generates tensions that can then serve as pointers or symptomatic indices of that which eludes our present-best efforts of cognitive, intellectual, or probative grasp.⁹⁸

VII

At this stage it is worth noting that one major bone of contention between realists and anti-realists in philosophy of mathematics, logic and the formal sciences is the issue as to whether those disciplines have need of – or should properly find any place for – the classical axiom of double-negation-elimination. This is the principle commonly expressed as 'two negatives make a positive', or the jointly logical and grammatical rule that to insert two 'nots' or equivalent negating terms into any given sentence is to have them cancel out and thus restore the sentence to a straightforward assertion of whatever was originally stated or affirmed. As I have said, it is the basis of arguments that work through *reductio ad absurdum*, that is, by means of a demonstrative (logical) sequence of reasoning to the effect that any denial or rejection of statement *x* has a plainly absurd or unacceptable consequence, and hence (by double-negation-elimination) that *x* should be affirmed. Conversely it is a leading thesis of those, like Dummett, who espouse an intuitionist or anti-realist approach to mathematics that the axiom need not and should not be upheld precisely on account of its conducing to a thesis which itself – in their view – goes against certain basic principles of right reason.⁹⁹ Chief among them, as we have seen, is the intuitionist/anti-realist

precept that truth cannot intelligibly be supposed to transcend or exceed the bounds of whatever can be known, discovered, formally proved, empirically established or otherwise borne out by the best investigative methods or techniques to hand. On this account the process of enquiry should not be envisaged as exploring regions of objective, pre-existent though hitherto unexplored conceptual or natural-scientific terrain but rather as opening up new paths of thought that in turn open up – indeed which create – new landscapes for the inventive designer-explorer. In which case there is clearly no need or room for the objectivist idea that thinking can find out truths beyond its present-best knowledge by following out certain logical implications that hold good despite and against the existent state of ignorance concerning them.

It is here, I submit, that Derrida's work poses the greatest challenge to received ways of thinking in epistemology and philosophy of science. It is best seen as a form of highly detailed and sophisticated thought-experimental reasoning conducted in and through the encounter with texts which effectively constitute just such a challenge through their turning out to harbor unresolved problems, aporias, or conceptual anomalies that act as a spur to otherwise strictly inconceivable advances in knowledge. Of course there has been much debate between those who affirm and those who deny that thought-experiments can deliver something more than purely analytic, i.e., self-evident but wholly uninformative truths and can actually establish substantive theses with respect to various scientific and other regions of enquiry.¹⁰⁰ Starting out with Kant's arguments for the existence of synthetic *a priori* knowledge this debate has typically swung back and forth between, on the one hand, assertions that such real-world applicable knowledge is indeed obtainable by means of speculative procedures run off-line in the 'labora-

tory of the mind' and, on the other, assertions that any results thus obtained cannot be more than disguised tautologies or the product of concealed definitions smuggled in under cover of some seemingly innocuous premise. What Derrida shows through close-readings of singular tenacity and also – *pace* Searle and other detractors – extreme conceptual precision is the possibility of finding out truths that cannot be expressed (that is, which elude any overt, articulate, and logically consistent presentation) in the text under analysis. Moreover, those truths are by no means confined to some purely linguistic or intra-discursive register of sense but must rather be seen as possessing a highly specific referential dimension and hence as pointing to genuine complexities or unresolved issues with respect to the given subject-domain. Beyond that – as emerges with increasing clarity in his later work – they articulate problems intrinsic to certain kinds of discourse on certain topics, those (such as justice, hospitality, forgiveness, friendship, democracy, or cosmopolitanism) which analytic philosophers might recognize as belonging to the class of 'essentially contested concepts'.¹⁰¹

For Derrida, as likewise for many of the thinkers who have deployed this resonant phrase, such concepts are problematic not solely on account of their complex or elusive conceptual character but in virtue of just that referential linkage with matters of real-world ethical, social, political, historical, and not least (if one considers his writings on Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss) anthropological concern. It is for this reason chiefly that deconstruction can be characterized – *pace* Fish – as a negative theory but one with very real and potentially far-reaching consequences. (Whether or not it is properly described as 'anti-foundationalist' in anything like Fish's – or Rorty's – stock usage of that term is a complicated issue which need not detain us here.¹⁰²) Nor should it be thought that his

approaching these topics by way of texts from Plato to Husserl and Austin rather than by 'direct' engagement with them is itself a sure sign that Derrida is out to create extra problems of a purely exegetical or hyper-induced character. More specifically, it is often taken as evidence that he seeks to spin some ingenious web of multiple conflicting significations which then serves – in typically idealist fashion – to block any reference to objects or events 'outside' the all-encompassing or all-consuming realm of textuality. In his later writings Derrida was at some pains to repudiate this misinterpretation of passages that seemed to espouse such an extreme anti-realist or ultra-constructivist view but which should properly be taken – so he now averred – to 'complicate' the nature and workings of referential language rather than deny that language could ever achieve anything more than an endlessly deferred simulacrum of reference.¹⁰³

If such misapprehensions are perhaps understandable when the passages in question (as very often happens) are cited completely out of context it is less so when the standard charges of idealism, solipsism, modish *linguisterie*, textualist mystification, and so forth, issue from readers laying claim to acquaintance with more than a handful of dubiously representative quotes. I have put the case here that Derrida's work does have significant implications for philosophy of language and logic, and that these result mainly – *contra* the dominant consensus among admirers and detractors alike – from its adopting what amounts to a critical-realist stance toward both the texts and the topic-domains with which it engages. Deconstruction is very often assumed to belong squarely on the side of anti-realism, constructivism, cultural-linguistic relativism, irrationalism, or a composite bugbear that incorporates all these and more. That in truth it belongs very firmly elsewhere is a point that finds plentiful evidence in Derrida's texts but

which again has been missed with curious tenacity by those ranged for and against it in various disciplinary quarters.

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- 81 See entries under Note 2, above; also Derrida, 'The Time of a Thesis: punctuations', in Alan Montefiore (ed.), *Philosophy in France Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 34–50.
- 82 For a well-informed and witty account of these premature announcements, see Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: criticism and subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).
- 83 This issue is taken up from various angles in Jarrett Leplin (ed.), *Scientific Realism* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). See also Larry Laudan, *Progress and Its Problems* (U. California Press, 1977) and 'A Confutation of Convergent Realism', *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 48 (1981), pp. 19–49.
- 84 See for instance Richard Boyd, 'The Current Status of Scientific Realism', in Leplin (ed.), *Scientific Realism* (op. cit.), pp. 41–82.
- 85 See Note 16, above.
- 86 See Note 16, above.
- 87 For a range of views on this topic, see William P. Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978) and *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Duckworth, 1991); Michael Luntley, *Language, Logic and Experience: the case for anti-realism* (London: Duckworth, 1988); Norris, *Truth Matters: realism, anti-realism and response-dependence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002); Neil Tennant, *The Taming of the True* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Crispin Wright, *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) and *Realism, Meaning, and Truth*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
- 88 See especially James Robert Brown, *The Laboratory of the Mind: thought experiments in the natural sciences* (London: Routledge, 1991) and *Smoke and Mirrors: how science reflects reality* (Routledge, 1994); R. Sorensen, *Thought Experiments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- 89 For an account of these quantum thought-experiments, see Norris, *Quantum Theory and the Flight from Realism: philosophical responses to quantum mechanics* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- 90 See Notes 16, 19 and 56, above.
- 91 Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (op. cit.), p. 158.
- 92 Ibid, p. 158.
- 93 See Note 82, above.
- 94 For a survey of these (mostly negative or hostile) assessments, see Norris, 'Raising the Tone: Derrida, Kierkegaard and the rhetoric of transcendence' and 'Of an Apoplectic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', in *Reclaiming Truth* (op. cit.), pp. 73–126 and 222–53.
- 95 See entries under Note 87, above.
- 96 Derrida, 'Afterword: toward an ethic of conversation' (Note 4, above).
- 97 Ibid, pp. 122–3.

- 98 See especially Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005); *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (Continuum, 2004); *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin MacKay (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).
- 99 See Michael Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) and *Truth and Other Enigmas* (op. cit.).
- 100 See Note 88, above; also – for a first-rate survey and extended bibliography of the literature on thought-experiments – James Robert Brown's essay for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at [<http://www.seop.leeds.ac.uk/entries/thought-experiment/>].
- 101 See for instance Derrida *Monolingualism of the Other, or, the prosthesis of origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford U.P., 2000); *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001); *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Peter Pericles Trifonas (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); *Rogues: two essays on reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford U.P., 2005); *Beast and the Sovereign*, Vol. 1, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. G. Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- 102 See Norris, *New Idols of the Cave* (op. cit.), for further argument against those (like Rorty) who seek to recruit Derrida – often through a highly selective or snippety reading – to the cause of their own wholesale anti-foundationalist, anti-realist, or neo-pragmatist crusade.
- 103 See for instance Derrida, 'Afterword: toward an ethic of conversation' (Note 4, above).

DEKONSTRUKCIJA, LOGIKA I „OBIČAN JEZIK“: DERIDA O GRANICAMA MIŠLJENJA

Rezime

U ovom eseju se tvrdi – što je suprotno opšteprihvaćenom mišljenju kako Deridinih pobornika tako i njegovih kritičara – da se Deridino djelo prvenstveno bavi pitanjima filozofije logike i jezika, koja su bila glavni predmet interesa filozofa „druge“, npr. analitičke i vodeće anglofone tradicije. Štaviše, ova pitanja su ovdje obrađena na način da se pokreću i druga pitanja epistemološkog i ontološkog karaktera, o kojima analitičari takođe aktivno raspravljaju. Ona uključuju i trenutno aktuelnu raspravu između realista i antirealista u vezi sa pitanjem da li se na jedan prikladan i razumljiv način može zamisliti da istina prelazi granice dostupnog svjedočanstva, najboljeg trenutnog znanja, ili ostvarivog dokaza. Moj esej prvo predstavlja suprotstavljene argumente, a potom tvrdi – što se opet snažno protivi standardnom shvatanju njegovog djela – da Derida zagovara stanovište realista ne samo u logičko-semantičkom smislu (na kojima se

danas najčešće zasniva ova rasprava), nego i kao pitanje ontološke posvećenosti.

Zaista, da nije tako, tada ne bi bilo opravdanja za tvrdnju – koja je implicitna u cijelom njegovom radu – da dekonstruktivno tumačenje može otkriti (više nego projektovati ili izmisliti) do tada neprepoznate kompleksnosti razuma i logike. Ove kompleksnosti onda služe da ukažu na do tada neprepoznate probleme i nedostatke u trenutnom stanju znanja koje se odnosi na jednu ili više onih brojnih tematskih oblasti kojima se Derida bavi uz pomoć takvog tumačenja. Otuda i njegovo insistiranje koje se suprotstavlja standardnim optužbama, da on ni za jedan trenutak ne odbacuje ili zanemaruje referencijalnu komponentu jezika, nego da ističe vrste komplikacije – nesigurnosti obima ili slučajeva kontekstualne nedovoljne ili prevelike determinacije – koje obično ostanu neprimijećene zbog drugih, više pojednostavljenih ili doktriniranih razloga. Moj esej tako nastoji da ponovo pozicionira Deridino djelo u pogledu nekih od najvažnijih rasprava u okviru današnje analitičke filozofije.

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