

**ELEMENTS OF DECONSTRUCTION:
*DIFFERENCE, DISSEMINATION,
DESTINERRANCE, AND GEOCATASTROPHE***

Marie Chris B. Ramoya
Ateneo de Manila University
Quezon City

This paper attempts to elucidate on Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction and its difficult elements, viz., difference, dissemination, destinerrance, and geocatastrophe. These basic ideas need elaboration for their proper understanding. Once successfully achieved, then here lies the significance of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction is founded on the position that there is nothing that does not function as a text, that is, there is nothing within man's experience that is not subject to textuality and hence to interpretation (Smith 2005, 44). Among other things, this points to the fundamentality of textuality, which is constitutive of philosophy itself, for "[w]hatever else philosophy regards itself as being (scientific, hermeneutic, analytic, deconstructive), it is a text. It is written, or spoken, and it is read" (Ferrel 1993, 122). This claim to the inescapable textuality of philosophy (and thought in general) is a reaction against what Jacques Derrida (1978, 281) calls the *metaphysics of presence* or logocentrism, or what he holds to be Western philosophy's paradoxical presupposition of a stable, selfsame, simple presence, or being at the heart—end and beginning of thought. These presupposed entities occur as "fundamentals to principles or to the center [and] have always designated an invariable presence—*eidōs, arche, telos, energia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject), *aletheia*, transcendality, consciousness, God, man..." which express logocentrism's longing for presence at the center of thought. Moreover, this logocentrism generates a hierarchized system of opposites, and the superior term in these opposites serve to establish their status and thus make the others inferior—for instance, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, immediacy vs. distance, identity vs. difference, speech vs. writing (Derrida 1976, xviii). The superior terms—being, presence, immediacy, identity, speech—are traditionally favored over their counterparts.

However, in criticizing the metaphysics of presence's *either/or* logic, Derrida does not favor a logical reversal. Instead, in his critical analysis, these polarities are shown to be constituted by an already existing difference.

Derrida attacks this *logocentric* thinking by pointing out certain contradictions within it. However, [he] shows that this authenticity, this purity of self-identity is always questionable: it is always contaminated by what it tries to exclude. No identity is ever complete or pure: it is constituted by that which threatens it. Derrida does not want to deny self-identity or presence: he merely wants to show that this presence is never as pure as it claims to be. It is always open to the other and contaminated by it. (Newman 2001, 2)

As such, deconstruction holds that any form of discourse and the development of arguments and systems, even the most successful ones, are haunted by nonlogical contradictions and discursive inequalities (Gasche 1987, 4), that is to say, paradoxically and, more importantly, *necessarily* (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 38), deconstruction “cannot work entirely within the structures of logocentric philosophy; neither can it work completely outside it” (Newman 2001, 10-11). This is because philosophy has always instituted a center (being or meaning, put briefly), the establishment of which is always grounded on the simultaneous expense of a margin or a periphery, which in turn destabilizes the desire for presence even before it has begun (Chapman and Routledge 2005, 70). Deconstruction, thus, moves by exposing these centers as always already contaminated by a loss of presence at the same moment that presence is instituted, making centers and peripheries into nonmonolithic categories of selfsameness but of originary traces.

In so doing, it involves a double-gesture: both overturning and displacing a conceptual order in order to both expose and wrench open the space always already inhabited by the manifold heterogeneity of textuality (Derrida 1982a, 329). However, three clarifications must immediately follow from this description. First, deconstruction is not a method, much less one that proceeds from without.¹ Rather, it *inhabits* those very structures of thought and uses the very same tools derived from these structures, out of which the “warring forces of signification” are carefully teased (Derrida 1981a, xiv). It, thus, problematizes both tool and content in the same stroke. As such, second, deconstruction “falls prey to its own work” (Derrida 1976, 24) for as the following illustrations would show, deconstruction is, putting it quite mildly, an exercise in recursivity. Lastly, that it is recursive does not mean it is an absolutely unruly hermeneutics with neither origin nor departure.

That is, though Derrida denies the absolute justification for a point of departure, “working *within* the need for some kind of point of departure—not one based on an essential identity—but rather one constructed through the logic of supplementarity, and based on its own *contaminatedness*” (Newman 2001, 11), deconstruction opens up the discourse of metaphysics to an *alterity*, in that it reacts to the closure of metaphysics. The result of Derrida’s analyses, then, is a radical displacement of presence as immediacy. This, in turn, is implicative of a more general thematic, that of alterity, which can be seen in Derrida’s focus on differences and which metaphysics tries to efface but are necessary (and inevitable) for any system. As such, it is a move to “dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed” (Derrida 1976, lxxvii) and, thus, reminds one of the always already there, which is constituted by nonidentity.

This paper will follow Derrida’s deconstruction of three instituted logocentrisms: first, in *language*; second, in *communication*—fields in which he exposes logocentrism

as taking the form of phonocentrism and its implications; and third, in *experience*—in which he exposes logocentrism as a sort of scripted destination, so as to make the application of deconstruction clearer.

ON LANGUAGE: *DIFFERANCE*

Context: Saussurean Semiotics and Husserlian Phenomenology

Basing on Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist semiotics and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, Derrida asserts that any linguistic sign or any phenomenological object is not derivative of a presence before representation. Tracing the distinction between speech and writing and the ubiquitous privileging of the former over the latter from Plato to Hegel (Palmer 2001, 379), Derrida deconstructs the logocentric tradition by turning his gaze specifically to Saussure's linguistics and the latter's distinction between the signified and the signifier. Derrida offers that the very concept of the sign itself is a testament to an *already* existing difference present in a system the center of which is an instituted presence, in this case, that of meaning. "Not only does Derrida" (Bennington 1993, 24) "begin with the sign in the order of his published work, [but] *he asserts, from the beginning, that the sign is at the beginning.*"

In Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics, and in semiotics in general, a sign is composed of two things: the *signifier* is the phoneme (or *phone*: spoken word) or grapheme (or *gramme*: written word) that refers to the *signified*, which is the ideal or conceptual meaning. Moreover, as the oft-quoted Saussurean claim states, "language is both arbitrary and differential." This means two things: one, a sign functions only insofar as it is *not* any other sign in the system itself, and it is in this differential functioning that a sign is said to have its identity; and two, the relationship between the signified and the signifier is arbitrary.

The logocentrism that occurs in semiology is the purity of presence (which takes the form of meaning) manifested as the immediacy present in the spoken word. Thus, according to this schematic structure, the *gramme* becomes secondary, echoing the hierarchical binary opposition between speech and writing in general.

In every case, the voice is closest to the signified, whether it is determined strictly as sense (thought or lived) or more loosely as thing. All signifiers, and first and foremost the written signifier, are derivative with regard to what would wed the voice indissolubly to the mind or to the thought of the signified sense, indeed, to the thing itself. . . . The written signifier is always technical and representative. . . . This derivation is the very origin of the notion of the "signifier." The notion of the sign always implies within itself the distinction between signifier and signified, even if, as Saussure argues, they are indistinguishable simply as the two faces of one and the same leaf. This notion remains therefore within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being. . . . (Derrida 1976, 11)

As such, in semiology the logocentrism of Western thought takes the form of a phonocentrism: "Speech has always been taken as more important than writing because,

traditionally, it is assumed that speech came first and that writing is just the transcription of speech” (Kolak 2001, 551) and speech is “believed to be uncontaminated by the effects of textuality” (Chapman and Routledge 2005, 69). Writing is therefore understood in the narrow sense (i.e., writing as the script, or the inscription, of speech). However, the differences present between the two aspects of the sign itself, i.e., the signifier and the signified, are already symptomatic of the irreducible differences haunting all systems whose concepts are built upon logocentric metaphysics. Though Saussure himself says that the sign’s aspects are those of “one and the same leaf,” the thesis concerning the arbitrariness and differential referentiality of the sign itself forbids any such hierarchical relegation of speech subordinating writing to a secondary status in terms of immediacy to presence.² That is, the arbitrary character of the sign, the word [as “(mot)...[is] already a unity of sense and sound, of concept and voice...of the signified and the signifier” (Derrida 1976, 31). It has no natural link or relationship (Saussure 1959, xxxix) with anything in reality, or with meanings, insofar as meanings are believed to “exist in their pristine purity” (Chapman and Routledge 2005, 69). Therefore, though Saussure holds that “writing and language are two distinct systems of signs,” writing cannot be the “natural image” of language itself. “Simply, it has no ‘natural attachment’ to the signified within reality” (Derrida 1976, 46). Thus, the sign is always unmotivated (or “immotivated”); the sign is arbitrarily related to its concept, and language therefore is not—can *not* be—*naturally* represented by writing, i.e., the sign has no natural relation to the outside (or to a pure, transcendental signified). If this is so, then the sign functions only insofar as it is related to other signs *within* the system of language, and not by its relation to anything outside this system. Derrida pushed this further and stated “the thing itself is a sign” (Derrida 1976, 49), which should be understood as there is no thing in itself given that the signifier and the signified are a “two-sided unity” (Derrida 1981b, 18).

Not content with merely appealing to arbitrariness, Derrida furthers that since differences are themselves not sensible presences, phonetic and graphic differences themselves have no rigor in terms of their distinction, in the same way that there is no reason for the attributing naturalness to the phoneme and secondarity to the grapheme. It is in Saussure that he finds the “desubstantializing of both the signified content and the ‘expressive substance’” by denying the essence of language to be phonic. “[Saussure] must now exclude the very thing which had permitted him to exclude writing: sound and its ‘natural bond’ with meaning” (Derrida 1976, 53). This double-standard for inclusion and, thence, exclusion is present within the history of metaphysics. For instance, in terms of the two senses of writing as traditionally held, i.e., one divine and one corrupting, Derrida’s concept of the *pharmakon* (following Plato) has relevance to understanding writing in the sense that Derrida proposes (and it is also the thematic which is reminiscent of his *sous rature*). As Hugh J. Silverman (1994, 186) says:

Differance is also the *pharmakon*: neither a poison nor a remedy, neither what kills nor what cures it is a medicine that could produce either result: too much could be fatal, whereas the right amount could cure. Writing is a *pharmakon*. Too much can make us forget, lose all the need to keep in memory; too little and we cannot hold it all in memory.

Again, this is relevant to the logic of the supplement that writing, in its two senses, that is, as writing in the narrow sense, (1) “introduces” the contamination of signification, i.e., a “disruption” of full presence via the mediating action of the sign, and that, as the secondariness of writing to speech, (2) it is in the same movement of expatriation and effacement (of the trace of alterity in identity and in temporality, i.e., in difference and in deferment). Derrida (1981a, 149), in tracing philosophy’s treatment of writing, particularly from those of Socrates and Plato, remarks:

While presenting writing as a false brother—traitor, infidel, simulacrum—Socrates is for the first time led to envision the brother of this brother, the legitimate one, as another sort of writing: not merely as knowing, living, animate discourse, but as an inscription of truth in the soul. It is no doubt usually assumed that what we are dealing with here is a “metaphor”... a “metaphor” philosophy will never thereafter be able to do without, however uncritical its treatment might be. But it is not any less remarkable here that the so-called living discourse should be described by a “metaphor” borrowed from the order of the very thing one is trying to exclude from it... Yet this borrowing is rendered necessary by that which structurally links the intelligible to its repetition in the copy....

In other words, from Plato to Hegel, good writing has been opposed to bad writing, “and the good one can be designated only through the metaphor of the bad one” (Derrida 1981a, 149).

Good writing is held to be the universal, intelligible writing, as opposed to writing in the literal, sensible, finite inscription. This echoes Derrida’s critical reading of the Husserlian condition for ideality. If “the ‘literal’ meaning of writing [is] metaphoricity itself” (Derrida 1976, 15), following Derrida’s rigorous and intricate argument for writing as arche-writing, that is, if language is characterized and conditioned by arche-writing, then it follows that metaphoricity is implicative of language itself.

For if “[t]he exteriority of the signifier is the exteriority of writing in general... [then] [w]ithout that exteriority, the very idea of the sign falls into decay” (Derrida 1976, 14), and if writing, being considered as “sensible matter and artificial exteriority: a clothing... an ‘image’ and exterior figuration” (Derrida 1976, 35), then it has been paradoxically understood throughout philosophy as both natural (universal, intelligible, primary) and artificial (literal, sensible, fallen). If writing as “a sign signifying a signifier which itself signifies an eternal verity,” that is, “eternally thought and spoken in the proximity of a present logos” (Derrida 1976, 15), then taking into consideration Aristotle’s formulation and its variants, i.e., writing as the representation of a representation, it therefore does not come to merely represent (or befall) an innocent, pure language (such as speech was believed to be), one that is bereft of the contamination of signification. Moreover, appealing to the simple signifieds supposedly represented by writing exposes an unending string of signifiers, and not “the realm of ultimate meanings” (Derrida 1976, 43) for, as stated, there is no ultimate meaning that does not pass through representation.

The hierarchized opposition “speech over writing” also becomes more apparent in Husserl’s phenomenology of consciousness. Though the parallelisms between structuralist linguistics and Husserlian phenomenology should not be exaggerated as

simple and identical, Derrida analyzes several points in Husserl's phenomenology and the structures therein and concludes that logocentrism, too, is present in phenomenology. Two interrelated points in Husserlian phenomenology will be presented. First, in the context of his analysis of consciousness, particularly in terms of self-communication and inner-time consciousness and, second, in terms of authentic ideality via repetition.

Generally, Derrida's critique is grounded on phenomenology as a philosophical movement "seeking to define 'essences'" (Chapman and Routledge 2005, 136); its search for the relationship between (and condition of possibility of) objective, ideal structures and subjective ones via the concepts of intentionality (Husserl 1965) and reduction (Husserl 1964). In terms of establishing the possibility of the relationship between objective structures, e.g., the essence of geometry and the concepts therein, and subjective structures, i.e., the ego, consciousness, Husserl (1964) comes to a pertinent problematic. It is ultimately in the analysis of Husserl's presentation of subjectivity and consciousness which Derrida notes the apparent torture haunting the Husserlian system: precisely that of the presence of a (non)originary difference even (and already) in Husserl's pure experience (Gasche 1987, 7-8). Furthermore, this privileging of the *voice* occurs in (and, hence, is contested by) Derrida in two forms (the literal and the figurative voice), which grounds both analyses and supports the same conclusion and charge—logocentrism as phonocentrism of the West. In Rudolf Bernet (1993, 146-47), the literal voice is the spoken word, immaterial and completely animated by its transcendental meaning, nonindicative and purely expressive when the speaker hears himself speak; the figurative voice is the metaphor for all forms of pure auto-affection. "If, however, there exists no such pure self-affection, then instantaneous self-consciousness is not only affected by blindness ("the blink of an eye") but also by muteness ("the voice that keeps silence")."

To clarify his charges, first, Derrida (see Smith 2005, 28-31) turns his attention towards Husserl's phenomenological analysis of consciousness, and its truism of the primacy of speech, exemplified in soliloquy. Husserl writes, "Why is the phoneme the most 'ideal' of signs?... When I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that *I hear myself at the same time* that I speak... As pure auto-affection... [t]his [act] is no doubt the possibility for what is called subjectivity."³ Speech, therefore, is valued over writing, and self-communication ("interior monologue," soliloquy, or "auto-affection") is ostensibly the most pure form of a speech act, in terms of the absolute proximity of voice and being. Pure expression or expressivity, i.e., meaning, is held by Husserl as essentially non-indicative expression, "indication" referring to "pointers which stand for something else," i.e., as sign—hence, whatever *indicates* implies absence.

Derrida contends that Husserl, in privileging meaning as non-indicated presence, has to exclude *signification* altogether, in that Derrida (1987, 112) reads Husserl as saying that it is only in "prelinguistic self-presence" that meaning lies.

In a brief but detailed explanation in the attempt to contextualize Derrida's analysis, Bennington and Derrida (1993, 64-66) devotes a section to Husserl himself:

According to Husserl, there are two sorts of signs: indications and expressions. Indications are all caught up in a facticity which compromises their ideality and forbids all certainty... Indications may *say* something, but

not *mean* to say anything, have no *meaning* in that sense. In interlocution too, my words, which attempt to express my intentions or my meaning, only indicate them to the other party, represent what is properly present to myself alone, must go outside to facticity and the physical side of the sign. This indication cannot be the essence of signification, for I can also speak to myself, indicating nothing, not going outside to communicate my thought, without for all that losing meaning.... In its purity, expression expresses itself in the self-presence of consciousness....

Hence, there is a “possibility of bracketing the sign character of words by merely representing words” in Husserl (Gasche 1993, 8). Moreover, “It is not by chance that the thought of being, as the thought of this transcendental signified, is manifested above all in the voice: in a language of words [*mots*]” for Derrida (1976, 20) and for Graham Priest (1994, 104) in the “*primum signatum*,” and hence, “[i]n a nutshell, a presence is... a kind of non-linguistic entity which serves to provide a determiner of sense; Derrida often calls it the *transcendental signified*.” In Husserl (see Bennington and Derrida 1993, 66-69), the version of this transcendental signified as the pure selfsame presence synthesized by the transcendental ego.

However, if there is no indication (as representation) in expression, then no signification is possible. The purity of hearing oneself speaks the moment one speaks crumbles due to the signifiatory and contaminating (i.e., intervening) process necessary even for soliloquy. This is because there is an inevitability to the signifying action of *expression* itself, in terms of it being implicative of an other, or an absence of selfsameness: “...contrary to Husserl’s notion of a pre-linguistic, ‘pure’ consciousness, Derrida points to what we might call the *semiotic conditioning of consciousness*: thought does not proceed without language” (Smith 2005, 37). The communality of language conditions the alterity already present within any expressivity in soliloquy, and in communication in general. Though Husserl (see Derrida 1973a, 45) posits that there is “an absolute heterogeneity between perception or primordial presentation and re-presentation or representative re-production.” Derrida reads Husserl as separating these two movements by an abyss (Gasche 1993, 15); thus, leading the former to conclude that the latter’s transcendental phenomenology has in itself an element of alterity already within its own system.

...phenomenology’s transcendental *Schein* [appearance] results in three paradoxes, all of which revolve around language. [First], after having performed the reduction, the phenomenologist finds it impossible to communicate his knowledge to those still stuck in the natural attitude.... [Second], the phenomenologist has no other language at his disposal than mundane language.... Finally, when the phenomenologist tries to determine the relation between the transcendental ego and the empirical ego, the absolute and the world, he has at his disposal only mundane logics; the ontic identity determined by these logics, however, is inadequate for determining this identity which is also a difference....

In light of this intersubjective problem, a transcendental language must be developed... If it is indeed the case that, for the theorizing ego, the

transcendental meanings are “transparent” prior to communication, then it seems that, if one is going to develop a transcendental language, one will have to develop a language equally transparent. This language, therefore, would have to be a voice, a perfect unity of signified and signifier. (Lawlor 1993, 81)

The voice, far from being “an ether that introduces no absence, no distortion, no alterity; the voice is . . . entirely safe” (Lawlor 1993, 84). Derrida grants the transcendental experience synthesized by the transcendental ego as always already caught up in a system of indication, even, and perhaps most especially, in soliloquy.

Moreover, and further using Husserl to disrupt phenomenology, Derrida uses ideality as implied by objectivity and inner-time consciousness to problematize pure presence. Objectivity is of prime importance both to Husserl and to Derrida, albeit for obviously different reasons and contentions. For Husserl (see Derrida 1973a, 7), authentic ideality must be one that can be *infinitely repeated or iterable in the identity of its presence*: “[I]ntersubjectivity is the condition for objectivity, which is absolute only in the case of ideal objects.” This is also where the Derridean analysis of inner-time consciousness becomes pertinent, as already implied even from his reading of Husserl in the latter’s concept. Husserl posits “transcendental appearance” in the context of time, particularly of the “Living Present (*lebendige Gegenwart*)”—a saturated, pregnant presence that is a synthesis of protention (the expectation of the same) and retention (primary memory), by the agency of the transcendental ego (Caputo 1987, 101). Derrida utilizes these same concepts and pushes them to their conclusion: the perception of a *now*, a present, is dependent upon that which is *not* present, in terms of temporality (Derrida 1973a, 64). That is to say, if the ideality of perception only becomes authentic by repetition (and, hence, repeatability), then at the ground of the possibility of ideality itself is not an originary presentation (in Husserlian parlance, *Gegewartigung*) but that which has a representative structure. In terms of experiencing a now that is pregnant with presence, that very presentation itself already carries within itself the necessary possibility for repetition (and necessary for its own ideality, as far as Derrida reads Husserl), which is a representation (*Vergegenwartigung*), a modification, an essentially *constituted* present the presencing of which “can appear as such only inasmuch as it is *continuously compounded (compose continument)* with a nonpresence and nonperception, with primary memory and expectation.” Furthermore:

The original phenomenological data that Husserl wants to respect lead him to posit an absolute heterogeneity between perception . . . and re-presentation . . . Memory, images, and signs are re-presentations in this sense. Properly speaking, Husserl is not *led* to recognize this heterogeneity, for it is this which constitutes the very possibility of phenomenology. For phenomenology can only make sense if a pure and primordial presentation is possible and given in the original. This distinction [implies] re-presentation, which posits the having-been-present in memory . . . (Derrida 1973a, 45)

As such, the present is the present only because there is an always already synthesized potential-retentional (expectation-remembrance) making present again, i.e.,

the Living Present is contaminated (i.e., woven) with representation and makes it possible due to the very same Husserlian requirement of the continuous compounding of the now. Therefore, in terms of the constituted ideality which grounds the whole transcendental phenomenological project, “[t]he crux of Derrida’s argument consists then in demonstrating that Husserl’s own description of the movement of temporality and the constitution of intersubjectivity unmistakably establish repetition, and with it everything that ought to derive from presence, to be required by presence and all ideal objectivity in general” (Gasche 1993, 11). As Gayatri Spivak (see Derrida 1976, lxviii) notes, “Husserl’s text is tortured by a suppressed insight that the Living Present is always already inhabited by difference.” If ideality is constituted by intersubjectivity, then the synthesized protentive-retentive character of the Living Present requires a repeatability which is only accessed through writing (Lawlor 1993, 85). The opposition between speech and writing then becomes a superfluous distinction, in that what makes ideality and objectivity possible and present in the system itself has been expatriated from itself, (paradoxically) notwithstanding Husserl’s positing of language as the only ground of possibility which makes ideality (the purest of which is that of geometry) form in consciousness (and in the temporal realm in general): *to be absolutely ideal, the object must be written, for writing alone can perdure*.

Repetition occurs as the constitutive of Husserlian ideality and in Derrida (1973a, 50) as *representativite indefinie*. “In a certain way ideal objects do exist objectively in the world, but it is only in virtue of these... repetitions and ultimately in virtue of sensibly embodying repetitions [which occur] as language” (Smith 2005, 161). It is important also to note that

Derrida’s *displacement* of the Husserlian distinction between presence and re-presentation is based on a modified account of re-presentation. For Derrida, re-presentation involves a process of indicative signification, i.e., the presence of signs that must be understood as traces.... [He] must show that the presence of ideal objects as well as the self-presence of the transcendental subject necessarily depends on a form of re-presentation that is characteristic of traces. As far as *ideal objects* are concerned, this presents no difficulty since Husserl had himself emphasized in *On the Origin of Geometry* and elsewhere the importance of writing for the constitution and preservation of ideal objects. (Bernet 1993, 149)

To conclude, then, the subject in phenomenology, the ego, is *constituted* and not *constituting* as such, in terms of the objects of its consciousness. Therefore, and again, the instituted primacy of speech in the context of self-communication, as that which does not need signs, becomes problematical. If the now of the moment in which one speaks in an interior monologue is implicative of a now that is in itself made possible only by a representation, speech then becomes grounded on the very thing which has been taken to be the “downfall” of writing in the narrow sense: the signifying action of language itself. This echoes Derrida’s conclusion relative to his analysis of Saussurean linguistics: *speech is as much contaminated by writing as writing in the narrow sense has been instituted as*. Clearly, Derrida (1976, lxix) is proposing an understanding of writing in terms of that which makes both the oppositions of the signifier over the

signified and that of speech over writing possible *in the first place*: writing as “trace-structure, [in that] everything [is] always already inhabited by the track [or trace] of something that is not itself....”

The secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifiers in general, affects them always already, the moment they *enter the game*. There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language. (Derrida 1976, 7)

Writing in the narrow sense is already present even in speech. It does not erupt from the outside of language (understood traditionally as speech), rather, it is always already within the system of language. “The meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa” (Derrida 1976, 35). In this light, representation therefore becomes more originary than presentation, in terms of the mediatedness which is seen in both speech and writing, or, perhaps more accurately, in speech as writing. “Yet Husserl himself has shown that it belongs to the very structure of the sign to operate without fulfillment, in the absence of its object” (Caputo 1987, 104) and, therefore, the distinction between indication and expression, seminal to Husserl’s theory of signs, “stipulates the possibility, and existence of a ‘lived experience [that] is immediately self-present in the mode of certitude and absolute necessity” (Derrida 1973a, 58). Because of this very fact, “[d]istinct from re-presentation, presentation, more precisely, primordial presentation, is free from the delegating or representative function of indicative signs. Indeed, the indivisibility of the presence to self of what is given in the mode of immediate presence assures the irreducibility of re-presentation to presentative presentation” (Gasche 1993, 10). It is this that Derrida deconstructs by his analysis of Husserl’s inner-time consciousness and repeatability as the condition for ideality, leading to representation being originary through the logic of supplementarity.

Differance

To the common root of writing and speech, Derrida assigns the name “arche-writing” (“*archi-écriture*”). Arche-writing consists of writing under erasure (*sous rature*), involving the always already representationality of language. Another term for this is *differance*, a neologism from the French *differer* (Latin verb *differre*) which means both “to differ” (to not be identical to) and “to defer” (to delay, to take a detour). To be not identical to something (or, since every “present” is a “representation,” to be not identical to *itself*) in space; to delay its (re)presentation in time.⁴ The sign, therefore, can only be understood in the context of *differance*, which affects the totality of the sign (which is both, and neither simply, signified and signifier). Put simply, “[s]uch is the strange ‘being’ of the sign: half of it is always ‘not there’ and the other half always ‘not that.’ The structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent” (italics supplied; Derrida 1976, xvii). As such, the structure of the sign is the structure of the trace, which subverts all structures inasmuch as they are built on presences. In denying pure self-sameness in presence, Derrida (1976, xv) simultaneously forwards the trace (the French of which “carries strong implications of track, footprint,

imprint”), in that, “[n]othing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces” (Derrida 1981b, 26). The *trace* therefore is another name for the (non)originary in Derrida, in focusing on the impossibility of a pure, selfsame, immediate presence, as posited by both linguistics and phenomenology:

The unheard difference between the appearing and the appearance... (between the “world” and “lived experience”) is the condition of all other differences, of all other traces, and it is already a trace.... The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the differance which opens appearance and signification. (Derrida 1976, 65)

In short, *meaning*, i.e., sense, insofar as it is conditioned by alterity in time and in space, is automatically *not* being (Derrida 1981a, ix). If consciousness (and hence signification) of presence is conditioned by trace, which is not in itself pure or uncontaminated, *the trace itself cannot be an origin as such: it is a (non)origin*. Hence, there is always already an alterity in time and in space as implied and conditioned by the trace in contention to Husserl’s transcendental appearance. “There is a duration to the blink, and it closes the eye” (Derrida 1973a, 65) in the same way as “A moment cannot be qualified as just a little bit past, just a little lapsed. The present in the pregnant sense cannot be just a little bit pregnant!... Retention and reproduction are but variant degrees of representation....” (Caputo 1987, 102-103). All these terms—*trace*, *differance*, *arche-writing*—can be understood as pertinent concepts (nicknames of one other) in the motifs of Derrida’s reaction against “the reduction [effacement, expatriation] of writing as the reduction of the exteriority of the signifier,” and hence are pertinent to his grammatology. The *gram* (which he inscribes in his *grammatology*) is none other than *differance* (Derrida 1981b, 26) and *arche-writing* is none other than the other as the necessary condition, but dangerous, supplementarity of language that has never been in absolute proximity to presence and meaning (Smith 2005, 42).

Playing with the double meaning of the word *supplement* in French, Derrida follows Jacques Rousseau in his anthropological analysis of writing as that “dangerous supplement.”⁵ Following Rousseau, *supplement* has two meanings which occur both at once (as “an addition” and “a substitute”), which are intimately connected with writing, in that “[t]he sign is always the supplement [addition and substitute] of the thing itself” (Derrida 1976, 145). The supplement is “exterior, outside of the positivity to which it is superadded, alien to that which, in order to be replaced by it, must be other than it” (Derrida 1976, 145), adding itself and substituting what for Rousseau is the pure, virginal presence of Nature. Like writing, then, which adds itself to the purity of speech, as by transcription, it replaces the thing itself, as by signification. However, it is in this understanding of the supplement, as *arche-writing*, that the economy of signification becomes apparent: just as the sign refers indefinitely, supplementarity is structured as a chain (“[t]he play of the supplement is indefinite” and “[r]eferences refer to references”), in a movement that is always differed and deferred. “The thing itself steals away” because “the thing itself is a sign,” which is another way of saying

“there is no thing in itself” (Derrida 1976, 49). *Representation, supplementarity, as was already mentioned and demonstrated, is the originary condition of presence.*

The logic of the supplement, therefore, transgresses the binary logic of logocentric metaphysics, but also gives rise to the oppositions within it. The supplement is thus conceived of traditionally as dangerous, fatal, in that it stands for the thing itself (which again echoes Husserl’s paradoxical insight that what guarantees objectivity is writing, and at the same movement, which introduces absence). Supplementarity, hence, addresses the issue posed both by semiology and phenomenology: the mediatedness of presence (or the present), but paradoxically, in effacing the trace, the “logocentric longing par excellence” is to forget the originary supplementarity and institute it as purely additive, i.e., as merely an addition to a pure presence, a pure concept, a pure meaning, language as speech. The history of philosophy, therefore, is the history of effacing what it has instituted but obliterated in its orbital quest for presence: *the trace of alterity in supplementarity.* Derrida (1976, 149), therefore, charges logocentrism as having one law: blindness to the supplement, which is what logocentrism in all its permutations is. To this charge he counters *arche-writing* as “originary supplementarity (if this absurd expression may be risked, totally unacceptable as it is within classical logic)” within language, in that it is always already implicative of an alterity with regard to presence, which is neither restored nor accessed in purity by its supplementarity. In short, “substitution has always already begun.” Absence, risk, death, loss as implied in speech and in writing, and “writing” as *arche-writing*—as “the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace” (Derrida 1976, xxxix)—will be made more clear in the context of communication.

Therefore, it is in the spacing, delay, supplementarity, tracing of differences in both time as well as space that makes the present presence possible, as signified, mediated, contaminated, as well as conditioned by an other. There is a detour which must and inevitably will be taken, for anything to mean. “It is presence in general that is thus divided,” that is, through the necessary supplement of the sign, of language in general, presence is fissured at its origin by taking the detour and spacing of originary representation. This detour is the detour of *arche-writing*, of *differance*, which conditions all experience, since “all experience is the experience of meaning.” The supplementarity of writing therefore becomes the original condition for language to be language: “the becoming-writing of language is the becoming-language of language” (Derrida 1976, 229).

ON COMMUNICATION: *DESTINERRANCE*

Context: Dissemination and Iterability

For Derrida (1982a, 318-19), there is a homogenous space and a selfsame process involved in the communication of meaning, in that *meaning* is “the content of the semantic message, is thus transmitted, *communicated*, by different *means* . . . over a much greater distance, but within a milieu that is fundamentally continuous and equal to itself, within a homogenous element across which the unity and integrity of meaning is not affected in an essential way” (Derrida 1982a, 311). The homogeneity is established within the means as well as the capacity of the sign, in that a sign or its constituted

statement can function either as an empty reference or as detached from its referent; a sign can be vacuous (as with the case of mathematical meaning); a sign can be aggrammatical but still be meaningful. The sign functioning even as it is detached from its referent constitutes the logic of *iterability* in Derrida (which is noticeably the structure of repetition also in his argument against Husserl). The sign and/or statement being thus detached, he comes to two interrelated points relevant to the section, which will be discussed in turn: iterability *conditions* communication, and anything that is sent is not so much totalizable in terms of context as well as presence as it is disseminated. By the same gesture as the logic of supplementarity was presented as the (non)originary condition of the sign, the logic of iterability becomes the condition for communication. Iterability (as a shorthand definition, *repeatability*) is implicative of absence, in the forms of detachment, dissemination—briefly defined, meaning and/or presence undergoing irreducible and generative multiplicity, and of death (Derrida 1981b, 45).

First, iterability (the exemplar of which are infinitely reusable and recombinable letters having a common form) (Lawlor 1998, 188), is necessary for the sign to be a sign—an intelligible trace which cannot and can no longer be conceived as proper or unique. As such, “the structure of iteration...implies *both* identity *and* difference.... The iterability of an element divides its own entity *a priori*.... It is because this iterability splits each element while constituting it...that the remainder...is never a full or fulfilling presence” (Derrida 1988, 53).

As such, iterability implies absence as was stated, but it further conditions sendings (*envois*⁶) of any kind. A statement’s detachability, in the case of Husserl’s analysis of signs, being detached from their referent, indicates its functioning even as it is wrenched from its “original” utterance or inscription (this detachability having been presented to be what makes the sign what it is in the first place). Iterability and detachability, therefore, are two aspects of any sign, of any statement, of any text—for them to be considered as such. These are implicative of the absence which haunts both writing (in the narrow sense) and speech, no matter how it would seem otherwise, and hence the proffering of writing as *arche-writing*. The possibility of functioning when cut off from its referent is none other than the dangerous supplementarity of *arche-writing* as (non)origin: the weaves of traces which are, as they are “present” in language, “present” in communication, such that they condition language and communication as not presentation of a meaning that is selfsame but always already indicative of absences—in reference, as well as in the context of its inscription. Simply, for a text to be a text, it must be iterable in citation and hence can be detached from its context, in short, it must be quotable. In the same way that a sign that is understood to be unique, that is, occurring only once, would not be a sign (Halion 1992, 164); a statement that could not be cited in another context is not a statement (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 86). However, the necessary possibility of all utterances constitute their being grafted into other citational chains (Derrida 1982a, 315) does entail that contexts cannot be total. However, “[j]ust because contexts are always already *underdetermined* does not mean that they are *indeterminate*” (Smith 2005, 63). Indeed, for an *indeterminate* text, and for de-contextualizing to be possible, the only requisite is that one does not even read a text, that is, in absolute respect to a text, in one “would have to bar a reading of it...and hence no longer be a text” (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 163).

Second, because of the iterability and detachability of *envois*, communication necessarily engenders the possibility of death.⁷ This, ultimately, is what the functioning of the sign, and hence of a text, points to: that they continue to function even when the writer and the reader are absent. Iterability and detachability, therefore, condition the very meaning of a message, a sending, or a text.

This repetition necessarily involves the possibility of my death, and therefore of finitude. But ideality is pure only if it allows a repetition unto infinity: *in fact* we are in finitude, but *de jure* ideality implies infinity. This infinite only appears in the finite: . . . “I am” is understood on the basis of “I am dead.”

“I” must be able to function in the absence of its object, and, like any other statement, “I am” must be understandable in my absence and after my death. (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 110, 116)

In offering this, Derrida fissures both the space (which is simply not a space) and medium [which is (non-)originary] of meaning and communication: the singularity which marks the coordinates (i.e., the context) of the moment of inscription is itself a differed-deferred (i.e., of *differance*) presentation, haunted by absence, in referent; conditioned by absence in the form of death. This singularity which marks the moment of the text’s inscription carries with itself a fissuring *a priori*, it is “a presence thus divided,” like the linguistic sign is. Hence it is always a mark: a trace of absence-presence, but never totalizable in terms of identity, in terms of context, or of space. Derrida likens this strange functioning to a signature: a signature is appended in terms of a proper name, marks the here-and-now of a text, a date, a document, it must be iterable in its common form, and thus must hold within itself the possibility of holding weight even when the signatory is dead. Furthermore, this signature at the moment of its inscription bears countersignatures, in that its intelligibility and readability (conditioned by its iterability) by an other thus wounds and fissures the signature (and the text) the moment it is written: it “loses the singularity it keeps,” it is disseminated at the very start (Derrida 1992b; Bennington and Derrida 1993, 377).

Hence, following the logic thus presented, the openness to the other as well as to the iterability unto absolute absence as death also holds, in that one is outlived (and should be so) by his inscribed signature, which the other countersigns by appending his *reading* of the text, or, understood in terms of the postal, of the message sent, which, for it to be a message, outlives both the addressee and the sender, *ad infinitum*, to other readers and other contexts. Thus, a text is always essentially open to further reading. For David Wood (1987, 157), “[p]erhaps, then, both the reader and writer are engaged in a life-and-death struggle that never ends, and is never resolved.” The other therefore is a dangerous supplement also: it is the countersigning of the other which detaches the text (which is never a text proper to only one context—because of iterability; nor proper to a moment of inscription—because of countersignatures) from its context. The other is also thus the condition for the text’s perdurance throughout space and time, all by the same movement—the movement of *arche-writing*, which in this context is more specifically called *dissemination* [the always already multiplicity in and conditioning singularity, or, as in Spivak (see Derrida

1976, lxxiii) the loss of “meaning that is one”] and *destinerrance* (the conditioning possibility of arrival in non-arrival).

Destinerrance

In presenting *destinerrance* (also, *adestination*), Derrida’s style becomes more metaphorical, in all senses of the word. The concepts pertinent hereafter, while still employed by Derrida throughout what might be called his “professional” genre, are more *performative* of the contamination of philosophy by poetry, i.e., metaphoricity. The concept of the metaphor, while being very apposite in a discussion of Derrida’s take on language, can be further appreciated when put in the context of communication, where the postal principle governing all *envois* becomes pertinent, and where Derrida’s notion of absence and death haunting all texts (here in the form of messages) becomes interwoven with his critical analyses of the concepts of address and destination. Interestingly, Derrida notes that the “real meaning” of “metaphor” is “transport.”⁸ Thus communication, the transporting of a message from a scriptor to an addressee, is captured by the metaphor of *metaphor*, which he terms the *postal principle*. He (1987, 64) inscribes his analysis within the Heideggerian *es gibt*, i.e., following Heidegger’s *schicken* (to send) and exploiting the connections of the word with *destination* (to *destine*), writes:

[S]*chicken*, is to send, *envoyer*, to “expedite,” to cause to leave or to arrive, etc... [T]he gift itself is given *on the basis* of “something” which is nothing, which is not something, it would be...like an “*envoi*,” destination, the destinality...of an *envoi* which, of course, does not send this or that, which sends nothing that is, nothing that is a “being,” a “present.” Nor to whoever, to any addressee as an identifiable self-present subject.

For Derrida (1987, 29), the teleology governing the logocentric metaphysics gets its support in the context of sendings in Heidegger, in that “the epochs of being would still *be derived* from the *envoi* of being,” that is to say, again, of the orbital history conceptualized as an origin and a telos of presence, i.e., of a destination that coincides with its origin, in terms of its conceptualization of presence. Derrida, however, in contextualizing this sending as destined, subjects it once again to what the postal system (which is what makes all sendings possible) implies: “To post is to send by ‘counting’ with a halt, a relay, or a suspensive delay, the place of a mailman, the possibility of going astray and of forgetting....” That is to say, a message, being disseminated, is disseminated both spatially and temporally, and in multiple ways, moreover. The homogenous space, therefore, as well as the message, are both fissured—here disseminative and disseminated, respectively. A message, being subjected to a fallible, disseminating postal system, is at always at the risk of the always already possibility inherent *in* and condition *for* any mediation—loss, delay (the very characteristics of *differance* itself—detouring, differing)—and when it does arrive it “takes itself away *from the arrival at arrival*” (Derrida 1987, 123-24), for its chance of arriving owes itself to possibility as possibility and therefore of impossibility. That is, for as long as the possibility exists that the letter will not arrive, then it must do so indefinitely—

indefinitely, that is, *until* it arrives, the event of which is conditioned by its never arriving, and never arriving simply (Derrida 2001, 107). In a word, it arrives in its being *adestined*.

Moreover, Derrida pushes the question of destination (which has never been in the Derridean corpus limited to messages and texts, as it becomes more apposite to any voyage, including the broadest voyage there is: experience itself) to a *necessary destinerrance*.

ON EXPERIENCE: THE *ODYSSEY* AND GEOCATASTROPHE

If every travel is a traversal from somewhere to somewhere else, then it must be a spacing which is done in a disseminative spacing and, therefore, denying the originary and teleological character which is implicative of travel, that is, it denies an absolute point of departure, as well as that of destination, in that it constitutes of a spacing always already within a *topos* which does not assure any identity. Every encounter, thus being deprived of originarity in terms of identity, departure, and arrival, is always already an encounter which is implicative of catastrophe, an event of alterity.

Experience as a word is explained by Derrida (with Malabou 2004, 1, 41) as traversal, or as voyage: both understood as relevant to the roots of the words *derive* and *arrive*: *Deriver* iterally means

...to leave the bank or shore” in two contrary senses. In the first instance, deriving can characterize a continuous and ordered trajectory from an origin to an end.... In the second instance, however, deriving as drifting refers to a loss of control, to deviation or skidding.... Necessity and chance thus cohabit, in a paradoxically complicitous way, within the same verb.

Experience, therefore, contains within itself both reaching one’s destination and whatever it is that happens, expected or otherwise.

Derrida (with Malabou 2004, 4) captures this paradox utilizing the myth of the *Odyssey*. Ulysses is seen to have a long voyage, one which has an origin to an end that is “derived in a continuous and ordered trajectory.” Anything that happens and befalls him in this voyage is thus necessary, any catastrophe becomes an accident confirming the essence of the voyage. In so doing, the traversal and its events become derivative, the catastrophes are a script that is followed, therefore, no longer an accident, no longer a surprise, and no longer *befalling* Ulysses. It is a “disciplined chance,” a chance that is softened in advance, in that it is expected, anticipated, programmed. It is a surprise known in advance; therefore, it was never a surprise to begin with.

When the impossible *makes itself* possible, the event takes place (possibility *of* the impossible). This is, without question, the paradoxal form of the event: if an event is only possible, in the classic sense of the word, if it inscribes itself in the conditions of possibility, if it does no more than make explicit, unveil, reveal, accomplish what was already possible, then it’s no longer an event. For an event to take place, for it to be possible, it must be, as event the coming of the impossible.

The condition of possibility thus gives the possible a chance, but by depriving it of its purity...im-possibility is thus not the simple contrary of the possible. It seems opposed to it but it also gives itself over to possibility: this impossibility traverses possibility and leaves in it *the trace of its withdrawal*. An event wouldn't be worthy of its name, it wouldn't make anything happen, if it did nothing but deploy, make explicit, actualize what was already possible, that is to say, in sum, if all it did was to implement a program. . . . For there to be an event, it has to be possible, of course, but there must be an exceptional, absolutely singular interruption in the regime of possibility, the event must not be *simply* possible; it must not reduce itself to explication, the unfolding, the acting out of a possible. (Derrida 2001, 108-109)

That is, for any traversal and for every encounter to be worthy of the name, it has to have the event of the other, *i.e.*, the arrival of (or into) what is foreign, unexpected, unanticipated, impossible. *This is, paradoxically and precisely, what a traversal entails: an encounter with a truly other, unexpected, not in the program, in a sense, catastrophic*. As such, any traversal always has an element of a geocatastrophic nature to it (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 126). Like the message which owes its chance of arrival to nonarrival, the event, for it to be an event of alterity, *i.e.*, that which “abducts the traveler’s identity and allows an opening to alterity to become an experience of the world in general, must occur by surprise and remain incalculable” (Derrida and Malabou 2004, 2). Moreover, as Derrida and Malabou (2004, 197-198) explain:

The catastrophe or dangerous reversal results from a collision—which is at the same time by chance and of necessity—between the desire for an absolute intimacy with the other and the very impossibility of every joining together. The other can be the loved one, the foreigner, the far-off land, a language, an island or a city. . . . Such an excess of exteriority. . . is matched by the fantasy of a total immobility, of a place where one can wall oneself in, never leaving or moving. . . . Paralysis relates to catastrophe inasmuch as it signals an unknotting. . . . When derivation is doubled and overtaken by the speed of the postal principle, the event is freed, dissociated in its possibility from every methodical anticipation, from every order of arrival. The voyage takes place on the basis of this unlinking, destining the traveler to confront both punishment and fortune, which is always the case in terms of fate or the lottery.

From this citation it can be noted that the paralysis that immobility induces in terms of being *adestinerrant* is at once neutralized, in terms of the overturning of the logic of derivation. Thus there is no need, once assurances are deprived, in terms of where one always already is, to grapple with chance and necessity as opposition: one realizes that “we *are* the play of chance and necessity” (Derrida 1976, xlv). Furthermore, Derrida (1992c, 118) states:

...do you seriously want to get me to speak about my “destiny” under these conditions? No. But if by destiny one means a singular matter of not being

free, then what interests me is especially that, precisely and everywhere: this intersection of change [sic] and necessity, the *line of life*, the proper language of life, even if it is never pure.

The traveler, wanting to be assured of an identity amidst his traversal, exposes himself to death every way he turns, and in the very desire of assured destination and identity. However, the traveler can have assurance of neither destination (because of *destinerrance*) or of identity (because of alterity): it “can only expose itself to accidents when it tries to save itself, and first of all to save itself from its name and its coming. It has no relation to itself—that is, no totalizing individuality—that does not expose it even more to death and to being-torn apart” (Derrida 1992a, 303).

This notwithstanding, and reiterating that Derrida’s treatment of catastrophe as end, and also a reversal (in this context the reversal of the logic of destination), Derrida (with Malabou 2004, 28), as was stated, is not leading towards a catastrophism. Insofar as traversal has thus been discussed, he offers in his *aporia*, a “faith in the other, precisely, that must orient every voyage that remains *truly open to the world*.” That is to say, though “Derrida stakes a claim for a voyage... [that] would stand in the immanence of a catastrophe [and] travels in the twilight of that immanence, perpetually missing his appointment with Ulysses,” he, in so doing, opens the whole discussion to *possibility*, and thus to, as Genevieve Lloyd (1999, 34) puts it, a “crossroads between chance and necessity.”

Following his discussions on the possibility of events and their being conditioned by impossibility, insofar as events (should) remain incalculable, as well as his discussion of *destinerrance* and originary exile which both fissure homogenous points of origin and departure as well as crossing borders, it becomes apparent that what is underscored is neither assurance nor necessity *as such* but a “perhaps.” This “perhaps” is concordant with the singularity of an event (which, as does the logic of derivation, should not be assimilated into “the essence of the voyage”), and thus as openness to what one encounters, as other and this other *as singular other*. This “experience of the perhaps” is the conclusion of Derrida’s overturning of the logic of derivation, of the *Odyssey*. Assured of no guarantees, and no reprogramming back into an orbital odyssey of no surprises (as is one in one’s experiences), there is the faith in the perhaps. This is a faith which is not prescribed nor instituted by configuring the traversal into a derived drifting. It is a “faith on the other” which makes the voyage “truly open to the world,” in that that faith is almost “undecidable,” and hence, his *aporia*:

The perhaps is just that which happens only in so far as it might just as well not happen. The love of this future is experienced as risk, what is expresses is not to be thought of as the hopeful anticipation of something which will be present. This kind of futurity is experienced as risk—an anticipation which will take its form in another way of “addressing oneself to the possible.” (Derrida 1997, 67)

This undecidability is the “perhaps,” the “immanence without apocalypse,” Derrida’s “[perpetual] missing [of] his appointment with Ulysses.” The “perhaps” is the “anxiety of a double, simultaneous, and contradictory desire, the desire to return home, to *my* place, as quickly as possible, but also to adjourn the return indefinitely” (Derrida

and Malabou 2004, 3). However, in being *adestinerrant*, the traveler with this “perhaps,” remaining within the strictest tension between the paradoxical desires, carries with it the neutralization of these two desires, in the place where one is always already. Because of this faith in the perhaps, Derrida reiterates his neologisms—the trace, spectrality, cinders. Deconstruction thus counters metaphysics with a hauntology, defining experience as “evok[ing] a space that is not given in advance but that opens as it advances.” Put in another way, “one always begins again, one is always beginning” (Gall 1994, 174), and one is always already beginning with loss and delay, traces of presences (in this context, origins and ends, as well as identities) that never were whole. This echoes at least three things: first, the impossibility of justifying one’s point of origin and of departure absolutely; and, hence, second, the inhabitation of an always already, implicative of what one seeks to overthrow outside this habitation, in one’s desire to reappropriate into propriety, as in the relegation of chance to accident, thus to a necessity instituted—all movements of a traversal wanting to be an *Odyssey*; and three, one can thus understand why Derrida, in the course of the preceding demonstrations, does not confront metaphysics head-on, that is, he does not *contradict* every system (and the oppositions thereof; he does not contradict them *as such*) but traces the system, as far as possible, so as to demonstrate the necessity of contamination and the recognition of this necessity, which is no longer grounded on an absolute law but on being haunted by *perhaps* and *alterity*.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper, we turn again to deconstruction. Because of *differance*, the concept of presence is displaced threefold: in language, presence as such, simple, can no longer be conceived, in that the signification entails a referential chain with no transcendental signified. There is, therefore, an alterity in the very heart of presence. Furthermore, this alterity takes the form of a detour or a delay, taken in the context of the now which is exposed to have traces of traces of past and future elements, indeed, for any definition of it to be possible. Thus, *differance* fissures presence beforehand, as it were—in making explicit the representation contaminating the very “origin,” which is no longer pure or recoverable with the sign. In communication, presence instituted as the homogenized space traversed by meaning, which itself was held to be proper, by the same token, fissured, in that inscription always carries in itself iterability as its necessary condition—thus, meaning is disseminated. This traversal of meaning is assured of no ends, cannot be assured of no ends, indeed, for textuality is itself only insofar as it functions even in the context of absence. Thus, apart from dissemination splitting the concept of proper meaning, there also is *destinerrance*, which is intimately linked with the treatment of arrival conditioned by the impossibility of advent.

Lastly, in the context of experience as traversal, this *destinerrance* conditions every traverse—such that sedentariness and destination are denied in any voyage, which Derrida insists is not a call for a somber view of experience. Instead, it can be read as a radical openness to an alterity, an openness that does not spring from a pure, proper identity or presence in terms of being a traveler or a space, but an alterity which is an always already constitutive of traces of difference—as such, it is a traversal that is “truly open to the world,” and truly open to the undecidability of perhaps.

Insofar as philosophy is a desire for a kingdom, *differance* frustrates it. It is not, thereby, falsified—it is not, for example that Plato or Hegel were wrong—it is that the desire to dominate the field it surveys... is frustrated—and was so before deconstruction analysed it as such. (Ferrel 1993, 130)

This is the Scylla and Charybdis of Derrida's project: contradiction and diversity. Or we might even say that Derrida's Scylla and Charybdis are the infinite and the indefinite. (Lawlor 1998, 189)

As numerous scholars did not fail to notice, Derrida's (see Chapman and Routledge 2005, 67) massive deconstructive corpus leads his readers to either to treat him as a passing fad or as a charlatan, or to the uncomfortable position of attempting to correct errors with tools derived from that very error, as Barbara Johnson (1981a, x), in the introduction to *Dissemination* states. However, although

...[t]he reader who follows Derrida through [the] maze of textual involutions bears witness to an ingeniously paradoxical rhetorical strategy calculated precisely to defy calculation. Derrida's resistance to metaphysics is embodied in this steadfast refusal to be captured by any calculus, caught in the noose of the theoreticist's dream of perfect systematicity. But such a refusal presents profound problems for an exegete.... Derrida's continued deconstruction of metaphysical presuppositions... lead him once again along a precarious path between the theoreticist edifice of metaphysics and an abyss of meaninglessness...

It would suffice to say that regardless, and *more importantly, because of the grandiosity of Derrida's efforts, what he reminds us of is quite simple: "One cannot help wishing to master absence and yet we must always let go"* (Derrida 1976, 142). Philosophy is not immune to this desire to master presence, but it is in the constant questioning of its own foundations that the philosophy of Derrida is at its most relevant.

NOTES

1. A discussion of how to formally and technically deconstruct is difficult to make explicit, as Derrida says in numerous statements, using various interrelated arguments, for instance, in Derrida's (1991, 273) letter to a Japanese friend: "...deconstruction is neither an analysis nor a critique. I would say the same about method. Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one," and in an interview with Derrida (1996, 218): "...deconstruction does not consist in a set of theorems, axioms, tools, rules, techniques, methods..." To go around this difficulty the article attempted an ostensive discussion rather than a formulaic one.

2. "Now from the moment that once considers the totality of determined signs, spoken, and *a fortiori* written, as unmotivated institutions, one must exclude any relationship of natural subordination, any natural hierarchy among signifiers or orders of signifiers" (Derrida 1976, 44-45). Also, from the same work (1976, 43), "[w]riting is not a sign of a sign, except if one says it of all signs..."

3. Originally, in Edmund Husserl, *L'origine de la geometrie*, translated and analyzed by Derrida (1973b).

4. Derrida (1982b, 8) exploits the polysemia in the Latin and the French, aside from that in the latter as the homonyms (*differents* in the sense of “different things,” *differends* as “different opinions”). *Differance* in French does not occur in the active sense of delaying or active differentiation from other things—it is suspended between the two senses of *differant* as differing and deferring.

5. The analysis of Derrida regarding “the dangerous supplement” as supplement (or substitute, in the sense of the French *suppléance*) is based on (and, hence, inscribed) from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s [1712-1778] major works, which include *Reveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), *Emile* (1762) as well as in *Essay on the origin of languages* (ca. 1770).

6. Derrida (and Malabou 2004, 128) translated *Envoi* from the meanings of the Heideggerian *schicken*, that is, both “to destine” and “to send.” “Envois” thus become “sendings,” both in the contexts of communication and of travel, in that *envoi* communicates a movement (either of a letter or a person, in general), subjected through the postal system (and the implications thereof).

7. Absence is to be understood in the context of the Derridean analysis as the absence of, following Husserl, the referent as well as the absence of either the speaker or the scriptor; as well as of the addressee (in terms of not being present, or their death):

What is here called “death” is the generic name we shall give to my absence in general with respect to what I write—whether this absence be real or an absence of attention or intention or sincerity or conviction.... When you read me, not only do you not know whether or not I am dead, but whether what I write is really what I meant, fully *compos mentis*, at the moment of writing. That there be this fundamental and irreducible uncertainty is part of the essential structure of writing. (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 51)

Taking this further, David Wood (1987, 148) states, “[i]t is the absence of the Other, perhaps even the Other’s absolute absence, that is the necessary condition for the legibility of writing.”

8. Indeed, the *metaphor* has been relegated as secondary to the *concept*, following the binary oppositions in the logocentric metaphysics. This, Derrida (1976, 271) claims, is what allows that the quest for the proper name, i.e., the selfsame, literal, is the effacement of the metaphor, even the metaphoricity of language, which he equates with the sign, through transport or transference (through the mediation of signification). “In what consists the precision and exactitude of language, that lodging of writing? Above all in literalness. A precise and exact language should be absolutely univocal and literal [*propre*]: nonmetaphorical.” He further describes this effacement as well as expatriation of the metaphor as characteristic of the orbital, hierarchized teleology of the history of the logocentric metaphysics: the derivation [French *deriver*, from the Latin *rivus*, stream; or *ripa*, bank] of a presence, marking it as origin and end (see Derrida and Malabou 2004, 11). Thus, one can say that the history of metaphysics is

the derivation (also: genealogy, order of sense) as effacement of the metaphor. Hence the relevance of the postal principle, in this context, for, as Smith (2005, 60) astutely observes, “[e]ven philosophical ‘concepts’ are, at bottom, post cards.”

9. Iain Thomson (1999, 20, 39) is particularly referring to the Derridean analysis of the existential analytic of Heidegger’s *Dasein* and how Derrida would proffer the *aporia* in connection to this, as presented by Derrida (1993) in *Aporias*. However, this description of Derrida’s style is in no way limited to the aforementioned book, as most authors and scholars of Derrida would show. See, for example, Derrida and Malabou (2004, 10, 14) and Johnson’s introduction to *Dissemination* (1981a, xvi-xix).

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