

## **“A Systematic Theoretical Matrix for a Deconstruction of Metaphysics” In the Critical Work of Jacques Derrida’s “Writing and Difference”**

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**ABSTRACT:** The concept of the **metaphysics of presence** is an important consideration in deconstruction. Deconstructive interpretation hold that the entire history of Western philosophy with its language and traditions has emphasized the desire for immediate access to meaning, and thus built a metaphysics or ontotheology based on privileging presence over absence. Deconstructive thinkers, like Jacques Derrida, describe their task as the questioning or deconstruction of this metaphysical tendency in Western philosophy. Derrida writes, "Without a doubt, Aristotle thinks of time on the basis of *ousia* as *parousia*, on the basis of the now, the point, etc. And yet an entire reading could be organized that would repeat in Aristotle's text both this limitation and its opposite." This argument is largely based on the earlier work of Heidegger, who in *Being and Time* claimed that the theoretical attitude of pure presence is parasitical upon a more originary involvement with the world in concepts such as the ready-to-hand and being-with. Friedrich Nietzsche is a more distant, but clear, influence as well.

**Keywords:** *Interpretation, Deconstruction, Metaphysical, ontotheology*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Criticism is a concept of Questioning, Challenging, Criticizing and Arguing. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) is one of the most well known twentieth century French philosophers born in Algeria. Derrida is best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction, which he discussed in numerous texts, and developed in the context of phenomenology. He is one of the major figures associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy. He was also one of the most prolific. Distancing himself from the various philosophical movements and traditions that preceded him on the French intellectual scene (phenomenology, existentialism, and structuralism), he developed a strategy called "deconstruction" in the mid 1960s. He is the father of Deconstruction.

**Deconstruction** is a name commonly associated with philosopher Jacques Derrida's critical outlook over the relationship between text and meaning. Derrida's approach consists in conducting readings of texts with an ear to what runs counter to the structural unity or intended sense of a particular text. The purpose is to expose that the object of language and what upon which any text is founded is irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. Throughout his readings, Derrida hoped to show deconstruction at work, i.e., the ways that this original complexity which by definition cannot ever be completely known works its structuring and destructuring effects.

Deconstruction also inspired deconstructivism in architecture and remains important within art, music, and literary criticism. Deconstruction has at least two aspects: literary and philosophical. The literary aspect concerns the textual interpretation, where invention is essential to finding hidden alternative meanings in the text. The philosophical aspect concerns the main target of deconstruction: the "metaphysics of presence," or simply metaphysics. Starting from an Heideggerian point of view, Derrida argues that metaphysics affects the whole of philosophy from Plato onwards. Metaphysics creates dualistic oppositions and installs a hierarchy that unfortunately privileges one term of each dichotomy (presence before absence, speech before writing, and so on). Deconstruction denotes the pursuing of the meaning of a text to the point of exposing the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions upon which it is founded supposedly showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. It is an approach that may be deployed in philosophy, in literary analysis, and even in the analysis of scientific writings. Deconstruction generally tries to demonstrate that any text is not a discrete whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings; that any text therefore has more than one interpretation; that the text itself links these interpretations inextricably; that the

incompatibility of these interpretations is irreducible; and thus that an interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point. Derrida refers to this point as an "aporia" in the text; thus, deconstructive reading is termed "aporetic." He insists that meaning is made possible by the relations of a word to other words within the network of structures that language is.

Deconstruction often involves a way of reading that concerns itself with decentering with unmasking the problematic nature of all centers. According to Derrida, all western thought is based on the idea of center an origin, a truth, an ideal Form, a Fixed Point, an Immovable Mover, an essence, a God, a Presence which is usually capitalized, and guarantees all meaning. Derrida has taken the deconstruction of metaphysics, particularly logocentric metaphysics, as his critical target. His early training in phenomenology led to a wariness of, and a tempered respect for, the desire for presence all pervasive in Western philosophy: a presence of meaning, being, and knowledge.

All metaphysicians proceed from an origin, seen as simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical to treat then of accidents, derivations, complication, deterioration. Hence God before evil, positive before negative, pure before complex, etc. This is not just one metaphysical gesture among others; it is the metaphysical exigency, the most constant, profound and potent procedure.

Derrida's task is to undermine metaphysical thinking to disrupt its foundations, dislodged its certitudes, turn aside its quests for an undivided point of origin, the logos. Its major task, Derrida argues that metaphysics pervades Western thought. Now, if Metaphysics is so pervasive, isn't Derrida's own thinking going to be inhabited by it? Yes inescapably. So the task is impossible..? Derrida has never claimed that what he does is possible. He knows that no critique can ever totally escape from what it is criticizing. Meanwhile, movements can be made.... It is possible to overturn a metaphysical binaries, to reverse its hierarchy by privileging its second term for instance, to privilege body not mind, Man not God, the complex before the simple, absence rather than presence. Derrida does this.

But undecidability disrupts the binary structures of metaphysical thinking. It displaces the "either/or" structure of oppositions. The undecidable plays all ways, takes no sides. It won't be fixed down. It leaves no certainty of privileged foundational term against subordinated second term. The unfixing of this certainty is the unfixing of Metaphysics. *Derrida's Philosophy has been called anti-foundationalism*. That's partly useful. But Derrida is not simply "against" foundations, he knows they are inescapable. However, metaphysical foundations can still be shaken. That's what he does. He makes a movement of solicitation (French word, from old Latin *sollicitare*, to shake as a whole), a shaking at the core, a tremor through the entire structure. Metaphysical oppositions rely on assumptions of presence. The first or privileged binary term "full" presence. Its subordinate is the term of absence, or of mediated, attenuated presence. This concept Derrida takes from Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the German Phenomenologist. Adopting Heidegger's formulation, Derrida argues that in western thinking the meaning of being in general has been determined by presence, in all the senses of this word. Presence can be spatial: for example, proximity, nearness or adjacency, and also immediacy, having actual or direct contact, lacking mediation, having no intervening material, object or agency. And it can be temporal, it evokes the present as the single present moment, the now; and occurrence without delay, lapse or deferral. Presence organizes metaphysical concepts of being. And all the "groundly" terms of metaphysics designate a presence. Derrida gives these examples:

- Presence of the object to sight
- Presence as substance essence or existence
- Temporal presence as the point of the 'now', or of the instant
- Self presence of thought or consciousness
- Present being of the subject
- Co-presence of the self and the other

**"A Systematic Theoretical Matrix for a Deconstruction of Metaphysics"** is the concept of Derrida's Original Critique from essay 6 to 10 in the collection of essays "writing & difference."

## II . CONTEXT

In this Critical essay "La Porale Soufflee" which means in English "The Breath Speech" is the sixth essay of Derrida's collection of essays known as "Writing and Difference." In this particular essay Derrida Criticizes from the concept of Artaud that the first gesture of the destruction of classical theater and the metaphysics it puts on stage is the reduction of the organ. The classical Western stage defines a theater of the organ, a theater of words, thus a theater of interpretation, enregistrement, and translation, a theater of deviation from the ground-work of a pre established text, a table written by a God-Author who is the sole wielder of the primal word. A theater in which a master disposes of the stolen speech which only his slaves his directors and actors may make use of. "If, then, the author is the man who arranges the language of speech and the director is his slave, there is merely a question of words. There is here a confusion over terms, stemming from the fact that,

for us, and according to the sense generally attributed to the word *director*, this man is merely an artisan, an adapter, a kind of translator eternally devoted to making a dramatic work pass from one language into another; this confusion will be possible, and the director will be forced to play second fiddle to the author, only so long as there is an acceptance that the language of words is superior to others and that the theater admits none other than this one language” (TD, p. 119).<sup>31</sup> The differences upon which the metaphysics of Occidental theater lives (author-text / director-actors), its differentiation and its divisions, transform the “slaves” into commentators, that is, into organs. Here, they are recording organs. Now, “We must believe in a sense of life renewed by the theater, a sense of life in which man fearlessly makes himself *master of what does not yet exist* (my italics), and brings it into being. And everything that has not been born can still be brought to life if we are not satisfied to remain mere recording organisms” (TD, p. 13).

If we wish to gain access to this metaphysics of life, then life, as the source of good inspiration, must be understood as prior to the life of which the biological sciences speak: “Furthermore, when we speak the word ‘life,’ it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach. And if there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames” (TD, p.13). Life referred to “from its surface of fact” is thus the life of forms. In *Situation of the Flesh* Artaud will oppose to it “the life-force”<sup>19</sup> (CW 1:165). The theater of cruelty will have to reduce this difference between force and form.

In this following essay SEVEN “Freud and the scene of writing” Derrida justifies to the Freud concept of theory to the history of Metaphysics and the concept of difference which was subjected to the Lecture of Dr. Greens’ seminar as a Fragment.

Phonologism is Derrida’s abbreviated fashion of describing one of the metaphysical gestures inherent in most linguistics: the privilege given to a model of language based on speech, because speech is the most *present* form of language, is presence in language. This is equivalent to the metaphysical repression of writing, i.e., of difference. Here, too, Derrida might be challenging Jacques Lacan, whose statement about the unconscious being structured like a language seems to depend upon many of the linguistic conceptions which Derrida considers to be uncritically metaphysical

An attempt to justify a theoretical reticence to utilize Freudian concepts, otherwise than in quotation marks: all these concepts, without exception, belong to the history of metaphysics, that is, to the system of logocentric repression which was organized in order to exclude or to lower (to put outside or below), the body of the written trace as a didactic and technical metaphor, as servile matter or excrement. For example, logocentric repression is not comprehensible on the basis of the Freudian concept of repression; on the contrary, logocentric repression permits an understanding of how an original and individual repression became possible within the horizon of a culture and a historical structure of belonging. Why it is a question neither of following Jung, nor of following the Freudian concept of the hereditary notion of unconscious memory trace. Certainly, Freudian discourse—in its syntax, or, if you will, its labor—is not to be confused with these necessarily metaphysical and traditional concepts. Certainly it is not exhausted by belonging to them. Witness the pre-cautions and the “nominalism” with which Freud manipulates what he calls conventions and conceptual hypotheses. And a conception of difference is attached less to concepts than to discourse. But Freud never reflected upon the historical and theoretical sense of these precautions.

The necessity of an immense labor of deconstruction of the meta-physical concepts and phrases that are condensed and sedimented within Freud’s precautions. The metaphysical complications of psychoanalysis and the so-called human (or social) sciences (the concepts of presence, perception, reality, etc.). Linguistic phonologism.

The necessity of an explicit question concerning the meaning of presence in general: a comparison of the undertakings of Heidegger and of Freud. The epoch of presence, in the Heideggerian sense, and its central support, from Descartes to Hegel: presence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness. The concepts of archi-trace and of *différance*: why they are neither Freudian nor Heideggerian.

*Différance*, the pre-opening of the ontic-ontological difference (cf. *De la grammatologie*, p. 1029), and of all the differences which furrow Freudian conceptuality, such that they may be organized, and this is only an example, around the difference between “pleasure” and “reality,” or may be derived from this difference. The difference between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, for example, is not uniquely, nor primarily, a distinction, an exteriority, but rather the original possibility, within life, of the detour, of deferral (*Aufschub*) and the original possibility of the economy of death (cf. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, SE XVIII).

*Différance* and identity: *Différance* within the economy of the same. The necessity of withdrawing the concepts of trace and of *différance* from all classical conceptual oppositions. Necessity of the concept of archi-trace and the erasure of the archia. This erasure, which maintains the legibility of the archia, signifies a conceived relationship of belonging to the history of Metaphysics (De la grammatologie, 2:32).

From this essay EIGHT “The Theatre Of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” Derrida Criticises that the theatre of cruelty is the object of Metaphysics as Antonin Artaud’s Approaches to this essay and also the language employees in the Classical theatre is described below.

The theater of cruelty is not a *representation*. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable. Life is the nonrepresentable origin of representation. “I have therefore said ‘cruelty’ as I might have said ‘life’” (TD, p. 114). This life carries man along with it, but is not primarily the life of man. The latter is only a representation of life, and such is the limit the humanist limit of the metaphysics of classical theater. “The theater as we practice it can therefore be reproached with a terrible lack of imagination. The theater must make itself the equal of life not an individual life, that individual aspect of life in which characters triumph, but the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only a reflection” (TD, p. 116).

Speech and its notation phonetic speech, an element of classical theater speech and *its* writing will be erased on the stage of cruelty only in the extent to which they were allegedly *dictation*: at once citations or recitations and orders. The director and the actor will no longer take dictation: “Thus we shall renounce the theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer” (TD, p. 124). This is also the end of the *diction* which made theater into an exercise of reading. The end of the fact that for “certain theatrical amateurs this means that a play read affords just as definite and as great a satisfaction as the same play performed” (TD, p. 118). How will speech and writing function then? They will once more become *gestures*; and the *logical* and discursive intentions which speech ordinarily uses in order to ensure its rational transparency, and in order to steal or borrow its body in the direction of meaning, will be reduced or subordinated. And since this theft of the body by itself is indeed that which leaves the body to be strangely concealed by the very thing that constitutes it as diaphanousness, then the deconstitution of diaphanousness lays bare the flesh of the word, lays bare the word’s sonority, intonation, intensity the shout that the articulations of language and logic have not yet entirely frozen, that is, the aspect of oppressed gesture which remains in all speech, the unique and irreplaceable movement which the generalities of concept and repetition have never finished rejecting. We know what value Artaud attributed to what is called in the present case, quite incorrectly onomatopoeia. Glos-sopoeia, which is neither an imitative language nor a creation of names, takes us back to the borderline of the moment when the word has not yet been born, when articulation is no longer a shout but not yet discourse, when repetition is *almost* impossible, and along with it, language in general: the separation of concept and sound, of signified and signifier, of the pneumatical and the grammatical, the freedom of translation and tradition, the movement of interpretation, the difference between the soul and the body, the master and the slave, God and man, author and actor. This is the eve of the origin of languages, and of the dialogue between theology and humanism whose inextinguishable reoccurrence has never not been maintained by the metaphysics of Western theater.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay NINE Derrida’s main intention is to minimize Hegel’s attitude? But it is the opposite that is true! Derrida wanted to demonstrate the incomparable breadth of his undertaking. To achieve this, Derrida could not veil the very slight (and even inevitable) degree of failure. To my mind, it is rather the exceptional assuredness of this undertaking that emerges from my juxtapositions. If he failed, one cannot say that the failure was the result of an error. The sense of the failure itself differs from the sense of what caused it: the error alone is fortuitous. Hegel’s ‘failure’ must be spoken of in general terms, as one would speak of an authentic movement, pregnant with meaning”.

In this present essay “From Restriction to General Economy: Hegelianism without Reserve” Derrida pointed out the blind spot of Hegelianism, *around* which can be organized the representation of meaning, is the *point* at which destruction, suppression, death and sacrifice constitute so irreversible an expenditure, so radical a negativity here we would have to say an expenditure and a negativity *without reserve* that they can no longer be determined as negativity in a process or a system. In discourse (the unity of process and system), negativity is always the underside and accomplice of positivity. Negativity cannot be spoken of, nor has it ever been except in this fabric of meaning. Now, the sovereign operation, the *point of no reserve*, is neither positive nor negative. It cannot be inscribed in discourse, except by crossing out predicates or by practicing a contradictory super impression that then exceeds the logic of philosophy.<sup>15</sup> Even while taking into account their value as ruptures, it could be shown, in this respect, that the immense revolutions of Kant and Hegel only reawakened or revealed the most permanent philosophical determination of negativity (with all the concepts systematically entwined around it in Hegel: ideality, truth, meaning, time, history, etc.).

This TENTH essay “Structure, Sign and play in the Discourse of Human sciences” is a lecture by Jaques Derrida. In this Essay Derrida describes the idea of free play, which is a decentering of systems within the systems themselves. Enter of system means limitation, Yet this centering of systems, designed to give coherence to the system because it is force of desire, not by any fundamental principles. The basis of a structure comprise of historical patterns and repetition that can be observed through historical records. The movement of substitutions which Derrida called “rupture”, is the moment when the pattern or repetition reasserts itself through decentering and re entering the structure, an example of freeplay disrupting history.

Therefore three major critiques of decentering use the language of Metaphysics itself. This paradox is relevant as it applies to the dislocation of culture, where historically, philosophically, economically, politically, etc. The development of concepts births their opposing sides

### III. CONCLUSION

Derrida's division of *essay "Writing and Difference"* is of two parts which then, serves to remind the reader that between the sixth and seventh essays a "theo-retical matrix" was elaborated whose principles are to some extent derived from the first six essays and are more systematically put to work in the last five. This essay of Derrida's "writing and difference" first published in French in the year 1967 and later translated in English and published in Great Britain in the year 1978.

All the five essays which I have explored from six to ten in this concept were the most compelling analyses of why and how metaphysical thinking must exclude writing from its conception of language, finally showing metaphysics to be constituted by this exclusion. These essays on Artaud, Freud, Bataille, Hegel, and Lévi-Strauss have served as introductions to Derrida's notions of "writing and difference" the untranslatable formulation of a non metaphysical "concept" that does not exclude writing for almost a generation of students of literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. Derrida is difficult to read not only by virtue of his style, but also because he seriously wishes to challenge the ideas that govern the way we read. His texts are more easily grasped if we read them in the way he implicitly suggests which is not always the way we are used to read.

The essays of "*Writing and Difference*," then, are less "bound." In turn, each essay is involved to the material of the other texts it analyzes, for, as he has stated, Derrida's writing is "entirely consumed in the reading of other texts." If one reads "*Writing and Difference*" only in order to extract from it a system of deconstruction translator's introduction which has been our focus so far one would overlook the persistent import of "*Writing and Difference*." *Deconstruction of Metaphysics in this concern essays implies to the object as a metaphor to Life, Classical Theatre, Gestures, Organs and so on.*

Chronologically, of course, Derrida's division of "*Speech and Différance*" is more reasonable than the one I am proposing. I offer this division, again, to help orient the reader who comes to "*Writing and Difference*" knowing only that Derrida is very difficult to read.

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