



MARIKA ENWALD

## Displacements of Deconstruction

The Deconstruction of Metaphysics of Presence,  
Meaning, Subject and Method



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

To be presented, with the permission of  
the Faculty of Information Sciences of the University of Tampere,  
for public discussion in the Auditorium Pinni B 1097,  
Kanslerinrinne 1, Tampere, on January 30th, 2004, at 12 o'clock.

*Acta Universitatis Tampereensis 988*

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

University of Tampere, Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy  
Finland

Distribution



University of Tampere  
Bookshop TAJU  
P.O. Box 617  
33014 University of Tampere  
Finland

Tel. +358 3 215 6055  
Fax +358 3 215 7685  
taju@uta.fi  
<http://granum.uta.fi>

Cover design by  
Juha Siro

Printed dissertation  
Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 988  
ISBN 951-44-5890-7  
ISSN 1455-1616

Electronic dissertation  
Acta Electronica Universitatis Tamperensis 320  
ISBN 951-44-5891-5  
ISSN 1456-954X  
<http://acta.uta.fi>

Tampereen yliopistopaino Oy Juvenes Print  
Tampere 2004

English translation from the Finnish manuscript  
by Gareth Griffiths and Kristiina K lhi

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# **Displacements of Deconstruction - The Deconstruction of Metaphysics of Presence, Meaning, Subject and Method**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In my dissertation, titled “Displacements of Deconstruction - The Deconstruction of the Metaphysics of Presence, Meaning, Subject and Method”, I have concentrated on the study and description of the transgressive side of deconstruction, that is, on how deconstruction changes the borders of philosophy, and on how particular philosophical problems and the central ideas of philosophy could be understood differently. The object of my study is the philosophical side of deconstruction, that is to say, traditional epistemological, ontological and even metaphysical questions. How does Derrida rethink the philosophical notions of subjectivity, perception, meaning, language and being parallel to his critique of other thinkers? Through philosophical analysis, the justifications and consequences of Derrida's claims can be clarified and evaluated. The aim of my study is to bring out the novelty and importance of his texts to philosophy and to relate them to the Western philosophical tradition.

The study is divided into six main chapters: 1. Introduction; 2. The Deconstruction of the Metaphysics of Presence; 3. The Deconstruction of Meaning; 4. Grammatology; 5. The Deconstruction of the Subject; and 6. The Question of the 'Method' of Deconstruction. In the Introduction I give a brief overview of Derrida's life and work as well as the reception of his work. In Chapter 2 I analyse the starting points of Derrida's quasi-concept of 'deconstruction' as well as other quasi-concepts frequently occurring in his texts. The present study is to a large extent structured so that first I discuss the effects of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence on being (Chapter 2), and then on meaning and language (Chapters 3 and 4), the subject (Chapter 5) and finally method (Chapter 6). Even though the study presents these different aspects deconstruction in different chapters they are all closely linked. The deconstruction of both the subject and meaning are part of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence.

Derrida presents several new philosophical quasi-concepts and neologisms in his writings; neologisms such as *différance*, *trace*, *repetition*, *supplement* and *economy*. These quasi-concepts and neologisms have no clear and single meaning, but the question is rather about “a sheaf” (*faisceau*) of meanings. One of the main aims of my study is indeed to present interpretational models in order to better understand these terms. At the end of Chapter 2 I will also present other objects of critique linked with the deconstruction of the metaphysics of proper (*métaphysique de la propre*) and phonocentrism.

In Chapter 3, The Deconstruction of Meaning, I pose the question of how language-centred Derrida's view on meaning is. Deconstruction is seen as representing a very language-centred view. Contrary to this notion of deconstruction, I discuss what Derrida means by the expression "Other of language", and what its relation is to language and prepredicative experience. I focus on these questions because even in studies favourable to deconstruction it is often left open how prepredicative experience and intentions motivate the particular choice of words. This vagueness is one of the main targets of the criticism of deconstruction. My intention has been to preserve the various possible interpretations linked to Derrida's concept of language. In doing so, I have isolated four different interpretations. I claim, however, that Derrida does not present an extreme language-centred view of meaning: instead, he argues that the 'other' of language, which plays in language, is more complex than the traditional philosophical theories of meaning (such as the phenomenological theory of judgement) have presented it.

In Chapter 4 I have looked in more detail at Derrida's view of language from the point of view of what he terms *grammatology*. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida presents a provocative view about what he claims is a new science that studies meaning - grammatology. Its basic concepts include, for instance, gram (*gramme*), writing (*L'Écriture*), text (*texte*) and the play of differences (*le jeu des différences*). Thus my intention is to describe the grammatological view of the nature of meaning. How do the quasi-concepts of *writing* and *textuality* affect the traditional philosophical notion of meaning? Also, I discuss what consequences this view has for referentiality and notions of truth in general.

In Chapter 5 I discuss Derrida's deconstruction of the subject. Derrida has presented many attention-raising views about subjectivity. My claim is that he does not deny the existence of the subject, but he questions how it has been described in the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida's deconstruction of the subject has an effect on at least five different conceptions of it. One can talk about the deconstruction of the meta-linguistic subject, the substantial subject, the present subject, the conscious subject and the internal subject. I look at these separately. Parallel to the critiques, I describe how the subject is manifested after Derrida's deconstruction of it.

In Chapter 6 the methods and methodology of deconstruction are discussed, including the question of whether it is even correct to talk of a deconstructive "method". In some interpretations of Derrida's writings (for instance, in literary studies) there has been an attempt to abstract a general method of deconstruction. Derrida himself, and many other scholars of deconstruction, have sharply opposed such goals. The conflict between Derrida and some of his interpreters brings forth a number of philosophically interesting issues. I consider how this conflict has come about and, in doing so, suggest considering *deconstruction as mediating between method and non-method*. Deconstruction implies certain "methodological" ways of conceiving a text, where the object of study - the text - determines its reading and includes its own deconstruction. A deconstructive reading thus implies a certain openness to the deconstructive elements of the text.

## Acknowledgements

This study was carried out at the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy, University of Tampere, as part of a Finnish Academy project “The Nature of Philosophical Knowledge”.

I wish, above all, to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Leila Haaparanta PhD, for her encouragement and generosity. Her wise comments, first on my master's thesis, then my licentiate thesis and finally on my PhD thesis, have made me clarify and specify my arguments. I am grateful to her for having the opportunity to work on her Finnish Academy project “The Nature of Philosophical Knowledge”. The project seminars gave me a chance to present and discuss my ideas about deconstruction with other members of the group. I am also grateful to my other supervisor, Emeritus Professor Veikko Rantala PhD, for his belief from the beginning of my studies that a thesis on Derrida's writings is a suitable topic for a thesis in philosophy. In his graduation seminars and NOS-H project meetings I had the opportunity to present early versions of chapters of my thesis, which made me state my arguments more precisely and helped in giving the direction for my study on Derrida. I wish to thank him also for his comments on my master's and licentiate theses.

I express my thanks to the official reviewers of the thesis, Professor Nicholas Royle, PhD (University of Sussex) and Docent Kristian Klockars PhD (University of Helsinki), for their careful review and valuable comments on the manuscript. Professor Royle deserves special thanks for first presenting Derrida's writings as interesting, and for encouraging me to start to study them: his seminars on Derrida at the University of Tampere in 1990-1991 raised my interest to study more closely what lies behind the ideas of chiasmatic logic and the deconstruction of the subject and experience.

I express my deep gratitude to Gareth Griffiths Tek.Lic. and Kristina Kõlhi M.Sc. for the translation of my thesis to English. Mr. Griffiths' wise questions and comprehensive comments made me improve my statements. Our dialogue on the

translation, lasting over one year, was one of the most inspiring episodes of working with the thesis. I am grateful to his devotion to the translation and for the articles and references that he sent to me.

Special thanks are reserved to Hannu Sivenius PhLic., for sharing his expert knowledge of Derrida and for detailed comments on an early version of the thesis. I express also my gratitude for the articles he sent to me. My thanks also go to Docent Sami Pihlström PhD for his comments on the licentiate thesis. Also, I wish to thank Docent Mikko Lahtinen PhD, for his comprehensive comments on the licentiate thesis. I am also deeply grateful to Arja-Elina MA, Olle Enwald DI, and Mervi Rissanen MA, for revising the language of my licentiate thesis.

My thanks to the following friends and colleagues at the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy for their generosity and inspiration: Jani Hakkarainen MA, Timo Klemola PhD, Tapio Koski PhD, Ismo Koskinen MA, Ville Lähde MA, Lauri Mehtonen PhLic, Erna Oesch, PhLic, Pekka Passinmäki MA, Petri Räsänen, PhLic, Sami Syrjämäki, MA, Maija Tuomaala MA, Tommi Vehkavaara PhLic, and Timo Vuorio MA. Interesting discussions in corridors, seminars and the restaurant of the Pinni building has made the studies much more interesting, enjoyable, lighter and funnier than without such a good spirit. I also wish to thank Professor Juha Varto PhD for his interesting lectures on phenomenology, Heidegger and literature at the University of Tampere, and thus for giving a special inspiration for studying and teaching philosophy.

My warmest thanks go to my family and friends for their support and encouragement during these years. Most of all, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my dear husband, Sven, for his encouragement and love. I wish to thank him also for revising the language of my licentiate thesis and my other writings. My sweet child, Erik, has given me such a joy that I have had a special energy to accomplish my thesis. I am deeply indebted to my mother, Professor Sinikka Carlsson PhD, for her persistent encouragement and love. Her example as a scholar, teacher, artist and, above all else, mother, have taught me that it is possible to combine a work guided by inner passion and still always have time for her children. I am grateful to my father, Professor Pentti Tuohimaa PhD, for his example as a scholar and his support during my studies. I also want to thank my 89-year old grandmother, Maija Tuohimaa, for her braveness and positiveness.

This study was supported financially by the University of Tampere, the Nordiska samarbetsnämnden för humanistisk forskning (NOS-H), the Finnish Academy, the Wäinö Tanner Foundation, the Scientific Foundation of Tampere City and the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

Marika Enwald

Tampere, January 2004

*"I wish to reach the point of a certain exteriority in relation to the totality of the age of logocentrism. Starting from this point of exteriority, a certain deconstruction of that totality which is also a traced path, of that orb (orbis) which is also orbitary (orbita), might be broached." (Jacques Derrida: De la grammatologie 1967, 231/161-16)*

## 1. Introduction

French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-) has presented in his writings provocative views of the deconstruction of the Western metaphysical tradition, the metaphysics of presence, logocentrism, the subject and the transcendental signified. Derrida's three early works, *La voix et le phénomène*, *De la grammatologie*, and *L'Écriture et la différence*, raised a lively debate soon after their publication in 1967 regarding how to respond to these different deconstructions of the tradition of Western metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> Is deconstruction only a nihilistic critique or does Derrida really offer a new way of thinking through the basic notions of philosophy such as language, meaning, knowledge and subjectivity? But what, then, *is* deconstruction? Does it offer a new critical method for philosophy and the humanities, or is it only a kind of style of writing literature or literary criticism? Does Derrida present a justifiable critique of different notions of philosophy or does he only make provocative claims without presenting any constructive view in place of the notions he criticises?

The term *deconstruction* easily gives the impression of a negative and nihilistic operation entailing the destruction of structures. Derrida has responded to this kind of negative image of deconstruction by claiming that the deconstructive

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<sup>1</sup> Derrida's early writings also received attention in French philosophical circles, for example his introduction to his own translation of Edmund Husserl's "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historischen Problem", which was published as *L'Origine de la géométrie* (1962) and an article "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" (1966).

“undoing, decomposing, and desedimenting of structures, [...] was not a negative operation. Rather than destroying, it was also necessary to understand how an ‘ensemble’ was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end. However, the negative appearance was and remains much more difficult to efface than is suggested by the grammar of the word (de-), even though it can designate a genealogical restoration (*remonter*) rather than a demolition.”<sup>2</sup> Hence Derrida himself considers deconstruction not as a nihilistic dismantling and destruction of structures,<sup>3</sup> rather, the dismantling of structures leads to a new way of conceiving the function of traditional philosophical concepts and structures.

Thus, the object of the present study is to discuss the genealogical and reconstructive side of Derrida's writings. In other words, the study focuses upon Derrida's writings in which he presents proposals for what should take the place of the notions he criticises, and upon how he transforms traditional notions about being, meaning, language, writing, subjectivity and method. One main aim of my study is indeed to show that deconstruction is not a nihilistic critique of the philosophical tradition, and that it offers, through critical analysis, new ways of understanding the basic concepts of philosophy. The object of my study is thus the philosophical side of deconstruction,<sup>4</sup> in other words traditional epistemological, ontological and even metaphysical questions.<sup>5</sup> How does Derrida rethink the philosophical notions of

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<sup>2</sup> Laj, 390/272.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Several scholars of deconstruction have emphasised that one of the main novelties of Derrida's work has been the challenge to the boundaries between philosophy and literature, by showing that philosophy cannot avoid certain effects of language that traditionally have been thought to belong to literature (Bennington 1991, 75, Pasanen 1992a, 12-17, Royle 2000, 7). I would agree that Derrida has brought forth in his writings the intertextual, metaphorical and literary aspect of language, which makes the ideal of a pure philosophy (i.e. conceptual clarity, univocality, systematicness and stability) impossible. The reason why I use the expression of "the philosophical side of deconstruction" is that I shall focus on the philosophical questions that Derrida deals with in his writings and that my interpretation of his writings is conducted through certain philosophical questions, such as how does Derrida consider the notion of being.

<sup>5</sup> This kind of philosophical interpretation of Derrida's work has been carried out in various parts of the world, and especially in the Anglo-American world, but in Finland, where Derrida is mainly read in literary studies, such an analysis is missing. There have been only a couple of larger philosophical studies of Derrida's work in Finland: Outi Pasanen's PhD thesis in Comparative Literature: *Writing as Spacing: Philosophy, Literature and the Work of Jacques Derrida* (1992), and Jari Kauppinen's

subjectivity, perception, meaning, language and being parallel to his critique of other thinkers? Through a philosophical analysis, the justifications and consequences of Derrida's claims can be clarified and evaluated. The particularity of Derrida's texts is not necessarily best highlighted through a traditional philosophical analysis, such as the present study; nevertheless, the latter angle aims to bring out the philosophical novelty and importance of his texts and to relate them to the Western philosophical tradition.<sup>6</sup>

The present study aims at a systematic analysis of Derrida's deconstructions and quasi-concepts (*différance*, trace, supplement, writing, etc.).<sup>7</sup> One of the best known systematic philosophical analyses of deconstruction is Rodolphe Gasché's *The Tain of the Mirror* (1986). In his thorough interpretation of deconstruction he analyses the philosophical background of deconstruction and brings forth both the connections and differences between Derrida's deconstruction and the long tradition of philosophy of reflection. Gasché thus elaborates the relation of deconstruction to the philosophical tradition that literary critics have ignored. His other major achievement is that he shows how Derrida's deconstruction is systematic and coherent. A number of other philosophers (including, for example, Irene E. Harvey, Geoffrey Bennington, Hugh J. Silverman) have also explained the consistency in Derrida's thinking. It might therefore seem quite difficult to find any new perspective in this direction for analysing Derrida's work. The central aim of my study has been from the very beginning to understand Derrida's quasi-concepts in terms of how they explain in a new way the notions of being, subjectivity, perception and language. I shall analyse the phenomenological roots of his critique, as well as how his deconstructions and quasi-concepts materialise yet differ from a phenomenological analysis of

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PhD thesis in Philosophy: *Atopologies of Derrida, Philosophy, Law and Literature* (2000).

<sup>6</sup> Another way of treating Derrida's writings is, for example, as Nicholas Royle has aimed to do in *After Derrida*: "[T]o render what is at once 'literary' and 'philosophical' in Derrida's work, or rather what might be going on in the wake of their mutual contamination, as regards both form and content" (Royle 1995, 10). Also Outi Pasanen emphasised in her PhD thesis *Writing as Spacing* that the relationship between literature and philosophy is chiasmatic (Pasanen 1992a, 26). That is, the literary and rhetorical element of language contaminates philosophy in such a way that it makes the traditional notion of philosophy problematic. Derrida has shown that philosophical analysis is thoroughly rhetorical (ibid., 24).

<sup>7</sup> In chapter 1.3 I consider the problem of the systematicness of Derrida's philosophy and the possibility of presenting deconstruction as a doctrine.

subjectivity, experience and language. This kind of phenomenological perspective attempts to dismantle the misconception that deconstruction is only textual analysis and concerned only with language and texts. I aim to show that deconstruction develops as a deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence and as a double reading in Derrida's close reading of Edmund Husserl's writings. There are already several studies that bring out the phenomenological genealogy of Derrida's deconstruction such as, for example, Leonard Lawlor's *Derrida and Husserl* (2002), but the present study differs from these in its systematization. Lawlor's analysis proceeds by analysing Derrida's texts in chronological order, while my aim is to consider in what text a certain notion or quasi-concept is first developed and then to proceed to a more systematic interpretation of it.

I have developed a systematic way of presenting Derrida's deconstructions and quasi-concepts by starting from an analysis of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence and then going on to raise more detailed questions. By "systematic way of presenting" I mean that Derrida's deconstruction and quasi-concepts are exposed and analysed through a traditional philosophical approach, by starting from definitions and a genealogy of the quasi-concepts and then going into more detailed questions. The following considerations are thus based on an analysis of concepts.<sup>8</sup>

Derrida has not presented any systematic theory about the nature of meaning, subjectivity, perception and consciousness, but usually deconstructs some specific issue in a close reading of a particular philosopher. Thus, it is often seen that he does not present any philosophical doctrine of his own, but only analyses texts in order to reveal their contradictions. In fact, Derrida does not *only* analyse and dismantle texts by others but also inevitably presents his own ideas about epistemology and metaphysics. The reader of Derrida's texts notices clear tendencies in what Derrida reads in the texts he analyses, in what he criticises as well as in what he values. On the basis of these themes and tendencies evident in his writings, I have set out to discuss the reconstructive side of deconstruction, that is, how Derrida expands the limits of tradition and deals in an original way with the central concepts of the philosophical tradition. The present study concentrates mainly on Derrida's early production (1962-1972), that is, *L'Origine de la géométrie, traduction et introduction par Jacques*

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<sup>8</sup> This kind of procedure is quite problematic, because Derrida uses his terms slightly differently in different contexts and has deliberately criticised the philosophical ideal of univocal concepts by calling his own concepts 'quasi-concepts'.

*Derrida* (1962), *De la grammatologie* (1967), *La voix et le phénomène* (1967), *L'écriture et la différence* (1967), *Positions* (1972) and *Marges – de la philosophie* (1972), because it is there that one finds Derrida's critique of the tradition of Western metaphysics and its terminology. The formulations of questions central to Derrida's philosophy can also be found in these texts, questions which characterise also Derrida's later writings.

The present study is divided into six chapters: 1. Introduction; 2. The Deconstruction of the Metaphysics of Presence; 3. The Deconstruction of Meaning; 4. Grammatology; 5. The Deconstruction of the Subject; and 6. The Question of the 'Method' of Deconstruction. In the Introduction I give a brief overview of Derrida's life and work as well as of the reception of his work. In Chapter 2 I analyse the starting points of Derrida's quasi-concept of deconstruction as well as other quasi-concepts frequently occurring in his texts. Deconstruction starts specifically from the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, because, according to Derrida, the term deconstruction (*déconstruction*) is developed specifically on the basis of Heidegger's (1926) proposal for the dismantling of the Western tradition of ontology.<sup>9</sup> The question is, in other words, about the dismantling of metaphysics linked with Being (*Sein*), and specifically the concept of presence and its influence on how the character of the subject, perception, meaning and being can be understood. Thus the present study is to a large extent structured so that first I discuss the effects of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence on being (Chapter 2), and then on meaning and language (Chapters 3 and 4), the subject (Chapter 5) and finally method (Chapter 6). Even though the study presents these different deconstructions in different chapters they are all closely linked. The deconstruction of both the subject and meaning are part of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence.

Derrida dismantles the metaphysics of presence through quasi-concepts and neologisms he himself has developed in reading various philosophers' texts, such as *différance*, *trace*, *repetition*, *supplement* and *economy*. These quasi-concepts and neologisms have no clear and single meaning, but the question is rather about “a sheaf” (*faisceau*) of meanings. That is to say, they assemble together several different properties and functions of the concept. Derrida claims that “the word *sheaf* seems to mark more appropriately that the assemblage to be proposed has the complex

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<sup>9</sup> Laj, 388/270-271, Lawlor 2002,1.

structure of a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning – or of force – to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others.”<sup>10</sup> One of the main aims of the present study is indeed to give interpretational models in order to better understand these terms. At the end of Chapter 2 I will also present other objects of critique linked with the deconstruction of the metaphysics of proper (*métaphysique de la propre*) and phonocentrism.

In Chapter 3, The Deconstruction of Meaning, I pose the question of how language-centred Derrida's view on meaning is. Deconstruction is seen as representing a very language-centred view. In characterising it there are often references to the claim presented in *De la grammatology* that “*There is nothing outside of the text*” (*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*).<sup>11</sup> This has been interpreted as meaning that according to the deconstructive view all thinking is linguistic and under the influence of textuality, and that there is no permanent and unconditional referential basis outside language.<sup>12</sup> Derrida himself, however, expresses surprise over the fact that his work is seen as a declaration that there is nothing outside language when, on the contrary, he sees his critique of logocentrism specifically as seeking the Other of language.<sup>13</sup> Thus, my intention is to discuss what Derrida means by the Other of language, and what its relation is to language and prepredicative experience. I focus on these questions because even in studies favourable to deconstruction it is often left open how prepredicative experience and intentions motivate the particular choice of words.<sup>14</sup> This vagueness is one of the main targets of the criticism of deconstruction. Studies of deconstruction mainly consider the effects of textuality and writing, not the actual formation of meaning in the act of speaking or writing. This phenomenological way of thinking about the formation of meaning brings forth the problems linked with the language-centred view of meaning in general. Derrida's views about the formation of meaning and the relationship between language and prepredicative experience (as

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<sup>10</sup> Dif, 4/3.

<sup>11</sup> This is also translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as “There is no outside-text”. GRAM, 227/158.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., for instance, Caputo 1987, Rorty 1982.

<sup>13</sup> Derrida writes: “I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language, it is in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above else the search for the 'other' and 'the other of language'.” D&o, 123.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Staten analyses this problem in detail in *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (1985).

well as subjectivity and intentionality) can be interpreted in several ways. My intention has been to preserve the various possible interpretations linked to Derrida's concept of language. In doing so, I have isolated four different interpretations. I claim, however, that Derrida does not present an extreme language-centred view of meaning: instead he argues that the 'other' of language, which plays in language, is more complex than the traditional philosophical theories of meaning (such as the phenomenological theory of judgement) have presented.

In Chapter 4 I look in more detail at Derrida's view of language from the point of view of what he terms *grammatology*. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida presents a provocative view about a new science that studies meaning – grammatology.<sup>15</sup> Its basic concepts include, for instance, gram (*gramme*), writing (*écriture*), text (*texte*) and the play of differences (*le jeu des différences*). Thus my intention is to describe the grammatological view of the nature of meaning. How do the quasi-concepts of *writing* and *textuality* affect the traditional philosophical notion of meaning? Also, I will discuss what consequences this view has for referentiality and notions of truth in general.

In Chapter 5 I discuss Derrida's deconstruction of the subject. Derrida has presented many attention-raising views about the subject. For instance, according to him, "[T]he subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self presence; it is always inscribed in language."<sup>16</sup> This kind of claim has led to the view that deconstruction completely denies the existence of the subject, and the claim that 'the subject is dead' is often tagged to characterisations of deconstruction. Thus, it is seen that language completely guides man's thinking, and that the subject has become superfluous. Derrida himself has responded to these characterisations of deconstruction, saying, for instance, that: "I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed."<sup>17</sup> He does not deny the existence of the subject, but he questions how the subject has been described in the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida's deconstruction of the subject has effects on at least five different conceptions of the subject. One can talk about the deconstruction of the meta-linguistic subject, the substantial subject, the present subject, the conscious subject and the internal subject. I will look at these

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<sup>15</sup> GRAM, 43/27.

<sup>16</sup> D&o, 125.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

separately. Parallel to the critiques, I will describe how the subject is manifested after Derrida's deconstruction of it.

In Chapter 6 the methods and methodology of deconstruction are discussed, including the question of whether it is even correct to talk of a deconstructive "method". A lively debate has been going on about the method of deconstruction, about how deconstruction could be applied to the research of different fields of the humanities and social sciences, as well as more generally to the critical study of thinking and world views. It is used in the study of literature, culture and art, in the social sciences as well as in the research of social and political structures.<sup>18</sup> Thus its application is linked fundamentally with the question of whether it is even possible to describe such a general structural feature or principle that could be called deconstructive method and whether it is possible to outline a general methodology of deconstruction. Furthermore, one can ask how deconstruction differs from other ways of reading, for instance, from New Criticism or hermeneutics.

In some interpretations of Derrida's writings (for instance, in literary studies) there has been an attempt to abstract a general method of deconstruction.<sup>19</sup> Derrida himself and many other scholars of deconstruction have sharply opposed such goals.<sup>20</sup> The conflict between Derrida and some of his interpreters brings forth a number of philosophically interesting issues. My intention is to discuss how this conflict has come about and, in doing so, to suggest considering deconstruction as mediating between method and non-method. Deconstruction implies certain "methodological" ways of conceiving a text, where the object of study – the text – determines its reading and includes its own deconstruction. A deconstructive reading thus implies a certain openness to the deconstructive elements of the text. Therefore, I shall analyse some concrete descriptions of Derrida's own deconstructions, yet emphasising that deconstruction cannot be reduced to those descriptions. The best known of these is

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<sup>18</sup> The extent of the application of deconstruction can be seen, for instance, in the number of articles found under the title "deconstruction" in the *Humanities Index 1989-* CD-Rom. The subjects range from an economic analysis of the Gulf War to the analysis of the application of law and justice, as well as from linguistic analysis of metaphors and homonyms to the deconstructive analysis of gender identity.

<sup>19</sup> Of the many works outlining a methodology for deconstruction the most important are Johnathan Culler's *On Deconstruction* (1983) and Rodolphe Gasché's *The Tain of the Mirror* (1985).

deconstruction as a *double gesture*, which he has described in *Positions*, as well as the notion of deconstruction as a *double writing* and *double science*. Other general structural features that can be discerned in Derrida's texts include textual *grafting*, *paleonymy* and *dissemination*. Chapter 6 also presents Irene E. Harvey's interpretation of deconstruction as a tracing of so-called *hinge terms*, Simon Critchley's interpretation of deconstruction as *clôtural reading* and Rodolphe Gasché's interpretation of deconstruction as an analysis of infrastructures. The aim is not to derive from these characterisations of deconstruction a normative law of deconstruction, but rather they can act as sources of inspiration, so that new deconstructive ways of reading can develop. These interpretations are also not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other, in which case the question is more about differences of emphasis.

### 1.1. The research method and approach

My research method can be characterised on the one hand as conceptual analysis and on the other hand as hermeneutical: conceptual analysis because the research aims to analyse Derrida's quasi-concepts and neologisms as well as to present interpretations of them; and hermeneutical because the research aims to understand Derrida's statements and quasi-concepts in relation to his whole production and the philosophical tradition, particularly the thinking of Husserl, Heidegger, Saussure and Levinas. The contextual analysis of his statements is particularly important in showing how Derrida's deconstructions develop as a part of the philosophical tradition, yet, on the other hand, differ from that tradition and its different branches, particularly phenomenology, fundamental ontology and structuralism.<sup>21</sup> The sense and sensibility of Derrida's statements and deconstructions can be found only in relation to the earlier philosophical tradition and the meeting of different ways of

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the articles "Afterwards ou, du moins, moins qu'une lettre sur une lettre en moins" (1992) and "Lettre à un ami japonais" (1987), as well as *Positions* (1972), Royle 2000, 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> In the research of Derrida's writings particular attention has been paid to his views that break with the philosophical tradition. See, for instance, Rorty 1989, Bennington 1988, Llewelyn 1968, Royle 1992.

conceptualising the world.<sup>22</sup> In this respect my study will follow the Anglo-American philosophical reception of Derrida's work, which has brought forth the continuity and differences of Derrida's writings in relation to the philosophical tradition. For instance, Rodolphe Gasché, in *The Tain of the Mirror* (1986), has analysed the relationship of Derrida to the thinking of Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty; Hugh J. Silverman, in *Inscriptions: After Phenomenology and Structuralism* (1987), has discussed the phenomenological (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre) and structuralist (Barthes, Foucault) influences on deconstruction and, in *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (1994), he has discussed the relationship between hermeneutics (Gadamer, Heidegger) and deconstruction; Simon Critchley, in *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992), has shown the common points and differences in thinking between Derrida and Levinas; and John D. Caputo, in *Radical*

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<sup>22</sup> I do not use the hermeneutic method in any systematic sense, if such a method can be said to exist. Different thinkers define the hermeneutic method differently. For instance, Gadamer emphasises that in hermeneutics the question is above all about *understanding*, and not any technical (methodical) event but the fusion of the reader's and author's horizons. Other philosophers associated with hermeneutics, such as Paul Ricoeur, emphasise more precisely its methodological starting points, even to the extent that for Ricoeur linguistic analysis forms the foundation of the method (see Oesch 1994, 50). Likewise, philosophers differ in regard to the extent they emphasise the meaning of the intentions of the author in their interpretations. Erna Oesch dealt with this question in her Licentiate thesis "On Interpretation: The interpretational and factual foundations in modern and philosophical hermeneutics" (1994). Views vary according to the aim of understanding: reconstructing the intentions of the author (e.g. E. D. Hirsch) or interpreting the text as a part of the horizon of understanding conveyed by tradition (e.g. Ricoeur). It should be noted that I am not trying to understand Derrida's texts from within his intentions. Indeed, according to the deconstructive way of thinking, the interpreter cannot ascertain from the text what the writer really meant or, on the other hand, understand the text better than the author has understood it (cf. Schleiermacher 1974, 83-84). Some angle in the text manifests itself to the reader, which is to a large extent coloured by the tradition within which the reader reads the text. Tradition is not so much a linear and complete unity, but rather a multiplicity that can be understood and interpreted in many ways. It is linked with other traditions, yet contains innumerable different subcultures and contradictory contexts. Thus, my own research on Derrida is to a large extent defined by my own life-world, personal situation and the numerous traditions of which I am a part. In my interpretation the question is about a unique historicity which comes about from my own part in the common tradition, but also in its unique combination. Thus, it is not possible to present a final and objective interpretation of the contents of Derrida's philosophy or other texts: the interpretation is always historical and unique. In this regard my view of understanding differs from some hermeneutic starting points which emphasise attaining the objective meaning and the intentions of the author (e.g. Hirsch, Dilthey, Schleiermacher).

*Hermeneutics* (1987), has presented a kind of continuity of radical thinking between Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida. One of the more recent studies, Leonard Lawlor's *Derrida and Husserl* (2002), examines how Derrida's thinking develops through his close reading of Husserl's writings.<sup>23</sup> In the present study I will consider Derrida's writings in relation to the views of Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas and Saussure.

Derrida's writings are thoroughly historical; that is to say, they have come about in relation to the philosophical tradition, and they participate in the meeting of structuralist, psychoanalytical and phenomenological concepts. Derrida himself states that he has not deconstructed philosophical texts for the sake of deconstruction; rather he speaks about the historical *event* (*Ereignis*).<sup>24</sup> Derrida describes an 'event' as:

“another name for experience, which is always experience of the Other. The event is what does not allow itself to be subsumed under any other concept, not even that of being. A 'there is' or a 'let there be something rather than nothing' arises from the experience of an event, rather than from thinking of being. The happening of the event is what cannot and should not be prevented: it is another name for the future itself”.<sup>25</sup>

In “Lettre à un ami japonais” Derrida claims that “Deconstruction happens, it is an event, which does not suppose decision, consciousness or organisation of subject. In

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<sup>23</sup> Other studies which have analysed Derrida's writings in relation to the philosophical tradition include for example: Chang G. Briankle, “The Eclipse of Being: Heidegger and Derrida” (1987); Irene E. Harvey, “Wellsprings of Deconstruction: Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida” (1987); Leonard Lawlor, *Imagination and Chance – The Difference Between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida* (1992); Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (1985).

<sup>24</sup> Laj, 391/274, Act, 29, POS, 82/60. Derrida refers with the notion of ‘event’ (*événement*) to Heidegger's term *Ereignis*. According to Hugh J. Silverman Heidegger calls *Ereignis* “the event of difference” (the ontico-ontological difference), the event of the relating of beings to Being. Silverman points out the connection to the German word *Eigen*, which means “what is one's own”. Thus the term *Er-eignis* describes the appropriation of what is one's own: the ontico-ontological difference. Ontico-ontological difference refers to the beings relation to its own otherness (Being) (Silverman 1994, 159-160). Hence this event is ecstatic in that “it is the passage from identity to difference” (Ibid., 159). It is a temporal departure from the static and the stable, happening of the otherness ie. being's difference from itself. (ibid, 159)

<sup>25</sup> Act, 32.

French we say *ca se déconstruit*, something deconstructs itself.”<sup>26</sup> Thus deconstruction is formed in relation to certain historical texts and thoughts, such as the views about language in Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale* (1915) and Husserl’s views on the nature of meaning in *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-1901) and "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie" (1938).<sup>27</sup>

The central aim of the present study is to present an interpretation of the philosophical dimension in Derrida’s early production; how he dismantles philosophical notions of Being, the subject, meaning, knowledge and language.<sup>28</sup> However, a philosophical approach to Derrida’s work has also been strongly questioned in the Anglo-American reception of deconstruction.<sup>29</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, who has been criticised as presenting<sup>30</sup> one of the most profoundly philosophical interpretations of Derrida's work, claims in the introduction to his book *The Tain of the Mirror* that “Any attempt to interpret Jacques Derrida's writings in the perspective

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<sup>26</sup> Laj, 391/274.

<sup>27</sup> In emphasising the historical interpretation, Derrida follows Heidegger. The manifestation of meaning (knowledge, truth) is seen as a historical event, the prerequisite for which is tradition, which makes it possible and visible. However, Derrida does not consider the tradition to be so closed as Gadamer has described it. For Gadamer tradition “is always part of us, a model or exemplar, a kind of cognizance that our later historical judgement would hardly regard as a kind of knowledge but as the most ingenious affinity with tradition” (Gadamer 1993, 282) For Derrida, the tradition and context of interpretation is not enclosed or determinable (Sec, 369/310). Interpretation, as an historical event, refers to the fact that something unexpected can emerge and yet have in affinity with the tradition.

<sup>28</sup> Such an interpretation is still needed here in Finland, because Derrida's writings are mainly considered as a form of literature and thus interesting only for literary studies. The philosophical thrust of Derridian thought has not been recognized in institutions of philosophy in Finland.

<sup>29</sup> For example, David Wood has claimed in “The Possibility of Literary Deconstruction: A Reply to Eugenio Donato” that he is not convinced that deconstructive criticism needs to grasp Heideggerian and Nietzschean origins of Derrida’s work (Wood 1990, 59) Wood’s comment is part of a discussion published in *The Textual Sublime* (1990), concerned with whether the understanding of deconstruction implies an acknowledgement of a philosophical background of it.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Geoffrey Bennington claims that: “Gasché wants to place Derrida in a History of Philosophy in which he will not be contained” (Bennington 1988, 76). Bennington criticises the philosophical presentations of Derrida's work (in particular, Rodolphe Gasché’s *The Tain of The Mirror*, Christopher Norris's *Derrida* and Irene E. Harvey's *The Economy of Differance*) by arguing that “in their acute sense of our philosophical naivety, [they] end up displaying their own philosophical naivety – which consists precisely in their being too philosophical” (ibid. 76) (see also Pasanen 1992a, 24).

of philosophy as a discipline is bound to stir controversy.”<sup>31</sup> However, he recognizes the problems of judging Derrida's writings only as literary, because it would exclude them from the sphere of serious philosophy. They are perceived as having an “incompatibility with philosophical sobriety, a lack of philosophical problematics and argumentation.”<sup>32</sup> This perception of Derrida's work is quite common in university departments of philosophy in Finland, which has led to both an ignorance of and a disinterest in his work. To avoid interpreting Derrida's work only as literary, Gasché claims that his exposition of Derrida's writings is manifestly philosophical for at least two reasons:

“First, what Derrida has to say is mediated by the canon of the traditional problems and methods of philosophical problem solving, as well as by the history of these problems and methods, [...] Second, my study is philosophical because it tries to prove that the specific displacements of traditional philosophical issues by deconstruction amount not to an abandonment of philosophical thought as such, but rather to an attempt at positively recasting philosophy's necessity and possibility in view of its inevitable inconsistencies.”<sup>33</sup>

The present thesis also aims to bring out the philosophical aspects of Derrida's writings. Derrida elaborates in his early writings (1962-1972) philosophically important questions to do with temporality, presence, subjectivity and meaning in a way that can be characterised traditionally as philosophical analysis, but at the same time he shows the inconsistencies within the philosophical tradition and its analysis. Thus Derrida presents in his writings not only a traditional analysis and close reading of philosophical texts but also a criticism that questions the nature of philosophical

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<sup>31</sup> Gasché 1986, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1. This kind of misconception of Derrida's work can be found for example in Jürgen Habermas's critique of Derrida in *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (1985). He claims that "In his business of deconstruction, Derrida does not proceed analytically, in the sense of identifying hidden presuppositions or implications. This is just the way in which each successive generation has critically reviewed the works of the preceding ones. Instead Derrida proceeds by a critique of style, in that he finds something like indirect communications, by which the text itself denies its manifest content, in the rhetorical surplus of meaning inherent in the literary strata of texts that presents themselves as nonliterary. [...] Thus the constraints constitutive for knowledge of a philosophical text only become accessible when the (philosophical) text is handled as what it would not like to be – as literary text." (Habermas 1996, 189)

inquiry and its conditions. These aspects of Derrida's work cannot be ignored in philosophy, because his criticism affects the whole notion of philosophy, its methods and its concepts.

An important task is to present philosophical interpretations of Derrida's quasi-concepts. This kind of exposition of Derrida's work has been worked out rather thoroughly already in Anglo-American studies of Derrida's writings (for example: Gasché's *The Tain of the Mirror* [1986], and Bennington's *Jacques Derrida* [1993]).<sup>34</sup> Such an exposition is important because Derrida has elaborated concepts and ways of thinking that break with traditional ways of thinking in philosophy. For example, Derrida calls the neologisms he proposes quasi-concepts, which means that they have no unique semantic content or meaning, but rather several meanings and functions. For instance, the term *différance* refers to both static difference, "to be not identical, to be other, discernible, etc.",<sup>35</sup> and dynamic difference, *temporization* and *spacing*, "the action of putting off until later, of taking into account, of taking account of time and of the forces of an operation that implies an economical calculation, a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve, a representation".<sup>36</sup> Therefore, *différance* is neither simply active deferring *temporization* and *spacing* nor simply passive separation and distinction. Derrida often describes his terms through negations, presenting what the term is not; for instance, the term *deconstruction* is to a large extent described in this way. Derrida claims that it "is neither a word nor a concept",<sup>37</sup> "it [*différance*] cannot be *exposed*",<sup>38</sup> and "*différance is not*, does not exist, is not a present-being in any form; and we will be led to delineate also everything *that it is not*, that is, *everything*; and consequently that it has neither existence nor essence."<sup>39</sup> Another reason for the ambiguity of the terms is their high level of abstraction. Accordingly, his texts might indeed seem as if they float in some conceptual virtual world whose relationship to the experiential remains unclear. Ambiguity also arises due to the fact that Derrida often defines his new terms in relation to abstract terms that he himself has developed,

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<sup>33</sup> Gasché 1986, 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> The book also contains Derrida's text 'Circumfession', thus Bennington and Derrida are in a sense joint authors, but here I refer only to the Bennington's analysis.

<sup>35</sup> Dif, 8/8.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 8/8.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 7/7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 6/5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5-6/6.

as in “*The (pure) trace is différance*”.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, Derrida's work calls for interpretation, which is always a translation, transposition and transformation of his writings.<sup>41</sup>

The problems concerning the interpretation of Derrida's work raised in this thesis are to a large extent determined by the discussion about Derrida's work already raised in Finland, but similar problems are reflected also in Anglo-American criticism. Such problems are: What does deconstruction mean? Is deconstruction a method? What does Derrida criticise in Western metaphysics? Is Derrida's work extremely language-centred? Does deconstruction destroy the subject? These questions structure the interpretation presented in this study.

## 1.2. A brief biography of Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida was born in El Biar in Algeria in 1930. He also attended school and attained his baccalaureate there. In several interviews (for instance, those by Richard Kearney and André Jacob) he has been asked how a Jewish family background and the Jewish religion, which is clearly visible, for instance, in the philosophy of the Lithuanian-born Jew Emmanuel Levinas, have influenced the development of his own thinking. In the Kearney interview, Derrida analyses his own relation to Jewishness as follows:

“Though I was born a Jew, I do not work or think within a living Jewish tradition. So that if there is a Judaic dimension to my thinking which may from time to time have spoken in or through me, this has never assumed the form of an explicit fidelity or debt to that culture. In short, the ultimate site (*lieu*) of my questioning discourse would be neither Hellenic or Hebraic if such were possible.”<sup>42</sup>

Derrida first became interested in philosophy at the age of eighteen when he heard a programme on the radio about Albert Camus. He was also inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre's role as a French intellectual and activist. Later he has said that Sartre was “a

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<sup>40</sup> GRAM, 92/62.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Royle 1995, 4.

model that I have since judged to be ill-fated and catastrophic, but one I still love...<sup>43</sup>

In 1950 Derrida began his studies in France and stayed on to work with Hegel scholar Jean Hyppolite at the *École Normale Supérieure*. He began to read Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Bataille, Blanchot and others, and that same year completed his master's thesis, *Mémoire*, which dealt with Edmund Husserl's views on meaning, structure and origin. In 1956, at the age of twenty-six, he received a one-year scholarship to Harvard University. At that time he had planned to write a thesis for the *doctorat d'état* (the qualification needed to become a university teacher) "The Ideality of the Literary Object" inspired by ideas related to Husserl and phenomenological aesthetics. He gave up that plan, however, when he became more conscious of the deconstructive standpoint, which he then began to develop while planning the book *La voix et le phénomène*.

At the end of the 1950s, Derrida became interested in the problems that philosophy encounters with literature, writing and textuality. According to Derrida himself, French philosophy was dominated at that time (1958-1968) by French structuralism, typical for which was the immobility of structures. In the beginning of the 1960s he taught at the Sorbonne and studied phenomenology, structuralism and the theory of literature. Derrida translated Husserl's essay "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" into French, published in 1962 as *L'origine de la géométrie*, but which also contained Derrida's own long analysis of the book. For his translation Derrida was awarded the *Prix Cavallès*. Three years later Derrida began to teach the history of philosophy at the *École Normale Supérieure*, and to write for the journal *Tel Quel*, which published writings dealing with new French criticism. According to Terence Hawkes, *Tel Quel* "pursued 'une théorie et une pratique révolutionnaires de l'écriture' through focusing on new forms of fiction, philosophy, science and political analysis."<sup>44</sup> Derrida's first article to be published in *Tel Quel* was "La parole soufflée" (1965) in a special issue devoted to Artaud. The new French criticism was opposed to a positivistic study of literature and was interested in semiotics, Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism (as well as publishing poetry). Such scholars and authors as Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Edern Hallier, Jean-René Huguenin, Michel Foucault, Jean Genet, Alain Robbe-

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<sup>42</sup> D&O, 107.

<sup>43</sup> Norris 1987, 240.

<sup>44</sup> Hawkes 1977, 183.

Grillet, Julia Kristeva and Philippe Sollers were also linked to the journal. For example, a collection of essays by Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Sollers and other writers associated with *Tel Quel* was published as a book titled *Théorie d'ensemble* in 1968.

In 1967 Derrida published his first full-length books, *La voix et le phénomène*, *De la grammatologie* and *L'écriture et la différence*. *La voix et le phénomène* deals with the theory of meaning proposed by Husserl in *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-1901), and in it Derrida criticises Husserl's views about self-reflection and the ideality of meaning. Derrida saw a problem with phenomenology, in that it repeats metaphysical presumptions about what life is. According to Derrida, phenomenology is a philosophy about life and the living presence, in which case death has only a secondary meaning. This view on life directs the whole of phenomenology and its view of language.<sup>45</sup> For Husserl, meaning manifests itself in the mind as present, and the use of language only gives expression to some complete meaning that already exists in the mind. Derrida sets out in his work to outline the meaning of language as a constituting system that is not only expression. Thus it is thought that language centrally influences the formation of meaning. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida presents a critique of logocentrism. In the first part of the book he analyses the tradition of Western philosophy in relation to writing, and in the second part presents in detail how a typical world of values and explanatory model for logocentrism can be seen in the writings of Rousseau. Derrida's analysis of Rousseau has often been presented as a model example of deconstruction, and from which there have been attempts to abstract a deconstructive method.<sup>46</sup> *L'écriture et la différence* contains several articles in which Derrida analyses the views of Nietzsche, Foucault, Levinas, Freud, Saussure and Hegel on language and writing.

In 1972 Derrida again published three books: *Positions*, *Marges de la philosophie*, and *La dissémination*. In *Positions*, a collection of interviews, Derrida explains the main aims of his philosophy, gives a characterisation of deconstruction and explains his basic concepts and critique. Among the collection of articles in *Marges de la philosophie* is "La différence", in which he brings forth his own views

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<sup>45</sup> V&P, 9/10.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Irene E. Harvey: "Doubling the Space of Existence: Exemplarity in Derrida – The Case of Rousseau" (1987); and Paul de Man: *Blindness and Insight* (1983).

on language and presents the quasi-concept 'différance'. In the first part of *La dissémination* Derrida presents a new interpretation of the relation between writing and speech in Plato's *Phaedrus* dialogue, and in the second part, "La double séance", he analyses Plato's and Mallarmé's views on writing and art as mimesis. *La dissémination* begins to show the style of writing that is typical for Derrida's later writings, in which analysis proceeds in a manner of free association. Examples retrieved from fiction overthrow philosophical structures of thought. The text is not so much argumentative, nor does it proceed logically in the traditional sense, but rather through word associations.

From 1972 onwards Derrida has taught in Paris as well as at different universities in the USA, including regularly at John Hopkins and Yale.

Derrida wrote his book *Glas* (1974) using a sort of collage technique, with parallel analyses (on the same page) of Hegel and Jean Genet, along with occasional parallel insertions of passages from the Bible, encyclopaedia definitions and love letters written by Hegel. Categorising the work as either a philosophical text or as fiction is very problematic because the style of writing lies between these, with the text playing with words and dictionary definitions. Christopher Norris indeed characterises the work as a Joycean intertextual commentary.<sup>47</sup> *Glas*, like *La Dissémination*, *Signéponge* and *La carte postale de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*, are writings that can be characterised as fiction and even as humour or as ironic works, because they make fun of philosophical analyses in a rhetorical manner typical for literature. According to Rorty, this humour and irony is Derrida's most important philosophical contribution to philosophy.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Geoffrey Bennington emphasises the humour in Derrida's writing in his article "Deconstruction and the Philosopher (The Very Idea)" (1988), where he points out that the humour and laughter typical for Derrida's philosophy has mistakenly been forgotten in the philosophical research of deconstruction, and that it has been studied too much from the viewpoint of "serious" science, even though one of the most essential dimensions of deconstruction lies specifically in humour.<sup>49</sup> A good example of the ironical and literary style used by Derrida can be found in *Signéponge* (1976), in which he analyses the metaphors in Francis Ponge's poetry (such as sponge, washing machine

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<sup>47</sup> Norris 1987, 243.

<sup>48</sup> Rorty 1989, 125.

<sup>49</sup> Bennington 1988, 75.

and linen), finding in them a description of the relationship between writing and its theme and subject matter. However, even these texts approaching literature contain a philosophical dimension. One could indeed say that they cannot be clearly categorised as either literature or philosophy but are irresolvably both.

In the 1970s a public discussion came about between Derrida and John R. Searle on contextuality and intentionality. In his article “Reiterating the Differences - Replying to Derrida” (1975) John Searle criticises Derrida’s interpretation of Austin’s speech act theory as put forward in the article “Signature, Événement, Contexte” (1971). Derrida responded to Searle’s critique in an extensive essay published under the title *Limited Inc., a, b, c.* (1988) in which he explains in detail what he means by the absence of the author and reference, the non-saturation of context, iterability and the citationality of a mark.

In 1978 Derrida published an extensive study on Nietzsche, *Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, as well as a study on painting, *La vérité en peinture*, in which he considers from a Kantian point of view the meaning of framings and titles in regard to the understanding of painting.

His 1979 article “Survivre: Journal de Bord” (later published as “Living on: Border Lines” in the collection of articles *Deconstruction and Criticism* [1979]) has been characterised as the manifesto of deconstruction.<sup>50</sup> The book also included articles by Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, Paul de Man, as well as Harold Bloom, and soon led to the view of a uniform grouping of deconstructive and avant-gardist philosophy and literary criticism.<sup>51</sup> Later, attempts have been made to challenge this view, as, for instance, Rodolphe Gasché does in his article “Deconstruction as a Criticism” (1985). According to Gasché, it is rather a question of two separate

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<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, Pasanen 1985, 2. Geoffrey Hartman claims in the preface to *Deconstruction & Criticism* that it "is neither a polemical book nor a manifesto in the ordinary sense. If it wants to 'manifest' anything, by means of essays that retain the style and character of each writer, it is a shared set of problems. These problems center on two issues that affect literary criticism today. One is the situation of criticism itself, what kind of maturer function it may claim – a function beyond the obviously academic or pedagogical. [...] The second shared problem is precisely that of the importance – or *force* – of literature." (Hartman 1979, vii).

<sup>51</sup> Though Hartman points out that the contributors to *Deconstruction & Criticism* differ considerably. He considers Derrida, de Man and Miller as "boa-deconstructors, merciless and consequent, though each enjoys his own style of disclosing again and again the 'abysm' of words." (Hartman 1979, ix). Bloom and Hartman, on the other hand, he argues, can barely be considered as deconstructives (ibid. ix).

deconstructive movements: the French one, to which, for instance, Derrida and Foucault belong, and the American one, which incorporates, for instance, de Man and Miller. Gasché claims that the tradition of American deconstruction is to a great extent literary research continuing from the foundation of New Criticism,<sup>52</sup> whereas French deconstruction has a philosophical direction that criticises the Western tradition of reflective philosophy.<sup>53</sup> Terry Eagleton, on the other hand, argues that Anglo-American deconstruction removed the political aspect of deconstruction:

“Certain American uses of deconstruction, Derrida has observed (in Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.): “Les fins de l’homme”, Paris 1981) work to ensure ‘an institutional closure’, which serves the dominant political and economic interests of American society. Derrida is clearly out to do more than develop new techniques of reading: Deconstruction is for him an ultimately political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole structure of political structures and social institutions, maintains its forces.”<sup>54</sup>

Eagleton's argument can be supported by Derrida's comments in “Les fins de l’homme” (1972) and “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils” (1983) about the intertwinement of philosophy and the political.<sup>55</sup> However, Derrida has also pointed out the incommensurability of his philosophical and political commitments. For example, he has claimed that “I try where I can to act politically

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<sup>52</sup> According to Terence Hawkes: “‘New Criticism’ was conceived in opposition to an ‘older’ criticism which in Britain and America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, had largely concerned itself with material extraneous to the work under discussion: with the biography and psychology of its author or with the work’s relationship to ‘literary history’” (Hawkes 1977, 152). The general principle of New Criticism is that the work of art, and in particular the work of literary art, should be regarded as autonomous. The work of art should be examined in its own terms. Later, New Criticism was challenged by Marxist theory, structuralism, semiotics and the linguistic turn in general (ibid, 152).

<sup>53</sup> Gasché refers with his concept “the philosophy of reflection” to a philosophical tradition that began with Descartes, the epistemological starting point of which is in the analysis of consciousness. Consciousness is analysed through self-reflection. Other representatives of this tradition are, for instance, Kant and Husserl. I will discuss the relationship between the tradition of reflexive philosophy and Derrida’s thinking in more detail in Chapter 2, The Deconstruction of the Metaphysics of Presence.

<sup>54</sup> Eagleton 1983, 148

while recognizing that such action remains incommensurate with my intellectual project of deconstruction.”<sup>56</sup> And in “The Deconstruction of Actuality” (1994),<sup>57</sup> Derrida claims that it would be going along with the mediagological form to claim that “in reality I have only been concerned with problems of actuality, of institutional politics, or simply of politics.”<sup>58</sup> In “The Principle of Reason” he defends the university's and especially philosophy's right to investigate also purely theoretical questions concerning the grounds of knowledge even though it must not close itself from the needs of society.<sup>59</sup>

Derrida received a doctoral degree for published works from the Sorbonne in 1980. That same year he published *La Carte Postale de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*, a meta-fictional work on the border between literature and philosophy, about postcards a narrator has written to his loved-one, in which reality and fiction are combined. The cards refer to conversations with J. Hillis Miller and Paul de Man. The style of the writing varies from poetry to philosophical analysis. The text is also full of pseudo-references. One of these is a picture of a Tarot card in which Plato teaches Socrates to write. At the same time Derrida also discusses the conveyance of meaning and communication and the relationship between the text and the sender and the receiver.

The collection of articles *L'Oreille de l'autre* was published in 1982, containing the transcript of a lecture on Nietzsche, an autobiography, as well as transcripts from panel discussions from a seminar held in Montreal in 1979.<sup>60</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s Derrida had been invited to play a coordinating role in the foundation of the International College of Philosophy in Paris, an institution created with the intention of promoting interdisciplinary research between the sciences. Also, since the 1970s Derrida has been actively involved in Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique (GREPH), which has aimed to oppose the French government proposal to remove philosophy from the curriculum of the final year *lycée* course.

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<sup>55</sup> Fins, 131/111, Pr, 16-17.

<sup>56</sup> D&o, 120.

<sup>57</sup> The French original first appeared in the monthly review *Passages* in September 1993.

<sup>58</sup> Act, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Pr, 16-17.

<sup>60</sup> A presentation given by Derrida in Montreal, 22-24.10.1979.

In 1986 Derrida was appointed Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, French and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Irvine. That same year he published his study of Heidegger, *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*, in which he looks at ontological and sexual differences, as well as a collection of articles titled *Psyché: Invention de l'Autre*. In 1988 he published *Mémoires pour Paul de Man* in memory of de Man,<sup>61</sup> which has been followed over the years by several other obituaries on his fellow philosophers (“Les morts de Roland Barthes” 1988,<sup>62</sup> “Louis Althusser” 1990, *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas* 1997).

In the 1990s Derrida began to publish more and more articles and books about social issues, such as democracy (*L'Autre cap suivi de la démocratie ajournée*, 1991), and Marxism (*Spectres de Marx*, 1993). He has continued to write about literature and psychoanalysis (*Mal d'archive: Une impression Freudienne*, 1995; *Résistances de la psychanalyse*, 1996). Death, ethics (the ethics of giving and the gift), as well as love, are central themes in the article “Donner la mort” (1992) and in the books *Apories* (1993), *Passions* (1993), *Sauf le nom* (1993), *Politiques de l'amitié* (1994) and *De l'hospitalité* (1997). One could indeed say that there are three different emphases in Derrida's production: 1. Traditional philosophical and analytical deconstruction, 2. Poetical deconstruction, and 3. Ethical-political deconstruction. Derrida's early production (1962-1972) is a more traditional, critical philosophical analysis, from which emerge many philosophically important questions, such as: What is the nature of meaning? What is the nature of thinking? or even, What is philosophy at all? The discussion of these same kind of questions continues also in the more poetical and ethical-political stages of his production. I call the period from 1974 to the 1990s ‘poetical deconstruction’ because here it is more evident that Derrida questions the beliefs that philosophical concepts are clear and unambiguous, and that there is a clear demarcation between philosophy and literature. He began to use an ever more ironical (equivocal) and divergent (disseminating) writing style, and developed quasi-concepts about metaphorical expressions. From the beginning of the 1990s onwards, he began to write increasingly about social and ethical-political issues. In Richard Kearney's interview, Derrida describes his philosophy as follows:

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<sup>61</sup> Biographical details about Derrida are contained in Christopher Norris' book *Derrida* (1987), in Irene E. Harvey's book *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* (1986), as well as in Derrida's own book *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question* (1987).

“My central question is: from what site or non-site (*non-lieu*) can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner? Such a non-site or alterity would be radically irreducible to philosophy. But the problem is that such a non-site cannot be defined or situated by means of philosophical language.”<sup>63</sup>

It is indeed possible to say that this question defines to a large extent Derrida's whole production. In his early writings he aimed within the framework of philosophical analysis to think about those limits that philosophy has been compelled to create in order to define itself as philosophy, science and *episteme*.<sup>64</sup> In the poetical stage, Derrida moves further towards that writing style and way of philosophising that he ended up with at the earlier philosophical stage: that is, philosophy is seen essentially as one practice of writing among others, and which does not differ from literature because of any conceptual unambiguousness, but rather, philosophical concepts are seen to be just as obscure, ambiguous, textual and quasi-conceptual as the words used in literature. As already mentioned, in his later production Derrida analyses more and more social and political issues: democracy, Europe, racism, apartheid, feminism and Marxism. All in all, Derrida's production is very extensive, comprising over fifty books (some of which are collections of articles) as well as numerous articles (up to 1997 there are over 300 published articles).<sup>65</sup> Since 1983 Derrida has acted as director of studies at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris and continues (since his appointment in 1986) as the Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, French and Comparative Literature at University of California, Irvine, in the USA. Also he continues to receive invitations from around the world to give lectures.

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<sup>62</sup> Published in English as "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" in *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Merleau-Ponty* (1988).

<sup>63</sup> D&o, 108.

<sup>64</sup> According to Outi Pasanen (1990a, 49), Derrida's philosophy concentrates on a discussion about what philosophy and thinking is; what are philosophy's borders and subconscious presuppositions, what remains unthought within these borders, what has been included and excluded, and what are the ethical-theoretical solutions that have guided these solutions.

<sup>65</sup> Details about Derrida's writings from the 1990s are taken from the internet site "Bibliography of Works by Jacques Derrida", <http://www.hydra.umn.edu/jdyr.html> 21.2.1999.

### 1.3. The reception and study of deconstruction

There has been a lively debate about deconstruction over the last three decades, and countless articles and numerous books have been written, especially in the Anglo-American academic world. Derrida's writings have created a strong negative reaction, yet also raised hopes of a new type of world-view and science. His writings have been criticised as being messy, illogical, unscientific and lacking argumentation.<sup>66</sup> Others, on the other hand, are convinced about the systematicness of Derrida's critique and his way of thinking. For instance, Gasché states that "[t]he content and style of Derrida's thinking, reveals to even superficial examination, a well-ordered procedure, a step-by-step type of argumentation based on an acute awareness of level-distinctions, a marked thoroughness and regularity."<sup>67</sup> Others generally positive towards Derrida's writings nevertheless think that they do not form any doctrinal system. For instance, according to Bennington: "Derrida's work is less a system than a series of impure 'events'."<sup>68</sup> Derrida's writings have been valued for their creativity, innovativeness, provocativeness and humour.<sup>69</sup> Other researchers see deconstruction as subversive,<sup>70</sup> and a unique phenomenon in the history of philosophy.<sup>71</sup> For

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<sup>66</sup> See negative critiques of Derrida in Eco 1992, 39-40, Coulter 1996, 445, Habermas 1996, 188-189, 210 and Itkonen 1987, 298.

<sup>67</sup> Gasché 1987, 3. Gasché admits, however, that "the methodological aspect of deconstruction, if it is recognised at all, could still be viewed as the minimal coherence of a merely private and anarchic project, closer, in its aberrations, to literature than to philosophy." (ibid. 3). Similarly, Staten (1985, 13) states: "One would guess, from the ease with which it is often declared that Derrida has 'deconstructed' the boundary between literary and philosophical discourse, that Derrida remains in most of his work a careful and systematic, if unorthodox, philosopher."

<sup>68</sup> Bennington 1991, 109.

<sup>69</sup> Caputo 1987, Bennington 1988, Rorty 1989, Royle 1995. For instance, according to Rorty (1982, 93), Derrida has done a great service to philosophy "by making philosophy more unprofessional, funnier, more allusive, sexier, and above all, more 'written'"

<sup>70</sup> For example, Stephen W. Melville states: "Derrida's work is subversive, profoundly so – so profoundly that nothing is obvious either in advance or after the fact about what does and does not neutralise it, where it has and has not been domesticated, or what approaches to it are or are not rigorous." (Melville 1986, preface, xxvi) Melville argues that deconstruction is a subversion of philosophic property and propriety. He criticises the attempts to contextualize Derrida's writings,

example, Nicholas Royle claims that “The energy or allergy of affirmation with which Derrida's work is charged engages not the irrational but rather another kind of thinking. His work is concerned with [in Derrida's own words] 'possibilities that arise at the outer limits of the authority and the power of the principle of reason'<sup>72</sup>.”<sup>73</sup> Others, again, have not found anything interesting and substantial in Derrida's writings.<sup>74</sup> Derrida is often criticised as being a cryptic writer, that his texts are obscure and difficult to understand.<sup>75</sup> One can indeed say that his writings have raised a very lively discussion in philosophy and literary studies, which has then spread to other humanistic studies. Can philosophy or science at all be the Nietzschean ‘Gay Science’ that plays with all “earthly seriousness”?<sup>76</sup> Can the profound be ‘gay’ or the ‘gay’ be profound? What is the relationship between the writing style and content, can a multifaceted text containing literary and rhetorical expressions be systematic and substantiated?

It is understandable that Derrida's writings and argumentation have led to opposition, because he has criticised the tradition of Western philosophy from various angles. Thus different assumptions about foundations and Being, the metaphysics of

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because, he argues, it would drag his texts back into the confines of a received tradition and problematic, which would domesticate, neutralize and undermine the deepest motives of Derrida (ibid., preface, xxvi).

<sup>71</sup> Harvey 1987, 127.

<sup>72</sup> Pr, 14.

<sup>73</sup> Royle 1995, 1. Royle continues: "It [deconstruction] is concerned with a kind of thinking that tries to reckon with the fact that 'reason is only one species of thought' (Pr, 16) – without, for all that, simply valorising the irrational, since 'irrationalism, like nihilism, is a posture that is completely symmetrical to, thus dependent upon, the principle of reason' (Pr, 14-15). Thus Royle argues that Derrida's work has to do with "a new affirmation, and new ways of taking responsibility (Pr, 15), and indeed with something like a new enlightenment." (Ibid., 2) (I have changed Royle's reference to Derrida's article "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils" [1983] from PR to Pr).

<sup>74</sup> For example, Jeff Coulter claims that he cannot find in Derrida's writings “either the tools or the insights which so many others claim are there to be found.” Coulter 1996, 445.

<sup>75</sup> For example, John R. Searle has written that: "Michel Foucault once characterized Derrida's prose style [in conversation with Searle] as *obscurantisme terroriste*. The text is written so obscurely that you can't figure out exactly what the thesis is (hence "*obscurantisme*") and then when one criticizes it, the author says, "*Vous m'avez mal compris; vous êtes idiot*" (hence "*terroriste*") (Searle 1983, 77). Foucault also charged Derrida with exercising a "limitless sovereignty" over the text, permitting Derrida to "restate" it "indefinitely" (Miller 1993, 121).

presence, logocentrism, phonocentrism and phallogentrism have become objects of critique. Derrida has questioned on the one hand the signs and structures that form the foundation for classical structuralism, and on the other hand, the presence of experience, perception, the subject and meaning which form the foundation of phenomenology. He has also questioned ideas in the field of analytical philosophy, for instance, the ideas about contexts in Austin's speech act theory. On the other hand, he has criticised the aim typical for continental philosophy of creating a totalising metaphysics. In particular, he has questioned the Hegelian dialectical view of the preservation and overturning of opposites in a higher unity (*Aufhebung*). Likewise, Derrida has criticised Heidegger's and Husserl's views that support the definition of Being as presence. Correspondingly, Derrida sees the phonocentricity in the writings of Plato and Rousseau as problematic.

The views of Derrida researchers (among those who generally value his work) on how deconstruction is seen to fit within philosophy can basically be divided into two groups. Some researchers argue that deconstruction cannot be classified as a philosophical project because it questions philosophy's aim of finding the ulterior foundation and origin of existence, consciousness and thinking. Deconstruction is seen not as presenting any new metaphysical or epistemological position, but rather showing the impossibility of the traditional philosophical project (e.g. Rorty 1989, Bennington 1988, Llewelyn 1988, Pasanen 1992a, 1992b). Other researchers, on the other hand, emphasise that it is possible to find also philosophically interesting and substantiated views in Derrida's writings,<sup>77</sup> which cannot be understood separately from the tradition of continental philosophy (e.g. Gasché 1986, Harvey 1986, Melville 1986, Norris 1987, 1997, Critchley 1992, Silverman 1994).<sup>78</sup> For example, Irene E. Harvey has claimed that: "[D]econstruction does share similar aims with respect to its target of operation and overall goals of the process with Kantian critique, Nietzschean genealogy, and Heideggerian destruction." But by the same token she claims that "[T]he differences between these four strategies – deconstruction, critique, genealogy,

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<sup>76</sup> This refers to Friedrich Nietzsche's characterisation of 'gay science' in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882) § 382.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Gasché 1987, 3 and Staten 1985, 13.

<sup>78</sup> The difference between researchers is also due to the fact that they have different views of what philosophy and philosophical thinking entail. For instance, Rorty sees the traditional philosophical way of writing and thinking which aims to build

and destruction – are undoubtedly more significant than their similarities.”<sup>79</sup> Both viewpoints can be justified on the basis of Derrida’s texts. Both are also united by the view that Derrida’s writings differ radically from the philosophical tradition. However, they differ from one another regarding how profound the change in the way of thinking is. For example, Christopher Norris has attacked in several writings the view that deconstruction differs radically from the philosophical tradition. Thus he claims that Derrida's reading is the “most authentic 'Kantian' reading of Kant precisely through his willingness to problematise the grounds of reason, truth and knowledge.”<sup>80</sup>

According to the most critical viewpoint, the basic ideas of deconstruction cannot be understood from within the traditional philosophical way of thinking and, moreover, they are watered down by being transformed into the traditional language of philosophy. According to Bennington, the reader cannot but experience a feeling of strangeness when s/he reads about the philosophising attempts of deconstruction. He claims that they inevitably fail because Derrida questions the whole separation between philosophy and literature.<sup>81</sup> Bennington is right in that there are elements in Derrida’s writing which the philosophical analysis aiming for conceptual clarity and non-ambiguity cannot bring forth. One can even say that the uniqueness of his writings lies in that he has deliberately used the force of literature in language, that is, the performative, rhetorical and metaphorical aspects of language, and tried to dismantle the philosophical aim of seeking an ultimate ground, meaning and structure. Despite this, I still see that one can analyse Derrida’s writings from the viewpoint of traditional philosophy and thus aim for conceptual clarity. For example, Gasché,

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totalising systems as negative, whereas Gasché clearly values the systematicness, thoroughness and all-encompassing nature of philosophical thinking.

<sup>79</sup> Harvey 1987, 127.

<sup>80</sup> Norris 1990, 199. Also for example, Graig Brandist argues that "His [Derrida's] characterization of science and of writing, the science of which is grammatology, is typically neo-Kantian: science is a 'task' in which ideal objects are produced, while writing is [in Derrida's own words] 'the condition of the possibility of ideal objects [...] the condition of the episteme'" (Brandist 2000, 102). In *Against Relativism* (1997) Christopher Norris argues that deconstruction should be seen as closely allied to the epistemo-critical tradition of thought presented, for example, by Bachelard (Ibid., 45) Norris' aim is to "refute the idea of deconstruction as a apriori committed to an extreme 'textualist' version of the argument that reality is a purely linguistic construction, that all concepts are metaphors', 'all science merely a species of intrumental fiction' and kindred quasi-deconstructive *idées reçues*." (Ibid, 38).

<sup>81</sup> Bennington 1991, 75.

Harvey, Norris and Silverman have all succeeded in an interesting way in this challenge of meeting both views. When emphasising Derrida's unsystematicness and "unphilosophical" approach, the danger is that his thinking is either mystified or discarded as philosophically uninteresting. And when this happens it appears as if one is faced by the Emperor's New Clothes, fine but invisible.<sup>82</sup>

Derrida's early writings, especially his interpretation of Husserl and the questions about writing,<sup>83</sup> raised a lively debate in France soon after they were published in the early 1960s. The first wider commentary on Derrida's writings was *Écartés. Quatre essais à propos de Jacques Derrida*, edited by Lucette Finas, Sarah Kofman, René Laporte and Jean-Michel Rey, published in France 1973. Derrida has entered several public debates in the form of articles with, for instance, Levinas and Ricoeur, yet his reception in France can be characterised as being strongly critical.<sup>84</sup> This can be seen, for instance, from the fact that he did not receive any permanent post in France until 1983 when he was made director of studies at the *Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales*.<sup>85</sup> In Europe articles were written about Derrida's writings already in the 1960s in Italy, Holland and Denmark.<sup>86</sup> Derrida's writings have also raised a lively debate in Germany. Most prominently, Jürgen Habermas has been very critical of Derrida. In *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (1985)

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<sup>82</sup> For example, Searle has claimed that "granted that deconstruction has rather obvious and manifest intellectual weaknesses, granted that it should be fairly obvious to the careful reader that the emperor has no clothes, why has it proved so influential among literary theorists?" (Searle 1987, 78). Eagleton warns about the emptiness of deconstruction if it ignores social issues: "Anglo-American deconstruction largely ignores this real sphere of struggle and continues to churn out its closed critical texts. (...) Such deconstruction is a power game, a mirror-image of orthodox academic competition. It is just that now, in a religious twist to the old ideology, victory is achieved by 'kenosis' or self-emptying: the winner is the one who has managed to get rid of all his cards and sit with empty hands" (Eagleton 1983, 147).

<sup>83</sup> The first article published in France dealing with Derrida's philosophy was Michel Deguy's article "Husserl en seconde lecture", which appeared *Critique* no. 192, in June 1963. Since then, numerous philosophers in France have written about Derrida; for instance, Jean Lacroix, Francois Wahl, Francois Châlet and Philippe Sollers, to mention just few.

<sup>84</sup> One can mention, for example, Bernard-Henry Lévy's article "Derrida n'est pas un gourou" *Magazine littéraire*, no. 88, 1974.

<sup>85</sup> Bennington 1999, 335.

<sup>86</sup> The first article published in Italy to consider Derrida's philosophy was Mario Perniola's article "Grammatologia ed estetica" in the journal *Rivista di Estetica* no. 3 in 1966. The Dutch journal *Tidschrift voor Filosofie*, no. 1, 1968, was devoted to the philosophy of Derrida.

Habermas criticises deconstruction as a form of literary criticism applied to philosophy. Habermas claims that: “[I]f, following Derrida's recommendation, philosophical thinking were to be relieved of the duty of solving problems and shifted over to the function of literary criticism, it would be robbed not merely of its seriousness, but of its productivity.”<sup>87</sup> Therefore, for Habermas, this kind of deconstructive literary criticism, which merely “continues the literary process of its objects, cannot end up in science” and cannot be “subject to the criteria of problem-solving” and “purely cognitive undertakings”.<sup>88</sup> Also Manfred Frank's *Was ist Neo-Strukturalismus?* (1983) has been one of the most influential critical commentaries on poststructuralism in Germany, looking at it from a hermeneutic point of view. He is certainly not unsympathetic towards the writings of Derrida, yet challenges the post-structuralist scepticism that denies the assertibility of meaning. Frank criticises deconstruction by claiming that “If one were to take Derrida's antihermeneutics seriously in all its radicality, one would have to conclude that the disseminal character of signs – their total nonpresence – not only would make endurable signification impossible for them, but also would prohibit their signification at any point at all. That, to be sure, would be an absurdity that could be maintained only by going contrary to the experience of speaking and understanding [...]”<sup>89</sup> Also Peter Zima's *Die Dekonstruktion: Einführung und Kritik* (1994) can also be considered an important commentary on deconstruction for the German audience.

Derrida's work has been most favourably received, however, in USA and UK. Nevertheless, in these two countries there is also a strong tradition of analytic

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<sup>87</sup> Habermas 1996, 210.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>89</sup> Frank 1989, 432. In terms of the history of philosophy, Frank points out that poststructuralism and hermeneutics confront the essential problems of modern thought: the absence of transcendental values and the questioning of subjectivity. But they have diverged most significantly with regard to their evaluation of the possibility of an authentic dialogic situation. For Frank, understanding could not occur without a shared, supra-individual code. But it would also be impossible without the individual construction and actualizing of that code. Deconstruction and hermeneutics are most compatible, however, when they affirm the insurmountable asymmetry of encounters between speaking subjects. Unlike some others, Frank does not feel that asymmetry opens the floodgates to arbitrariness. Hypotheses made by one partner in a dialogue are always motivated, and in this sense they can also be called upon for accountability. But hermeneutics and poststructuralism can be reconciled only by limiting the infinite play of signification while at the same time maintaining the impossibility of determinacy.

philosophy, and of pragmatism, too, in USA, which has meant that Derrida's ideas have not been broadly accepted there. For example, Antony Easthope argues in *British Post-structuralism* (1991) that “As far as literature is concerned, British deconstruction is represented by a handful of essays”<sup>90</sup> He considers that one of the reasons for the marginal interest in Derrida in Britain was that “British readers were thoroughly warned off deconstruction” by the Terry Eagleton whose books have been widely read in British academic circles.<sup>91</sup>

According to Simon Critchley, there are two waves discernible in the reception of deconstruction in the Anglo-American world: 1. The literary scientific reception that began in the 1970s and the philosophical reception from 1986 onwards.<sup>92</sup> The research into deconstruction sprang primarily from within literary studies circles in the USA, especially the so-called Yale school, to which belong Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman and in some respects Harold Bloom. These, together with Derrida, published in 1979 a collection of essays titled *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Extensive deconstructive literary research has been carried out in UK and USA, for instance by Derek Attridge, Jonathan Culler, Shoshana Felman, Barbara Johnson, Vincent Leitch, Nicholas Royle and Robert Young. The most important among the researchers creating a literary methodology from a deconstructive viewpoint have been Culler, Gasché, de Man and Miller.

Literary studies' interest in deconstruction is to a great extent based on the fact that it offers a new way of understanding the character of a text, the influences of intertextuality, as well as the reader's position as an interpreter of literature. Deconstruction has raised interest also because it has been seen as a method which enables the taking of a critical distance from Western culture, through which it is possible to rethink Western values and goals (transformation) and to overstep the

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<sup>90</sup> Easthope 1991, 164.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>92</sup> Critchley 1992, 1-2. However, Geoffrey Hartman's *Saving the Text: Literature / Derrida / Philosophy* appeared already in 1981. One can also mention: Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend* (1984); Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (1984); Gregory L. Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (1985); Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (eds.) *Derrida and Différance*, and Don Ihde and Hugh J. Silverman (eds.), *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (1985).

limits of tradition (transgression).<sup>93</sup> The critical re-thinking and transgression of limits characteristic of deconstruction, has traditionally been seen as something characteristic of artistic creation, and in this sense it is natural that deconstruction as a theory was received first within the circles of literary and art research. Furthermore, deconstruction has appealed because it breaks traditional subdivisions between theory and practice as well as between philosophy and literature. Thus, so-called theoretical research no longer manifests itself as a pure genre. Within it other practices of creative writing can be combined, and this has been particularly the case within the sphere of literature, for example Derrida's *Glas*, *La carte postale* and *Signéponge*.

It was not until the early 1980s that important philosophical research on deconstruction began to appear in the Anglo-American world; for example: Henry Staten's *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (1984), *Derrida and Différance* (1985) edited by Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, and *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (1985) edited by Don Ihde and Hugh J. Silverman.<sup>94</sup> Especially Gasché's *The Tain of the Mirror* (1986), Harvey's *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* (1986) and Llewelyn's *Derrida on the Threshold of Sense* (1986) created a new philosophical approach to deconstruction. The philosophical background to deconstruction was studied, and its basic concepts were brought out in a more systematic way. Philosophical research into deconstruction has been carried out mainly in the USA and the UK. Important research from this angle has also been carried out by Robert Bernasconi, Richard Beardsworth, John D. Caputo, Simon Critchley, Richard Kearney, Robert Magliola, Stephen Melville, Christopher Norris, Gary John Percesepe, John Sallis, Hugh J. Silverman, Henry Staten and David Wood, to mention a few (in alphabetical order). Philosophers have been interested in deconstruction on the one hand as a new way of reading the classics of philosophy and on the other hand in order to discuss the substantiations and formulations of Derrida's philosophical statements. Furthermore, philosophers have been interested in deconstruction's

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<sup>93</sup> Taking this "distancing" from Western philosophy one step further, one may ask whether it has anything in common with non-Western philosophy. This has indeed been the argument behind Harold Coward's book *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* (1991) and Dennis McCort's book *Going Beyond the Pairs: The Coincidence of Opposites in German Idealism, Zen and Deconstruction* (2001).

<sup>94</sup> However, articles on deconstruction did start appearing already at the beginning of the 1970s; for example, Richard M. Zaner's "Discussion of Jacques Derrida's 'The Ends of Man'" being one of the first ones, published in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, March 1972.

critical formulation of questions and the re-thinking of the tradition of Western metaphysics. The research of deconstruction is still lively in philosophical and literary scientific research.

Derrida's writings have been received very positively in poststructuralist, postmodernist and feminist theory circles. One can indeed say that Derrida's writings have been one foundation in the birth of poststructuralist feminist theories. Within, for instance, feminist theory Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak makes direct references to Derrida's texts. Likewise, within psychoanalytical theory, for example, Mikkel Borch-Jacobson and, again, Kristeva have been influenced by Derrida. Undoubtedly, Derrida is one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century.<sup>95</sup>

There has been rather little research and discussion of deconstruction in Finland within the field of philosophy, because of a strong tradition of analytical philosophy and a deep interest in German philosophy (Kant, Hegel, Husserl and to a lesser extent Heidegger). In 1985 an issue of *Synteesi*, the journal of the Finnish Society of Semiotics, was devoted to deconstruction, including translations of a few key articles, Derrida's "La Différance" and "L'Étre à un ami japonais" and Gasché's "Deconstruction as Criticism".<sup>96</sup> In an issue of the interdisciplinary journal *Tiede ja Edistys* in 1987 there was a debate between Esa Itkonen and Hannu Sivenius about deconstruction. Sivenius' essay "Derridan puolesta" [In defence of Derrida] (1988) was one of the first presentations in Finland of deconstruction as philosophy. In 1988 Outi Pasanen's Finnish translation of *Positions*, the collection of Derrida interviews, was published. However, the articles in *Synteesi* and the Finnish translation of

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<sup>95</sup> For example, Stephen Melville has claimed that: "[T]he writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida have been unquestionably the single most powerful influence on critical theory and practice in this country [USA] over the past decade and more." (Melville 1986, 25). Also Peggy Kamuf has argued that: "[W]ith that work [*De la grammatologie*] he began what has proved to be one of the most stunning adventures of modern thought. It promised, from its first public acts, an explanation with philosophical traditions unlike any other. That promise has since been realized in more than twenty-two books and countless other uncollected essays, prefaces, interviews, and public interventions of various sort." (Kamuf in the preface of *Between the Blinds. A Derrida Reader* 1991, 7).

<sup>96</sup> The term *deconstruction* cropped up in public in Finland for the first time in *Sianhoitoopas* [Pig husbandry guide] (1987) by Markku Eskelinen and Jyrki Lehtola, which undertakes a deconstructive reading of literary texts.

*Positions* did not raise a strong interest in deconstruction in Finland, because the set of concepts and the use of language linked with Derrida's philosophy differ significantly from traditional philosophical research in the country. One of the most central tasks of research of deconstruction in Finland would indeed be to interpret and translate his concepts into Finnish, so that further research would not be a mere superficial translation of words and slogans but rather interpretations of whole thought structures.

In Finland deconstruction has interested more researchers in literature than in philosophy – a phenomenon common to the reception of Derrida in many other countries, too. As late as 1992 Outi Pasanen stated in her article "Positions on Translation" (1992c) "One has to realise that while, for the moment, there is almost no reception of Derrida in this country [Finland], the same holds also for the context that is essential for understanding what is at stake in deconstruction".<sup>97</sup> In 1991 an international seminar was held at the University of Tampere with important deconstruction scholars attending, such as Timothy Clark, J. Hillis Miller, Nicholas Royle and Robert Young. The seminar proceedings were published in English and Finnish under the title *Afterwords* (1992). Several other important scholars of deconstruction have held seminars at Helsinki University, for instance, Simon Critchley, Rodolphe Gasché, Christopher Norris, John Sallis and Hugh J. Silverman. Also, Derrida himself held a seminar at Helsinki University in spring 2000 on the subject of justice.

Translations of Derrida's writings have been published in the Finnish cultural journal *Nuori voima*;<sup>98</sup> for instance, the first chapter from *Donner le temps. 1. La fausse monnaie*, "Le temps du roi" (1991),<sup>99</sup> and the article "Force de loi. Le 'fondement mystique de l'autorité'" (1994).<sup>100</sup> Translations of Derrida's writings as well as essays on his work have been published in the philosophy journal *Niin & Näin*; for instance, "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences

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<sup>97</sup> Pasanen 1992a, 43.

<sup>98</sup> In the same journal there have also been several articles about Derrida's writings; for instance, Jari Kauppinen's "Kuolemani hetkellä – auto-thanato-grafiasta" [At the moment of my death – on auto-thanato-graphy] (1996), and Hannu Sivenius' "Marxin aave(et)" [The Spectre(s) of Marx] (1996).

<sup>99</sup> *Nuori Voima*, 4/1995.

<sup>100</sup> *Nuori Voima*, 2/2000.

humaines” (1996).<sup>101</sup> In the same journal was also a debate about deconstruction in the aftermath of the so-called Sokal affair.<sup>102</sup> A Finnish translation of Derrida’s article ”The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils” (1983) appears along with well-known articles on the task of universities by Kant, Habermas and Foucault, as well as by Finnish scholars, in the book *Yliopiston ajatusta etsimässä* [Looking for the idea of the university] (1990).<sup>103</sup> A large collection of Jacques Derrida’s articles translated into Finnish titled *Platonin apteekki ja muita tekstejä* [Plato’s Pharmacy and Other Texts] edited by Teemu Ikonen and Janne Porttikivi is due to be published in Autumn 2003.<sup>104</sup>

Since the 1990s, however, there has been an increased interest in Derrida’s writings also in philosophy in Finland.<sup>105</sup> A French philosophy circle has been

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<sup>101</sup> This was published along with Ismo Nikander’s article ”Merkkien loputon leikki – Fenomenologian ja strukturalismin välissä ja tuolla puolen” [The endless play of signs – between and beyond phenomenology as structuralism]. Nikander has also discussed in his article ”Dialogin mahdollisuus ja mahdottomuus” [The possibility and impossibility of dialogue] (1996) the relationship between Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Derrida’s deconstruction.

<sup>102</sup> The ’Affair’ was about the publication of physicist Alan D. Sokal’s fraudulent article ”Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity” in the journal *Social Text* (46-47/1996), after which the author disclosed that the ’spoof’ article, the gaffs in which had gone unnoticed by the editors of *Social Text*, had been written as a way of criticising what he regards as the lack of understanding of science and mathematics by certain key philosophers such as Derrida. The affair was discussed in Tommi Vehkavaara’s article ”Huijauksia vai konstruktioita” [Frauds or constructions] and I. A. Kiesepää’s article ”Kvanttigravitaation hermeneutiikka ja postmoderni diskurssi” [The hermeneutics of quantum gravity and postmodern discourse], *Niin & Näin*, 4/1997.

<sup>103</sup> Articles by myself on Derrida have been published in the *Tampere University Department of Philosophy Publication Series*. Marika Tuohimaa, ”Kuinka kielipainotteinen Derridan näkemys merkityksistä on?” [How language-centred is Derrida’s view on meanings?] (1998), and in the journal *Königsberg*, Marika Tuohimaa, ”Ajan kehkeytymisen jäljillä – Jacques Derridan näkemyksiä ajasta” [On the trail of the emergence of time – Jacques Derrida’s views on time] (1996).

<sup>104</sup> Also forthcoming (Spring 2004) is *Johdatus dekonstruktioon* [Introduction to Deconstruction] by Marika Enwald.

<sup>105</sup> Also since late 1990’s Derrida’s views on ethics have been under discussion in Finland (Jari Kauppinen ”Etiikka kauhun tilana – Derrida Blanchot’n ja Levinasin välissä” (1998) [Ethics as a state of uncanny – Derrida between Blanchot and Levinas], Kristian Klockars ”Det performativa och frågan om praktiskt förnuft hos Derrida” [The performative and the question of practical reason in Derrida’s writings” (2002), Marika Tuohimaa ”Dekonstruktio ja oikeudenmukaisuus – Jacques Derridan dekonstruktion etiikasta” (2001) [Deconstruction and justice - On Jacques Derrida’s ethics of deconstruction])

operating at Helsinki University for several years, where texts by Derrida and other French thinkers have been read out and discussed. In the 1990s several masters' degree theses and various post-graduate researches about Derrida's philosophy have been made. Outi Pasanen from the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Helsinki has been a pioneer in the research of deconstruction research in Finland: her PhD, "Writing as Spacing: Philosophy, Literature and the Work of Jacques Derrida" (1992) was made at the State University of New York at Binghamton. Likewise, Jari Kauppinen at the University of Helsinki Department of Philosophy has specialised in Derrida's philosophy: his PhD thesis was titled "Atopologies of Derrida – Philosophy, Law and Literature" (2000). These studies show that also in Finland Derrida's writings have been studied from a philosophical angle more closely since the 1990s.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Also an important study on Derrida is Merja Hintsa's book, *Mahdottoman rajalla: Derrida ja psykoanalyysi* [On the borders of the impossible: Derrida and psychoanalysis] (1998). She has read Freud through Derrida, finding many pertinent deconstructive aporias in Freud's writings, thus offering a non-traditional reading of Freud.

## 2. The deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence

One of the central themes in Derrida's writings, and through which the term 'deconstruction' becomes understandable, is the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence (*métaphysique de la présence*).<sup>107</sup> Derrida himself states that his use of the term 'deconstruction' comes from Heidegger's notion, presented in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), of the 'destruction' (*Destruktion*) of the tradition of Western metaphysics.<sup>108</sup> According to Heidegger, Western metaphysics presupposes that Being and beings<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Lawlor 2002, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Laj, 388.

<sup>109</sup> Heidegger's notion of *Sein* is translated into English as *Being* and the notion *Seiendes* is translated as either the present participle *being* or as *entity*. Heidegger's main question in his writings concerns the meaning of Being, but what he actually means by the notion of Being is a more complex question. According to Hubert L. Dreyfus, Heidegger emphasises that: 1) Being is the most universal concept, and thus 'beingness' is the most general property 2) Being is indefinable and 3) The nature of being must be self-evident, since every proposition can be analyzed as including the copula 'is'. However the main task of Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* is to question this presumed self-evidence (Dreyfus 1992, 10-11). According to Joseph J. Kockelmans, in *Sein und Zeit* and *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* "Being is the pure horizon of meaning, within which beings appear and by reason of which they can reveal themselves for what they are. That suggests that in his early works Heidegger was of the opinion that "Being" and "world" to some degree are equivalent (Kockelmans 1984, 47). Being makes the comprehension of beings possible. In his earlier works Heidegger emphasises that Being is the Being of beings, and that Being could be understood only through beings. Kockelmans argues that in his later works Heidegger emphasises the negativity of Being, Non-being: "Thus the Non-being which lets beings be unveils itself as Being itself, insofar as it reveals the Being of beings. [...] Being is not just the Being of beings, but that it first and foremost is *itself*, the "other of beings," somehow antecedent (a priori) to all beings." (ibid., 49). Since 1930 (the lecture course on *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, published 1982), the term *mystery* is linked with the notion of Being. According to Kockelmans, concealment is ontologically prior to revealment in Heidegger's later writings. Revealment takes place within a horizon of darkness and concealment (ibid., 50). The notion of *Seiendes* refers to particular being or entity. In *Sein und Zeit* the focus is in a particular kind of being, *Dasein*. Being appears as the Being of beings and is understood by *Dasein*. Kockelmans points out that in Heidegger's later writings there is a phase where Heidegger considers that "Being can and even must be thought by itself, independent of the beings." (ibid., 56). But in *Was ist Metaphysik?* (1949) Heidegger corrected his statement and argued again that "Being never comes-to-presence without beings" (ibid., 56-57).

are present (*Anwesenheit*) in the present (*Gegenwart*).<sup>110</sup> But in such thinking, he argues, the temporal dimension of Being is forgotten. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida claims, like Heidegger before him, that the metaphysics of presence entails defining the meaning of being, time and subjectivity as presence (*présence*).<sup>111</sup> In other words, Being and the meaning of Being are seen as essentially present in the present.<sup>112</sup> Leonard Lawlor states in the introduction to his book *Derrida and Husserl* (2002): "Over the time while writing the book I slowly realised that Heidegger's attempt in *Being and Time* to reopen the question of being is the defining event of twentieth century philosophy."<sup>113</sup> The question of Being travels via Maurice Merleau-Ponty to the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Derrida.<sup>114</sup> In this sense, Heidegger's opening, which Derrida has continued in his own direction in his critique of the metaphysics of presence, is important also more generally in understanding the philosophical tradition of the 20th century.

The other philosopher that has decisively influenced the development of Derrida's thinking is Edmund Husserl. Concrete ideas in Derrida's writings on the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence and what it means for the basic concepts of philosophy such as meaning and consciousness have come from his close reading of Husserl. In his analysis of Husserl in *La voix et le phénomène* Derrida defines the metaphysics of presence as a philosophical tradition that considers the history of Being as presence, as self-presence in absolute knowledge, and as the consciousness of the self in the infinity of *parousia*.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the critique of the metaphysics of presence is concerned with how *Being, knowledge* and *consciousness* have been understood in the Western philosophical tradition. Thus, in the metaphysics of presence Being is understood as presence in the present. Knowledge, in turn, is interpreted as manifesting itself as the presence of meaning in

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<sup>110</sup> Heidegger 1979, 25.

<sup>111</sup> GRAM, 23/12.

<sup>112</sup> The metaphysics of presence differs from the requirement of moral and ethical presence, which occur, for instance, in Zen philosophy. The metaphysics of presence is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of the basic structure of Being. The moral and ethical requirement of presence requires conscious choice, observation and concentration on the present moment. Derrida's analysis is concerned with the extent to which being in the present moment is the original way of Being and basic form of the subject.

<sup>113</sup> Lawlor 2002, 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>115</sup> V&P, 115/102.

consciousness, and the subject is regarded as the presence of self-consciousness. According to Derrida, Western philosophy has indeed been dominated by the idea of the presence of consciousness as the primordial experience of Being.<sup>116</sup> Thus the phenomenon constituted by observation and experience is perceived as a kind of ideal meaning (*eidos*)<sup>117</sup> present in consciousness, and self-presence (*cogito*) and subjectivity is understood as the intentional phenomenon of the ego. In the metaphysics of presence, Being, meaning and consciousness are regarded as substance (*ousia*).<sup>118</sup> For instance, consciousness is considered a mental or spiritual substance thought to exist as something present. Likewise, meaning is considered as a mental or spiritual essence (*eidos*).

In this chapter I will examine the development of the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, referring also to Heidegger's and Husserl's thinking, as well as discuss what Derrida offers in its place. Is it at all possible to transcend the metaphysics of presence?

## 2.1. A preliminary definition of the term *deconstruction*

Derrida's attitude to the term 'deconstruction' has varied in his different writings. He has stated in many interviews and articles that he first took the word into use quite unsystematically, and only later characterised more specifically what he means by the term.<sup>119</sup> In his article "Lettre à un ami japonais" Derrida tells of the background to the term as follows:

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<sup>116</sup> GRAM, 23/12.

<sup>117</sup> The Greek word *eidos* refers to: 1) that what is seen, and 2) form and figure. The word has been used to signify meaning and idea. It is almost synonymous with the word *idea*, which meant in Ancient Greek 'pure form'. The word *eidos* is closely connected to the word *eidolon*, which meant 1) Delusion, dream or ghost, and 2) Whatever non-substantial form, for example reflection in the mirror or water. (*Greek-English Lexicon* 1958, 483).

<sup>118</sup> The Greek word *ousia* signifies 1) that which is some one's own, property 2) substance and essence, 3) the real nature, 4) substantiality, owning a nature, and 5) fundamental reality, the lowest level (*substratum*), which is behind movement. For example, Aristotle speaks in this sense of Democritus' atomic theory (*ibid.*, 1274).

<sup>119</sup> Punc, 44; Laj, 388/270.

“When I chose this word, or when it imposed itself upon me – I think it was in *Of Grammatology* – I little thought it would be credited with such a central role in the discourse that interested me at the same time. Among other things I wished to translate and adapt to my own ends the Heideggerian word *Destruktion* or *Abbau*.”<sup>120</sup>

In the beginning the term *deconstruction* was simply Derrida’s free translation of Heidegger’s notion of *Destruktion* and Husserl’s notion of *Abbau*. Heidegger presents the term *Destruktion* in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) within his critique of the Western ontological tradition. Heidegger refers with the term to a theoretical inquiry into ontology explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities.<sup>121</sup> For Heidegger, Greek ontology, that is, a way of looking at the Being of entities as formed in Greek philosophy, defines even today the concepts of philosophy.<sup>122</sup> Heidegger sets as his task to *destroy* the traditional content of ancient ontology in order to reach those primordial experiences that have determined the nature of Being.<sup>123</sup> According to Heidegger’s critique, in the tradition of ontology when existence and particularly *Dasein* understands Being it does so in terms of the ‘world’,<sup>124</sup> and thus the question of Being, that concerning the meaning of Being of entities, has been forgotten. According to Heidegger, in the course of the history of ontology certain distinctive domains of Being have come into view (such as Descartes’ *ego cogito*, the subject, the “I”, reason, spirit and person), which have not been interrogated as to their Being and structure.<sup>125</sup> For Heidegger in the process of *destruction* one is faced with the task of interpreting the basis of the ancient ontology in the light of the problematic of temporality.<sup>126</sup> According to Heidegger, in ancient Greece Being was understood on the basis of time. Thus entities are grasped in their Being as *presence*, that is, they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time, namely, the ‘present’ (*Gegenwart*).<sup>127</sup> This ancient Greek interpretation of Being operates in the philosophical tradition without any clear knowledge about the starting points

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<sup>120</sup> Laj, *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Heidegger 1979, 32/12.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 43/21.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 43/22.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 43/22.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 44/22.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 47/25.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 47/25.

contained within it or the consequences thereafter. Instead, time is perceived as one entity among other entities.<sup>128</sup> Heidegger attempts to explain the basic function of time from the point of view of the question of the meaning of Being. His central thesis is indeed that the meaning of *Dasein* is temporality and that temporality is essentially *ecstatal*, that is, aimed towards the future. For Heidegger primordial time is temporalised from the future and is finite.<sup>129</sup>

In a corresponding way, deconstruction can be seen to destroy concepts conveyed in the tradition of Western metaphysics about Being as presence. Derrida uses the term ‘the tradition of the metaphysics of presence’ in a similar sense as Heidegger speaks about the tradition of ontology. In other words, the term refers to a certain Western way of looking at entities, meaning, time and consciousness as present in the present. At the same time, Derrida aims to show the background assumptions linked with present-day views, which manifest the solutions and definitions typical for the metaphysics of presence. These include, for instance, the fact that death, finiteness, language and the empirical are perceived as always being secondary in relation to the immediately appearing, ideal and present. Derrida does not deny, however, the central meaning of presence in setting philosophical foundations; but the object of his study is rather the non-foundation beneath it. This non-foundational foundation Lawlor calls, referring to Derrida, the “non-Greek non-foundation”.<sup>130</sup>

Derrida has claimed that the notion of deconstruction has also been influenced by the notion of *Abbau*.<sup>131</sup> The term appears for the first time in Edmund Husserl's *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1939), in which Husserl is engaged in a generic exploration of the conditions of the validity of judgement. For Husserl, neither logic nor psychology is capable of revealing the true foundations of predicative evidence. This would involve a necessary retrogression (*Rückgang*) to the most primordial self-evidence of experience. To accomplish this task, Husserl proposes a double retrogression: 1. The retrogression that leads from the pre-given and “objective” world to the original life-world (*Lebenswelt*), and 2. The regressive inquiry that reaches through the life-world

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 48/26.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 380/331.

<sup>130</sup> Lawlor 2002, 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> Gasché states that Heidegger speaks of *destruction* as a "critical dismantling" (*Kritischer Abbau*) already in his lectures from 1927, thus anticipating Husserl's notion of *Abbau* (Gasché 1985, 112).

toward the transcendental subjectivity that constitutes both the lifeworld and the “objective” world.<sup>132</sup> With the notion of *objective world* Husserl refers to the scientific understanding of the world, in particular as presented in the natural sciences. This theoretical understanding of the world determines the way one experiences it. The notion of life-world, on the other hand, refers to the pre-theoretical world and the prepredicative experience constitutive of the objective world.

For Husserl, the retrogression to the original life-world requires a radical dismantling of the theoretical world and its idealisations in the most primordial experience. Husserl abandons psychological reflection and presents instead his view of transcendental reflection, the aim of which is to understand entities directly. To achieve this goal, Husserl suggests a transcendental reflection, that is, the method of *Abbau*. Gasché claims that transcendental reflection is a more fundamental mode of reflection than, for example, psychological reflection.<sup>133</sup> With the idea of transcendental reflection as dismantling (*Abbau*), one finds a mode of phenomenological insistence on grasping in the original intuition the thing itself. However, Husserl describes transcendental reflection, and therefore also *Abbau*, as being simultaneously mediated and nonreflective. Gasché suggests an interesting solution to this paradox. The method of dismantling must be considered nonreflective, because it allows for a retrogression to something that cannot in principle be given as such. On the other hand, *Abbau* is a mediated approach, because the conditions of predicative evidence whereby it attempts to make contact cannot be beheld in an intuiting act.<sup>134</sup> Gasché claims that “*Abbau* is precisely the kind of retrogression required for a reactivation of origins, such as historical origins, which must remain *essentially* dissimulated, in order to achieve the sort of grounding one expects of them.”<sup>135</sup>

Deconstruction as *Abbau* can be considered as a dismantling of theoretical and scientific idealisations. Gasché’s summation is that *Abbau*, *Destruktion* and deconstruction are nonreflective methodological devices. All three are in essence

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<sup>132</sup> Husserl 1972, 49/50. “The retrogression to the world of experience is a retrogression to the ‘life-world’, i.e. to the world in which we are always already living and which furnishes the ground for all cognitive performance and all scientific determination.” (Husserl 1972, 38/41).

<sup>133</sup> Gasché 1985, 110.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

positive movements, never negative in the usual sense, and certainly not “purely negative”. They attempt to construct, in a more or less systematic fashion, the grounds of greater generality for what is to be accounted for.<sup>136</sup> Deconstruction differs, however, from *Abbau* in that it neither aims for the retrogression of these idealisations to the lifeworld nor to transcendental reflection. Deconstruction questions such original grounds as life-world or transcendental reflection. Gasché claims that even though deconstruction shares with *Abbau* and *Destruktion* the goal of attaining the “ultimate foundation” of concepts, these foundations are no longer essences. Therefore, these ultimate reasons are no longer primordial, and the operation of deconstruction that reaches out for them is no longer phenomenological in any strict sense.<sup>137</sup> According to Gasché, the ultimate foundations to which deconstruction reaches out are no longer part of the grammar and lexicon of metaphysics; they are in a certain way *exterior* to metaphysics.<sup>138</sup> Derrida analyses how philosophical idealisations have been formed in the undecidable oscillation between writing and the ‘other’ of language, where the origin is produced at the same time as it is obscured and retracting. Deconstruction indeed differs in that sense from *Destruktion* and *Abbau* in that Derrida systematically questions the philosophical aim to present claims about what is the actual, original and fundamental form of the revealment of Being. Derrida shows how in philosophical study and self reflection the origin retracts.

Derrida himself has pointed out a certain fidelity to Husserl's phenomenology and the idea of reduction. According to Derrida, Husserl often describes the phenomenological reduction by use of the figure of placing in parentheses, brackets or quotation marks, and similarly, he argues, deconstruction implies a certain detachment, the intrinsic possibility for any mark to be repeated, or even mentioned or cited (placed in quotation-marks).<sup>139</sup> Another similar characteristic between reduction and deconstruction is the abyssal reflexivity. Derrida claims that: “The transcendental reductions themselves pluralize themselves, radicalize themselves in a sort of hyperbolic upping of the ante. And once they carry themselves off abyssally, link on to or interrupt each other, one can think of this multiplicity as of

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>139</sup> *Ec*, 296.

a polyphony – more than one *alter ego* in the same *ego*, etc.”<sup>140</sup> Deconstruction is similarly said to have this polyphonic and abyssal character, as Derrida puts it: “it [deconstruction] is already more than one voice”.<sup>141</sup> However, Derrida also points out differences. Deconstruction elaborates the impossibility of total saturation for so-called categorematic contexts and contexts in general and the open possibility of these incomplete, syncategorematic functionings that Husserl considers as a threat, 'abnormal', 'inauthentic' and 'symbolic'.<sup>142</sup> Thus deconstruction exploits the contextual and intertextual richness of the texts and the loss of original intentional meaning, which makes it impossible to decide in which context a text should be interpreted.

Derrida's attitude towards the notion of deconstruction has varied in his different writings. In *Positions* (1972) he is eager to describe and even define what he means by the notion of deconstruction, but later on he becomes more critical and reserved. In the debates following the presentation of “L'Oreille de l'autre” (1979) for example, he claims that when he employed the word ‘deconstruction’ in his early writings he did so only rarely and with the understanding that it was only one word among others, a secondary word, translating Heidegger's terms for ‘destruction’ and Husserl's for ‘dismantling’.<sup>143</sup> In several of his writings, Derrida expresses his amazement and irritation over the fact that the term deconstruction has become so central in the description of his philosophy. On the basis of his early production, one could indeed claim that ‘grammatology’ was the new science and philosophical approach that he actually wanted to present parallel to the phenomenological and structuralist approach. In his introductory speech to his doctoral examination,

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Even though it is possible to interpret Husserl's ideas of both transcendental and eidetic reduction as an abyssal and endless regression, there is another way of considering his reductions: the transcendental subject as an alter ego would be considered as the ground, source and the end of reflection in a way that does not allow for any other alter ego, one after another in an endless regression. However, Derrida's sophisticated close reading of Husserl reveals that even though it was maybe not Husserl's intention, his description of the transcendental and eidetic reduction leads into an endless regression.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 295. Derrida does not define what he means by categorematic context or syncategorematic functions. In general categorematic words (e.g. categorematic adjectives) have a meaning which is independent of the context, while syncategorematic words have a meaning which varies with context.

<sup>143</sup> Gasché 1986, 118, EO, 85-86.

published as “The Time of a Thesis: Punctuations” (1983),<sup>144</sup> he pointedly says that deconstruction is a word he has never liked and one whose fortune has disagreeably surprised him. Derrida’s attitude towards the term turns in the 1980s increasingly negative, and therefore introduced and used other terms in place of it; for example *inscription (l'inscription)*, *double-writing (l'écriture double)*, *double science (double science)* and *afterw.rds.* In a discussion published in *L'Oreille de l'autre* (1982) Derrida questions the linking of his research to deconstruction:

“When I made a use of this word (rarely, very rarely in the beginning – once or twice – so you can see that the paradox of the message transformed by the addressees is fully in play here), I had the impression that it was a word among many others, a secondary word in the text would fade or which in any case would assume a non-dominant place in a system. [...] It so happens – and this is worth analysing – that this word which I had written only once or twice (I don't even remember where exactly) all of sudden jumped out of the text and was seized by others who have since determined its fate in the manner you well know. [...] [F]or me 'deconstruction' was not at all the first or the last word, and certainly not a password or slogan for everything that was to follow.”<sup>145</sup>

However, in late 1980s and in the beginning of the 1990s Derrida showed a new interest in using and describing the notion of deconstruction, for instance in “Afterw.rds, ou du moins qu'une lettre sur une lettre en moins” (1992) and in “Force de loi – Le ‘Fondement mystique de l'autorité’” (1994). In the former Derrida describes deconstruction as an experience of the impossible<sup>146</sup> and as a kind of afterword: “It [deconstruction] *must* be what it both is and is not in itself: an effect of after the event, [...] *afterword to the presence or presentation of the present itself.*”<sup>147</sup> One of the most affirmative descriptions of deconstruction can be found in “Force de loi”, where Derrida claims that deconstruction is engaged by infinite demand for justice,<sup>148</sup> and even that “Deconstruction is justice”<sup>149</sup> Derrida sees justice as an

<sup>144</sup> “The Time of the Thesis: Punctuations” was the title of the presentation Derrida gave at the opening of a thesis defence on 2nd of June 1980 at the University of Paris, Sorbonne.

<sup>145</sup> OA, 85-86.

<sup>146</sup> Aft, 210/201.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 211/199.

<sup>148</sup> Fl, 19.

experience of the impossible, because it is incalculable.<sup>150</sup> Justice implies the rectitude of address as a singular.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, deconstruction could be described as a taking account of the other, the call of the other as a singular and incalculable. In a more recent writing, “Et Cetera...” (2000), Derrida describes deconstruction as an abyssal ‘et cetera’, which would threaten both identity and the very concept of concept. Derrida argues that “deconstruction introduces an ‘and’ of association and dissociation at the very heart of each thing, rather it recognizes this self-division within each concept. And all its ‘work’ is situated at this juncture or this disjuncture [...]”<sup>152</sup>

Derrida nevertheless takes a critical attitude towards the mechanical image of the dismantling of structures linked with deconstruction. In “Lettre à un ami japonais” Derrida claims that deconstruction has unfortunately been associated with an image of a nihilistic and negative reduction or a mechanical method or reading strategy, because the French word *déconstruction* (like the English word ‘deconstruction’) in its grammatical, linguistic and rhetorical senses is bound up with a mechanical sense of disarranging or dismantling of a construction.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, Derrida has emphasised in several writings that deconstruction cannot be reduced to some methodological instrumentality or to a set of rules and transposable procedures.<sup>154</sup> Deconstruction is not a definable and stable method that one could use and apply in whatever text; rather, it takes a shape in relation to the text or context. In “Afterwards” Derrida claims: “As it is never closed into a system, as it is the deconstruction *of the* systemic totality, it needs some supplementary afterword each time it runs the risk of stabilising or saturating into a formalised discourse (doctrine, method, delimitable and canonised corpus, teachable knowledge, etc.)”<sup>155</sup> Deconstruction has no essence previous to the text. In each case the particular text that Derrida has been reading has given the form of dismantling and deconstruction. Therefore, one cannot decide when one should start to deconstruct. The text and the historical reading of it dictate the opening of deconstruction. It cannot be

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>152</sup> Ec, 282-283.

<sup>153</sup> Laj, 388/271.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 391/273, Aft, 210/199.

<sup>155</sup> Aft, 210/199.

premeditated or decided where and when the text dismantles itself. Derrida has described deconstruction in “Lettre à un ami japonais” as follows:

“Not only because it [deconstruction] does not return to an individual or collective *subject* who would take the initiative and apply it to an object, a text, a theme, etc. Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organisation of a subject, or even of modernity. *It deconstructs it-self. It can be deconstructed* [*Ca se déconstruit*].”<sup>156</sup> (His emphasis)

What, then, is deconstruction about, if it is not a method, if it does not have a form and if it is not a goal-oriented analysis chosen by the subject?

Derrida describes deconstruction as a textual event. The reader need not actively anticipate or perform deconstruction, rather it happens in the text itself, and in particular within the unique historical reading act. Each text appears differently because it presents numerous possibilities for interpretation in accordance with different historical reading acts and understandings. However, deconstruction is not only something that happens because of the unique historical position of the reader, but rather the text itself has words and sentences that provide the possibility for different and even contradictory interpretations of the text. Hence, deconstruction is above all sensitive to the multiple and even contradictory meanings of the words and sentences. It does not conceal the inconsistencies or illogicalities of the text, but rather concentrates on analysing them. In *Positions*, Derrida describes the 'beginning' of deconstruction as following:

“The *incision* of deconstruction, which is not a voluntary decision or an absolute beginning, does not take place just anywhere, or in an absolute elsewhere. An incision, precisely, can be made only according to lines of force and forces of rupture that are localizable in the discourse to be deconstructed (...) This analysis is *made* in the general movement of the field, and is never exhausted by the conscious calculation of a ‘subject’.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Laj, 391/274.

<sup>157</sup> POS, 109/82.

Derrida emphasises that one cannot intentionally set the deconstruction in motion, but rather, the deconstructive reading requires a certain attitude or openness to the text, one that could be described with Derrida's expression 'meaning-to-say-nothing' (*ne-pas-vouloir-dire*).<sup>158</sup> In deconstruction one does not aim to set a goal-oriented meaning for the text. Instead, texts are read as they appear uniquely for each reader, without trying to erase or reject the equivocality occurring in the reading event. The deconstructive way of reading is controlled by a self-critical awareness of the absence of the author's intentions, in which case there is no return to the original meaning: the relationship to the original is always already disconnected. The deconstructive way of reading follows the event of the dispersion of meaning and studies the anomalies, gaps, illogicalities and aporias occurring in the texts. It is these which the reading, in aiming to bring out the presence of the original meaning, has attempted to hide and erase. Deconstruction does not try to hide the anomalies and illogicalities of the text, or to explain them in order to achieve greater consistency in the interpretation of the text.

In "Lettre à un ami japonais" Derrida points out that he has never liked the negative tone that is easily linked with the term 'deconstruction' due to the prefix *de-*. He stresses, therefore, that deconstruction is not a nihilistic demolition or destruction,<sup>159</sup> but rather it reveals how philosophical notions and structures function. Thus the aspiration of deconstruction is to achieve a deeper understanding of how structures or ensembles were constituted and to reconstitute the constitution. For Derrida deconstruction designates a genealogical restoration rather than a demolition.<sup>160</sup> In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida argues that deconstruction does not destroy structures from the outside, but rather inhabits those structures and operates

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<sup>158</sup> In the English translation of *Positions*, the translator Alan Bass has translated Derrida's expression *ne-pas-vouloir-dire* as *meaning-to-say-nothing* but *vouloir-dire* as simply *meaning*. In *La voix et le phénomène* Derrida translates Husserl's expression *Bedeutung* as *vouloir-dire*. He explains his choice of translation by arguing that Husserl's notion of meaning (*Bedeutung*) has a sense of voluntary intention as *wanting to say*. Derrida focuses on Husserl's claim that there can be no expression without voluntary intention, an intention of a subject animating the sign (V&P, 35-36/33-34). Derrida's claim, contrary to Husserl's, is that "writing literally mean nothing", because it enters into the play of *différance* (POS, 23/14).

<sup>159</sup> Laj, 389/271.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 390/272.

necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structures.<sup>161</sup> According to Derrida:

“To deconstruct was also a structuralist gesture or in any case a gesture that assumed a certain need for the structuralist problematic. But it was also an anti-structuralist gesture, and its fortune rests in part in this ambiguity.”<sup>162</sup>

Deconstruction implies both knowledge of the concept systems and analysis of how they work. At the same time, deconstruction is anti-structuralist because it reveals the points in the text and structures that do not belong or cannot be reduced to consistent structures. Thus deconstruction moves in two-fold space: both within and outside the structures. Derrida therefore speaks many times of deconstruction as a *double science* or *double writing*.<sup>163</sup> Deconstructive analysis implies both what can be seen through the written text and what has been excluded and effaced in the process of writing. In this respect, deconstruction happens at the limits of philosophy, language and thought and in particular the *other* of language and philosophy. Derrida claims in an interview that his critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language'.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, the critique of the metaphysics of presence reveals the absence of the original intention, referent and meaning of the text. The text is only a composition of traces, through which we can approach the “original” intention, but which can never be reached or understood as such. Silverman describes deconstruction as a “praxis which is employed in the movement to the limit, border, or hinge, and by which *différance* is inscribed as arché-writing.”<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, he states:

“It [deconstruction] situates itself at the intersection of the inside and the outside, the word and the concept, ordinary writing and speaking. Deconstruction is neither *destruction*, a tearing apart, analyzing into atomic units, nor *construction*, a bringing together, synthesizing into a unified totality. Deconstruction implies both destruction and construction. It

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<sup>161</sup> GRAM, 39/24.

<sup>162</sup> Laj, 389/272.

<sup>163</sup> POS, 56/41.

<sup>164</sup> D&o, 123.

<sup>165</sup> Silverman 1987, 303.

operates at the juncture which Merleau-Ponty described as the chiasm or intertwining between the visible and invisible, between philosophy and non-philosophy,[...]”<sup>166</sup>

Therefore, deconstructive analysis produces transgressions and displacements by following the points of conjuncture, where the meaning is disseminated, creating many interpretations or gaps, the effaced and repressed elements in the text. Deconstruction dismantles the old structures and reveals the limits of the prevalent tradition, interpretation, law or structure. Deconstruction attempts to point out why the old structure or law does not enclose oneself in a self-identical, present and total system, but rather includes the elements of otherness, which sets it in to motion. Deconstruction is therefore never complete, closed or concluded, but rather it traces the movement that otherness necessarily produces in structures and laws. Derrida has described deconstruction in “Afterw.rds” as follows:

“For, always incomplete, of an incompleteness which is not the negativity of a lack, it [deconstruction] is interminable, an 'interminable analysis' ('theoretical and practical' as we used to say). As it never closed into a system, as it is the deconstruction *of* the systemic totality, it needs some supplementary afterword each time it runs the risk of stabilising or saturating into a formalised discourse (doctrine, method, delimitable and canonised corpus, teachable knowledge, etc.).”<sup>167</sup>

This characterisation of deconstruction reveals also that Derrida regards deconstruction as a critical movement that has not canonised form. It is not a method or doctrine, but rather the event of dismantling the text. In *Positions* Derrida claims that the incision of deconstruction happens in the general movement of the textual field.<sup>168</sup> Deconstruction does not give access to the original truth or enable a rescue from the mistakes of logocentrism or phonocentrism. It does not offer the final solution, but rather makes topological changes and displacements.

However, this kind of description of deconstruction is problematic. Is every critical and transgressive analysis then deconstruction? Derrida's widest descriptions of deconstruction are so encompassing that almost any critical analysis could be

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 303.

<sup>167</sup> Aft, 210/199.

considered deconstruction, as, for example, when, in “Afterwards”, he describes deconstruction as “interminable analysis” and as “the opening of the future itself”.<sup>169</sup> Also, some of Derrida's descriptions of deconstruction in “Et Cetera...” are so open that it is difficult to specifically identify what deconstruction is. Derrida has claimed, for instance, that:

“[D]econstruction is also like a way of thinking set-theory. It would always be necessary to say, if we were to believe them [the friends of deconstruction], 'deconstruction and... et cetera... etc.' And 'deconstruction would go *with*, together with *something* else. And in this way you would get different taxonomic tables according to the name of this 'thing', and according to its presumed concept, and according to the play of different articles, and according to the type of continuity and the conceptual structure of this X, which, consequence or consecution, follows the *and*.”<sup>170</sup>

Also Nicholas Royle has proposed following Derrida's open descriptions of deconstruction for the following suggestion for a formal definition of deconstruction made for the editors of the *Chambers Dictionary*:

**“deconstruction** n. not what you think: the experience of the impossible: what remains to be thought: a logic of destabilization always already on the move in 'things themselves': what makes every identity at once itself and different from itself: a logic of spectrality: a theoretical and practical parasitism or virology: what is happening today in what is called society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality and so on: the opening of the future itself.”<sup>171</sup>

The most open descriptions of deconstruction raise a number of questions: How does one identify deconstruction? How does one justify the naming of something as a deconstruction, and who justifies and authorises this name? Has Derrida the ultimate authority to this name? If deconstruction is always plural, what do they have in common? Derrida considers these questions in “Et Cetera...” and refers in this context

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<sup>168</sup> POS, 109/82.

<sup>169</sup> Aft, 210/199-200.

<sup>170</sup> Ec., 282.

<sup>171</sup> Royle 2000, 11.

to his own analysis of proper names.<sup>172</sup> The common feature between different deconstructions would be the proper name “deconstruction”, the style (of signature) and the event of deconstruction is different in different contexts. There is no rule of deconstruction, because the example is always other than the rule.<sup>173</sup>

The term *deconstruction* can be considered, rather, as a metaphor or quasi-concept which does not have any clear and distinct referent or conceptual meaning, or propriety, but rather it is a guiding and indicative term. Deconstruction has no identity. As Royle argues: “This is why the question ‘what is deconstruction?’ is itself evidence of a serious naivety, for deconstruction *is*, above all perhaps, a questioning of the ‘is’, a concern with what remains to be thought, with what cannot be thought within the present.”<sup>174</sup> Deconstruction happens “on the move in ‘things themselves’.”<sup>175</sup> This movement of destabilization cannot be calculated by any subject.<sup>176</sup> Therefore perhaps the best way to understand what deconstruction “*is*” is to consider what and how Derrida has deconstructed in his writings.<sup>177</sup>

In the next chapter, I shall describe in detail the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence and other deconstructions that are related to it. In understanding Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence it is important to examine how his ideas on metaphysics have developed from his readings of Husserl. It can be shown how Derrida’s thinking is influenced by Husserl’s philosophy, yet his emphases and interests turn in a different direction. Deconstruction and the other central quasi-concepts in Derrida’s writings, such ‘writing’, ‘trace’ and ‘différance’, develop through his analytical reading of Husserl. One can indeed say that deconstruction ‘branches off’ from phenomenology.

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<sup>172</sup> Ec, 300-301.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>174</sup> Royle 2000, 7.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>176</sup> POS, 109/82, Aft, 210/200, Royle 2000, 6.

<sup>177</sup> Silverman claims in *Textualities* (1994), that in order to offer an account of the features of deconstruction, a full examination would have to consider: 1) problematics which are in question; 2) the strategies employed; and 3) the particular deconstructive indicators which identify the practice and its elements. (Silverman 1994, 62). I shall

## 2.2. The phenomenological background to deconstruction

Derrida's earliest research, from the beginning of the 1950s until the 1960s, was concerned primarily with Husserl's phenomenology. Thus Derrida was a critical researcher of Husserl for almost twenty years. Derrida's master's thesis, "Mémoire" (1954), published much later under the title *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl* (1990), as well as his first articles ("Genèse et structure et la phénoménologie" [1964], and "La forme et le vouloir-dire: Note sur la phénoménologie du langage" [1967]) and books (his extensive introduction to his own French translation of Husserl's essay "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" (*L'Origine de la géométrie*) and *La voix et le phénomène* [1967])<sup>178</sup> dealt with the basic questions of phenomenology, that is, phenomenological analysis, language concepts, meaning and the subject. Derrida had also planned at the end of the 1950s to write a PhD thesis on phenomenological themes, with the title "The Ideality of the Literary Object".<sup>179</sup> However, he gave up his doctoral thesis plan when he became more aware of the problematics linked with phenomenology, which he deals with in one of his first published books *La voix et le phénomène*.<sup>180</sup> David B. Allison claims, in his introduction to the English translation, *Speech and Phenomena* (1996),<sup>181</sup> that Derrida's analysis of Husserl represents new French research on phenomenology, but which does not remain confined within the framework of phenomenology.<sup>182</sup> There was much research into phenomenology at that time in France, Husserl's work having interested French philosophers from the beginning of the 20th century, some of the best known being Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, de Beauvoir and Weil. One could say that Derrida represents the next generation of critical research in France, which would also include Levinas, Nancy, Blanchot, Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous. Already in *Totalité et infini* (1961) Levinas made

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discuss the first question in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, and the strategies and deconstructive indicators in chapter 6.

<sup>178</sup> Derrida also discusses Husserl's views on language in *De la grammatologie* (1967) and in the published interviews *Positions* (1972), but these do not have such a central position in the Husserl research as his other early works.

<sup>179</sup> Norris 1987, 240.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> First published in English in 1973.

<sup>182</sup> David B. Allison, Introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* [V&P] 1973, xxxi.

critical comments on Husserl's phenomenology, arguing that its view on intentionality and knowledge is solipsistic, and that in it there is no place for otherness or the Other.<sup>183</sup> Derrida, on the other hand, questioned the starting points and aims of phenomenology on the basis of a critique of the tradition of ontology presented by Heidegger. According to Derrida, Husserl's transcendental phenomenology represents "in its modern, critical and vigilant form" the history of Western metaphysics.<sup>184</sup> Derrida criticises in particular the metaphysics of presence linked with phenomenology.

In order to understand the background to Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, it is important to examine his extensive introduction to his own French translation of Husserl's essay "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" (1938) published in 1962. This is part of Husserl's later philosophy, where he moves from pure transcendental phenomenology to deal with questions of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*).

Husserl's oeuvre has been seen as comprising at least four different periods: 1. The non-phenomenological period (from the beginning of the 1880s to the mid-1890s), 2. Descriptive phenomenology (mid-1890s to circa 1905), 3. Pure or transcendental phenomenology (circa 1905 to early 1930s), and 4. Genetic

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<sup>183</sup> Levinas 1979, 43-44. Levinas argues that "Phenomenological mediation follows another route, where the 'ontological imperialism' is yet more visible. It is the Being of existents that is the *medium* of truth; truth regarding an existent presupposes the prior openness of Being. [...] Since Husserl the whole of phenomenology is the promotion of the idea of *horizon*, which for it plays a role equivalent to that of the *concept* in classical idealism; an existent arises upon a ground that extends beyond it, as an individual arises from a concept. [...] To broach an existent from being is simultaneously to let it be and to comprehend it. Reason seizes upon an existent through the void and nothingness of existing – wholly light and phosphorescence." (Levinas 1979, 44-45). Derrida has presented a critique of Levinas's views in his article "Violence et métaphysique, essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas", which was published in 1964 in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. He shows that Levinas's way of speaking about otherness and the Other is problematic because it argues that linguistic thinking is violent to the otherness of the Other, but when writing a theory about the otherness of the Other Levinas inevitably acts according to the ontological tradition he criticises and commits violence towards the otherness of the Other. Levinas replied to Derrida's critique in *Autrement qu'être au-delà de l'essence* (1974). Derrida later brought out valuable features of Levinas's philosophy, for instance in the essay "At this very moment in this work here I am" (1991) and *Adieu* (1995).

<sup>184</sup> POS, 5/13.

phenomenology (1930s).<sup>185</sup> The central work of the non-phenomenological period is *Philosophie der Arithmetik* (1891), in which Husserl discusses the foundations of arithmetic, as well as the question of intentionality. *Philosophie der Arithmetik* is, however, the only one of his works which Husserl later rejects, partly as a result of Frege's critique of it, realising the problem of psychologism linked with its outlook. In his later philosophy, Husserl aims to avoid psychologism, that is, returning ideal objects to concrete and empirical consciousness, and instead sets out to establish the objective foundations of logic and the idealism of science.

The most important work of the period of descriptive phenomenology is *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-1901), in which Husserl sets as his task the study of 'logical experiences' in order to be able to give fixed meanings to the concepts of logic. The work, however, not only presents a description of the foundations of logic; indeed, it is seen as important because it is here that Husserl also presents a theory of systematic phenomenological meaning.

In the period of transcendental phenomenology, Husserl turns ever more towards the transcendental phenomenology first presented by Kant, and the questions of the transcendental origin of ideal objects and transcendental reduction. The earlier descriptive stage was characterised by a striving to understand the objective foundations of logic, mathematics and science, while in the transcendental phenomenology period Husserl starts to look at the transcendental subject as the foundation of objectivity. The most important work of this period is *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie (Ideen I)* (1913), often seen as Husserl's magnum opus, in which he looks at transcendental reduction. Other works from that period are *Erste Philosophie* (1923-1924), *Phänomenologische Psychologie* (lectures 1925, published 1968), *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge* (lectures 1929, published 1973) as well as *Formale und transzendente Logik* (1929).

*Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* (written between 1934 and 1937)<sup>186</sup> is seen as a central work of

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<sup>185</sup> The subdivision of Husserl's phenomenology into periods has been made by Haaparanta (1989, 3), Juntunen (1986) and Pasanen (1992, 103).

<sup>186</sup> The official edition of *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* in *Husserliana VI* was published in 1976, and edited by Walter Biemel. However, Husserl had already in 1936 published a long article in

Husserl's later phenomenology. Another important text written at that time is "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" (1938), which Derrida analyses in depth. This period is also often called the period of genetic phenomenology, to differentiate it from the earlier period of statically pure phenomenology.<sup>187</sup> At this point Husserl becomes interested in questions of how constituted objects receive their meaning in relation to the historical and social lifeworld, and the relationship of constituted objects and scientific idealities to the pretheoretical and prepredicative everyday experience. In his later philosophy Husserl emphasises prepredicative experience and through it tries to make understandable the validity of predicative evidence and the nature of predications themselves.<sup>188</sup> This method is central in *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1939), in which Husserl looks at the genealogy of logic as well as the relationship between the prepredicative experience and predicative thinking.

The manuscript of "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" was completed in 1936 and was got ready for publication by Eugen Fink after Husserl's death in 1938 for *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*. The editor of *Husserliana* IV, Walter Biemel, re-published it as an appendix to *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* in the *Husserliana Band IV* (1976), under the title "Beilage III" (Appendix 3) (first published in 1954). The basic question being addressed regarding the origin of geometry is the same here as in his earlier texts, that is, the question of the constitution of ideal objects, of which geometry is an example. Husserl examines the question of how ideal objects are constituted from the sensible, finite and pre-scientific material of the lifeworld. He discusses the concrete prerequisites of idealisations; language, intersubjectivity and the world as a continuous foundation and horizon. Husserl concentrates on examining the historicity of ideal objects, their origin and relationship to tradition.

Derrida's detailed analysis of Husserl's writings reveals the metaphysical background assumptions within Husserl's views, as well as the logic through which he arrives at his views about the constitution and origin of ideal objects. In the

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*Philosophica* "Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie".

<sup>187</sup> Juntunen 1986, 116-117.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

beginning of "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" Husserl states: "[W]e must ... inquire back into the original meaning of the handed-down geometry, which continued to be valid with this very same meaning – continued and at the same time was developed further..."<sup>189</sup> Husserl actually begins the essay by saying that such a question of origin could never have arisen for earlier developers of geometry such as Galileo Galilei,<sup>190</sup> because they only saw that they were describing general laws. This attempt of Husserl to examine the origin of geometry and its original meaning is reflected in his central argument in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* [hereafter *Krisis*] regarding the crisis that threatens European science, which is due to the fact that in this scientific tradition the original meaning of scientific idealisations has been forgotten. In this sense *Krisis* and his other texts written at the same time are concerned with the question of return (*Umkehrung*). In other words, it is the question of how scientific ideal objects (of which mathematical and geometrical idealities represent the purest form) are formed, and what is their origin in the lifeworld. Husserl argues that the mathematical object is an example of the absolute ideal object, because it exists irrespective of the empirical subject. As Derrida puts it, from the outset its Being is to be an object for pure consciousness.<sup>191</sup> Husserl emphasises, however, that "[s]cience, particularly geometry [...] must have had a historical beginning"<sup>192</sup> and that "geometry must have arisen out of a *first* acquisition, out of first creative activities".<sup>193</sup> Hence the ideal objects of mathematics and science do not exist before their constitution. Intuition, which constitutes these idealities, is absolutely constitutive and creative. In this sense, Husserl's views differ from those of Kant; for Kant the *first* geometrician only becomes conscious of the concept that he already possesses.<sup>194</sup> For Husserl every ideal objectivity is produced in the concrete

<sup>189</sup> Husserl 1976, 365; OG, 157.

<sup>190</sup> Husserl 1976, *ibid.*; OG, *ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> OG:I, 27.

<sup>192</sup> Husserl 1976, 367, OG, 159.

<sup>193</sup> Husserl 1976, *ibid.*, OG, *ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> OG:I, 40. Already in *Formale und Transzendente Logik*, Husserl argued that both Hume and Kant failed to see the problem in the constitution of the ideal objects, such as the judgements and the categories which belong to the sphere of reason and which logic is interested. In other words, Kant did not ask what is the basis of the analytic a priori (Husserl 1929, 229-230). Husserl's aim is to describe the origin and the constitution of the logical concepts (such as negation, relation, plurality and possibility). Husserl claims here that the origin lies in "prepredicative experience"

act of consciousness. Geometry and other pure “eidetic sciences” are, however, not factual;<sup>195</sup> that is to say, no sensory form, psychological experience or factual content of the real world has any intuitive meaning as such. The ideal objects of geometry and other sciences have a super-temporal existence, which is accessible for everyone who is familiar with the tradition.<sup>196</sup> Thus Husserl’s views come close to Plato’s views on ideality; differing, however, from Platonism in that an ideal object (*eidos*) does not precede the subjective act.<sup>197</sup>

Husserl lifts tradition into a central role in order to explain historical observation and the unity of the sense of geometry.<sup>198</sup> According to him, geometry and science are forms of the cultural world. They inherit all their characteristics from this cultural world, and exist only through tradition. Derrida, however, shows that Husserl’s view of history is similar to Hegel’s, in connection with whom one cannot really talk about natural history.<sup>199</sup> Husserl’s view of history is sort of transcendental, resembling Hegel’s view on the absolute.<sup>200</sup> Thus Husserl describes science rather as a unique and archetypal form of traditional culture. As a cultural form it is not actually related to any *de facto* culture. Thus, according to Derrida, phenomenology

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(*ibid*, 183-186), but in *Erfahrung und Urteil* he defines his task as constructing a theory of prepredicative experience (Husserl 1964, 1). Leila Haaparanta has pointed out in her article "Analysis as the method of logical discovery" that Husserl finds the origins of the concepts of logic by analysing the acts of perception, which Husserl calls 'predicative judgements' (Haaparanta 1988, 93). In a similar manner, Husserl claims in "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem" that the origin of idealities lies in the constitutive act. In his earlier writings, however, Husserl emphasises the transcendental aspect of logic and ideal objects. As Haaparanta has claimed, "The structure of judgement, which logic is interested in, thus mirrors the structure of pure consciousness, and it has its origin in this transcendental structure" (*ibid*, 92). The logical forms are empty unless they are embedded into the world of objects. We could not have become conscious of concepts of logic unless they are objectified, that is, unless we set them into experience (*ibid*, 92).

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Husserl 1976, 367; OG, 160.

<sup>196</sup> Husserl 1976, 367-368, OG, *ibid*.

<sup>197</sup> OG:I, 59-60.

<sup>198</sup> Husserl 1976, 366; OG, 158; OG:I, 52.

<sup>199</sup> OG:I, 57.

<sup>200</sup> In this regard, Husserl’s genetical stage does not radically differ from his earlier stages. It is a question of transcendental history not empirical history. What is new in Husserl’s genetic stage is the emphasis that idealities are constituted in the historical lifeworld, though even here a reduction is made, in which case it is not a question of an empirical lifeworld but a transcendental lifeworld.

differs from both conventional Platonism and historicist empiricism.<sup>201</sup> The problem for conventional Platonism is that if ideal objects exist eternally and it is only a matter of finding them, then why are pure eidetic sciences such as geometry continuously developing and changing historically? Why are eternal ideas not immediately known, and why is science not founded on these? On the other hand, how can the finite subject know the eternal ideas? An empiricism emphasising historicity, again, is linked with the problem of how it would be possible to derive something endless and eternal from the finite historical experience.

According to Derrida, Husserl strives to solve the problem linked with traditional Platonism and an empiricism emphasising historicity. Thus, the central question in Husserl is how finite subjectivity can construct an absolute and ideal object.<sup>202</sup> How is it possible to form an ideal object from the empirical and finite experience which is not tied to the finite and empirical experience? Husserl does indeed lift language into a central place in forming idealisations. According to him, it should be possible to express in discourse all ideal objects, and they must be translatable from one language to another.<sup>203</sup> Derrida, however, notices that Husserl does not refer to any factual language but to language in general – a common language (*die allgemeine Sprache*).<sup>204</sup> Thus ideal formations are founded in general language, and not in any factual language or particular linguistic incarnation. Husserl has to make a separation between factual language and general language (transcendental language), so that he can preserve the assumption that the word has an ideal objectivity and identity irrespective of its empirical, phonetic or graphic materialisation. Derrida indeed claims that Husserl in this context links speech to the immediate eidetic manifestation and activity.<sup>205</sup> Thus, according to Derrida, Husserl

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. OG:I, 59.

<sup>202</sup> In posing the question in this way, it is possible to see certain connections with Karl Popper's theory of the development of scientific concepts and theories, as presented in his *Logik der Forschung* (1935). One might speculate, however, that Popper would have taken a critical stance towards Husserl's Hegelian view of tradition.

<sup>203</sup> Husserl 1976, 369; OG, 161.

<sup>204</sup> Husserl 1976, 369; OG, 162; OG:I, 66. Husserl's expression "die allgemeine Sprache" has been translated in English as "common language", which Derrida interprets in his introduction as 'language in general' (OG:I, 66).

<sup>205</sup> Here a connection can be seen between Husserl's view of the immediate eidetic manifestation occurring in speech and Heidegger's views on speech (*Sprachereignis*). Joseph J. Kockelmans argues that the new conception of language first appears in

makes a similar reduction in regard to language as with culture and tradition. Language is studied so that the existence of actual natural languages in the world is put into parenthesis and examined as general language, that is, as a transcendental and pure language.<sup>206</sup>

According to Husserl, geometrical ideality reaches objectivity in speech, with the help of which it receives its own *linguistic living body* (*Sprachleib*).<sup>207</sup> Speech, that is, pure language, enables the geometrical idealisation and formation not to be left tied to and dependent upon the psychological life of the factual subject. Thus speech does not simply mean expression, which would refer to the object preceding the act of speech, but speech actually constitutes the object. Without falling back into language and thereby also into history, sense would remain an empirical formation “imprisoned as fact in psychological subjectivity – in the inventor’s head.”<sup>208</sup> According to Derrida, Husserl’s radicalness lies in the fact that he brings forth the constitutive dimension of language. Language enables the preservation and repetition of the mind in the future.<sup>209</sup> Derrida inherited this constitutive nature of language from Husserl, but then sets off to develop it in a different direction. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida lifts the phonetical, graphical and empirical materiality of language into a central position in his own description of language.

In his introduction to *L’Origin de la géométrie*, Derrida asks whether Husserl’s analysis of the constitutive language is not just another way of announcing or repeating that transcendental subjectivity is the condition of objectivity.<sup>210</sup> For

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Heidegger's *Logos* (1944) and is developed in "Brief über Humanismus" (1947) and *Das Wesen der Sprache* (1958). In these texts Heidegger starts to elaborate the notion of language as an original saying of *logos*. In a now famous line of "Die Sprache" (1950), Heidegger claims that "Language speaks" (Heidegger 1971, 198). In "Brief über Humanismus" Heidegger claims that thinking is saying, which brings the unspoken word of Being into language. The expression "to bring into language" must be taken literally. Thus, in 'saying' "Being, clearing itself, comes into language" (Heidegger 1980, 222). Kockelmans explains that for Heidegger (especially in the lecture entitled "Die Sprache" [1950]) "Speaking is initially a listening to the language which one speaks. In this case, listening thus even precedes one's speaking. We do not so much speak a language as we speak *from* a language. And we are able to do so because we have first listened to that language. What we hear and listen to in this way is the saying of language" (Kockelmans 1984, 153).

<sup>206</sup> OG:I, 74-75.

<sup>207</sup> Husserl 1976, 369; OG, 161; OG:I, 76.

<sup>208</sup> OG:I, 77.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 79

Husserl the language and intersubjectivity (consciousness of fellow men) are inseparably intertwined: language belongs to the horizon of civilization consisting of our awareness of others.<sup>211</sup> The objective world (the world of ideal objects) presupposes men with a common language.<sup>212</sup> Thus language and intersubjectivity are always already given before science as its condition of possibility. The requirement for the possibility of general language is the awareness that we as a community are together and in the same world. Thus, according to Husserl, one is conscious of civilisation from the start as an immediate and mediate linguistic community.<sup>213</sup> Two normal persons always have *a priori* awareness of belonging together, to the same mankind as well as living together in the same world. According to Husserl, the world (*Welt*) offers a foundation for the first idealities, absolute universal and objective idealities, such as, for instance, geometry.<sup>214</sup> Husserl's concept of *Welt* does not, however, refer to a more concrete and empirical Earth, but to a pure, transcendental and pre-cultural nature and foundation. Derrida questions this presupposition of the pre-cultural world and asks whether the pre-cultural pure nature has not been buried, being an unreachable infra-ideal. According to Derrida, the transcendental world cannot be the object of phenomenological study, nor cannot it ever be so as such. Derrida indeed states that an objective science of the Earth itself is just as impossible an idea as that of the idea of transcendental subjectivity.<sup>215</sup>

The most important theme from the point of view of Derrida's later writings is his analysis of Husserl's concept of writing. Derrida adapts the central logic from Husserl's analyses but then goes on to different emphases. Husserl sees that writing has a central position in the constitution of the ideal object because writing enables the traditionalising of the absolute object as well as its absolute ideal objectivity, that is, the separation from the empirical subject.<sup>216</sup> Writing frees sense from the actual and present consciousness as well as the reactivation that occurs in a particular linguistic community or society. Thus, according to Derrida, writing brings pure transcendental history to a conclusion. Without the final objectification offered by writing, language would remain a prisoner of the intentionality of the actual speaking

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<sup>211</sup> Husserl 1967, 369-370, OG, 162.

<sup>212</sup> Husserl 1967, 370, OG, 162

<sup>213</sup> Husserl 1976, 369; OG, 162; OG:I, 79.

<sup>214</sup> Husserl 1976, 370; OG, 162.

<sup>215</sup> OG:I, 83.

<sup>216</sup> Husserl 1976, 371; OG, 164.

subject and the community of speaking subjects. Thus writing produces an autonomous transcendental field where every factual and present subject can be absent. Writing constitutes the subjectless (i.e. independent of factual and finite subjects) transcendental field.<sup>217</sup> The finite sense can become non-spatio-temporal (finite), only by becoming linguistically corporeal. According to Husserl, truth cannot be fully objective, ideal, known by all and infinitely enduring before it has been spoken and written.<sup>218</sup> At the same time, according to Derrida, “[t]he authentic act of writing is a transcendental reduction”,<sup>219</sup> because writing permits the ultimate freeing of ideality from the actual constitutive subjectivity. As Derrida claims, “The ability of sense to be linguistically embodied is the only means by which sense becomes nonspatial”,<sup>220</sup> that is, becomes objective.

Derrida pays particular attention to Husserl’s way of discussing writing. Husserl is faced with a problem in stating that writing is not only a constituted sensible body (*Körper*), but a properly constituting body (*Leib*) of truth and objectivity. Husserl’s problem is that if writing is a factual event and a usurpation of sense, how would writing preserve truth and ideal objects from corporeal disaster?<sup>221</sup> Therefore, Husserl has to reduce empirical language to the point where its univocal and translatable elements are transparent.<sup>222</sup> Husserl presents his anxiety about the threat linked with language which science must avoid in order to achieve objectivity. This threat has to do with speech and reading being dominated by association. According to Husserl, in thinking directed toward the attainment of truths, one is concerned to put a stop to the free play of associative constructions.<sup>223</sup> The ideal object must be exactly repeatable at different times by different people. Husserl speaks in this context about reactivation (*Reaktivierung*).<sup>224</sup> Thus, according to him, all scientific sentences, from the point when they have been presented, are “forever

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<sup>217</sup> OG:I, 88.

<sup>218</sup> Husserl 1976, 371; OG, 164.

<sup>219</sup> OG:I, 92.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>223</sup> Husserl 1976, 372; OG, 165.

<sup>224</sup> Husserl 1976, 371; OG, 164.

identically repeatable with self-evidence...’’<sup>225</sup> In this reactivation the instituting evidence is re-formed.<sup>226</sup>

In his introduction to *L’Origine de la géométrie* Derrida criticises Husserl’s view about the eternally identically repeatable ideal object, and develops this further in his later writings. According to Derrida, absolute univocality is inaccessible as an Idea in the Kantian sense.<sup>227</sup> “The ‘same’ word is always ‘other’ according to the always different intentional acts which thereby make a word significative [*signifiant*].’’<sup>228</sup> Derrida therefore claims that the *a priori* structures of historicity could be questioned only by recourse to language, writing and the capacity of reactivation.<sup>229</sup> He pays attention to the paradox in Husserl’s claim that only writing enables the transcendental reduction,<sup>230</sup> but that, at the same time, it makes it impossible because in linguistic and non-linguistic reactivation the question is about a repetition where one does not return to the same. Reconstituting the origin in the phenomenological reflection reveals the origin always already as past and as withdrawing. In his introduction to Husserl, Derrida does indeed end up with a thematics of the separation and the withdrawal of origin, and he develops this further in his later writings.<sup>231</sup> Philosophical reflection, particularly the phenomenological reduction, can never return to the same present origin. It is rather a question of a return occurring after the event, where the origin withdraws. The reflection aimed at the origin always requires some earlier possible origin, in relation to which it always occurs afterwards.<sup>232</sup>

The emphases in Derrida’s thinking that differ from those in phenomenology are already evident in his extensive introduction to *L’Origine de la géométrie*. For a start, Derrida takes a critical stance towards Husserl’s attempt to found the objectivity

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<sup>225</sup> Husserl 1976, 373; OG, 166.

<sup>226</sup> OG:I, 99.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 104. Derrida points out that Husserl considered that "Objective, absolutely firm knowledge of truth is an infinite idea" (OG:I, 104, OG, 166). Therefore, Husserl's claim for the univocity of language is more sophisticated. As Derrida states: "Univocity is both the *a priori* and the teleological condition for all historicity: it is that without which the very equivocations of empirical culture and history would not be possible." (OG:I, 104).

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 118

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>231</sup> For example, in "La différence" (1972 in *Marges*), *La voix et le phénomène* (1969), and "Le Problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl" (1990).

of ideal objects on pure transcendental history and language. According to Derrida, the finiteness, that is, the spatio-temporality, linked with such a constitution cannot be transgressed. The ideal object is formed always through the intention of the finite subject. Husserl was aware of this, but then attempted to discuss what the requirement of the preservation of ideality would entail. For Husserl, the possibility of science and truth implied that ideality can be repeated identically, but he recognized that reactivation is always already the production of something new. For Derrida, “The ‘same’ word is always ‘other’ according to the always different intentional acts which thereby make a word significant (*signifiant*).”<sup>233</sup> Derrida takes a critical stance towards Husserl’s attempt to found the ideality of an ideal object on pure language and writing, and instead bases his own view on language and writing on empirical spatio-temporality. Letters and words are organised spatio-temporally, forming spatio-temporal meanings. Derrida has the same view as Husserl about the constitutive meaning of language when forming idealities but, unlike Husserl, emphasises the graphic and phonetic materiality of language. Due to the materiality of the linguistic formation of meaning, it is impossible to translate linguistic expressions from one language to another without the meaning being altered. Derrida asks rhetorically whether one can not say just the opposite of what Husserl said, that is, are not non-communication and misunderstanding the very horizon of culture and language?<sup>234</sup>

In his introduction to *L’Origin de la géométrie*, Derrida brings forth the same problem he had already discussed in his first investigation on Husserl, his early academic work *Mémoire* from 1953-1954; that is, that there is certain conflict in Husserl’s text between the genetic and the structural approach. Husserl attempts to give a structuralist description of ideal entities and a genetic description of their origin and foundation. As Derrida claims in “‘Genèse et structure’ et la phénoménologie”, “Husserl, for his part seeks to *maintain* simultaneously the normative autonomy of logical or mathematical ideality as concerns all factual consciousness, and its original dependence in relation to subject *in general: in general, but concretely*.”<sup>235</sup> Thus Husserl altered the tradition of transcendental philosophy by considering the concrete, but nonempirical, a “transcendental experience”, which would be constitutive,

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<sup>232</sup> OG:I., 153.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>235</sup> G&S, 158.

simultaneously productive and revelatory, active and passive.<sup>236</sup> What makes this approach problematic is that the structuralist approach attempts to stay clear of psychologism and historicism, while the genetic approach borrows its schemas from causalism and naturalism and depends upon empiricism.<sup>237</sup> The structuralist description aims for infinite ideal truths, while genetic analyses can tell us only finite relativistic truths. Derrida's claim is that Husserl remains bound to the rationalist and idealist tradition,<sup>238</sup> even though he attempts to take account of the genetic perspective. This is due to the way Husserl considers history as the unveiling of Reason (*Logos*). Thus, according to Derrida, phenomenology accomplishes the most profound project of metaphysics.<sup>239</sup>

In *La voix et le phénomène* (1967) Derrida looks even more thoroughly at the starting points of Husserl's views on language, particularly the issue of the position of the sign in phenomenology, as well as developing further his critique of the metaphysics of presence and the themes of the sign, *différance* and supplement. The object of his analysis here is Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-1901), which is set in Husserl's descriptive phenomenology period. Husserl discusses the possibility of a pure logic, and presents a phenomenological theory about the nature of knowledge. Derrida's central claim is that it is Husserl's views on language which influence the formation of his notion of phenomenology, especially the development of the ideas of eidetic and phenomenological reductions.<sup>240</sup> Derrida shows how Husserl's way of understanding meaning, expression, grammar and logic influences the later turns towards transcendental philosophy in phenomenology. At the same time, Husserl's book is important for the formulation of Derrida's own view of language, because it is here that it becomes clear why Derrida sees that meaning cannot have any pure and present origin and foundation. In his reading here it is possible to clearly see the bifurcating way of reading typical for Derrida's deconstruction, in which internal conflicts (aporias) within Husserl's analysis are brought to light. These aporias result from certain presuppositions which Derrida sees as typical of the philosophical tradition. These presuppositions include, among other

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>238</sup> PGH, 41, 217.

<sup>239</sup> G&S, 166.

<sup>240</sup> V&P, 1/3.

things, the idea of a pure ideal unchanging object, the internal self-identity of which is not threatened by any empirical exteriority.

Derrida claims that the setting of Husserl's question is directed by a certain kind of metaphysical history which sets the presence of the *living present* in a special position.<sup>241</sup> He pays particular attention to "the 'principle of principles', that is, the original self-giving evidence, the *present* or *presence* of sense to a full and primordial intuition."<sup>242</sup> According to Derrida, phenomenology repeats the basic assumption of the metaphysics of presence, according to which the meaning of Being has always been interpreted as presence. This presence is manifested in two ways: 1. As the presence of the object to intuition, and 2. As the presence of consciousness in immediate experience.<sup>243</sup> This interpretation of the presence of Being defines the relationships between the basic concepts of phenomenology. The presence of the self and the presence of the object for consciousness are seen to be original and pure, in relation to which other phenomena are defined as secondary, derivative and non-original.

Derrida pays particular attention to Husserl's views presented in *Logische Untersuchungen* about the sign (*Zeichen*). According to Husserl, the sign has a dual meaning: it can mean expression (*Ausdruck*) or indication (*Anzeichen*) (e.g. notes, marks, etc.).<sup>244</sup> According to Husserl, only expression carries meaning. Thus, for Husserl the language that carries meaning is limited only to expression. In an 'indication' there is no content of meaning present, but it refers to the absent referent. The indicative sign is thus meaningless (*bedeutungslos, sinnlos*), yet not without signification.<sup>245</sup> In expression, on the other hand, meaning is present as the signified content. Expression is a linguistic sign which expresses the meaning (*Bedeutung*). Derrida translates the term *Bedeutung* with the term *vouloir-dire*. Thus the term *Bedeutung* refers to what a discourse or someone *wants to say*, that is, always conveying the discursive content and linguistic meaning.<sup>246</sup>

This separation between expression (*Ausdruck*) and indication (*Anzeichen*) is a preparation for Husserl's later views about reduction, and which will make reduction

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 4/6.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 3/5.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 9/8, 115/102.

<sup>244</sup> Husserl 1984, 30-31/269; V&P, 4/2, 17/17.

<sup>245</sup> V&P, 17/17.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 18/18.

possible. According to Husserl, “*Expressions function meaningfully even in isolated mental life, where they no longer serve to indicate anything.*”<sup>247</sup> Thus reduction, that is, refraining from the temporal local judgements about the existence of the object, is possible and meanings can be studied immediately in the referencing mental life without needing a reference relationship outside oneself.

Derrida states that in resolutely concerning himself (in *Logische Untersuchungen*) with linguistic expression as the possibility of truth, Husserl might seem to reverse the traditional procedure, and that through an itinerary (ending with *Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem*) accord growing attention to that which in language deposits ideal objectivity, produces truth or ideality, rather than simply records it.<sup>248</sup> Despite this radicalness, however, Husserl is still stuck in classical metaphysics in that he emphasises the presence of meaning and idea to consciousness.<sup>249</sup> Thus Husserl aims to remove the indicative dimension linked with the formation of linguistic meaning,<sup>250</sup> because “the indicative sign falls outside the content of absolute objectivity, that is, outside truth”.<sup>251</sup>

Derrida pays particular attention to Husserl’s analysis of internal speech in which the indicative function linked with the sign disappears. According to Husserl, internal speech is by nature ‘expression’, in which meaning is always immediately present. In expression it is a matter of the sign<sup>252</sup> being filled (*Erfüllung*) by the meaning intention, which appears for the present consciousness as present. Thus, according to Husserl, internal speech does not need an indication (i.e. a mark, etc.), but meaning is manifested immediately as present for consciousness.<sup>253</sup> In internal speech I hear myself at the same time as I speak. Internal speech is a kind of spiritual flesh (*Leib*), which speaks and is present for the self – it hears itself – in the absence of the world.<sup>254</sup> This signified is in absolute nearness to the self. It is a matter of a kind of silent monologue. Instead, according to Derrida, “‘Hearing oneself speak’ is not the inwardness of an inside that is closed in upon itself; it is the irreducible

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<sup>247</sup> Husserl 1984, 30-31/269.

<sup>248</sup> V&P, 26/25.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 27/25-26.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 28/27.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 30/31.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 36/33-34.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 53/48.

openness in the inside.”<sup>255</sup> Derrida argues that in the sign one cannot make a clear distinction between the indicative and expressive function, but they are both already always along.<sup>256</sup> In all speech the referent (or indication) (*Anzeige*) is always included, and along with it the phenomena external to the immediate interiority and the sensible (the audible and visible) are included in the formation of meaning.<sup>257</sup> Derrida does indeed call the indicative function occurring in the sign the ‘process of death’ because indication refers to what is absent.

According to Derrida, phenomenology is the philosophy of life because the act of living, as the act of a living being (*Lebendigkeit*) is seen as the origin of meaning (*sens*) in general.<sup>258</sup> Derrida shows the contradiction in Husserl’s phenomenology created from the fact that in phenomenology original self-identity, that is, the presence of the given, is required, which is seen as the origin of meaning. At the same time, Husserl’s descriptions of the constitution of temporality show the self-identity and absence contained in the ‘original given’, which centrally influence the constitution of identity. According to Husserl, the internal monologue occurs in a ‘moment’, in the ‘blink of an eye’. Meaning then occurs immediately as present in itself in the present moment.<sup>259</sup> Its presentation does not require other signs. The signified and signifier are united in a point-like *now moment*. Derrida shows, however, how Husserl’s own presuppositions dismantle this argument. Particularly Husserl’s theory of time in *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1969),<sup>260</sup> contradicts his own way of emphasising the *now moment* experience and presence as the starting point of phenomenology.<sup>261</sup> Husserl presents a description of the constitution of time in the interaction between the intentional acts aimed at the future (protentions) and the intentional acts aimed at the past (retentions). The present is formed by a continuous movement of protentional and retentional traces. This movement (irreducible synthesis) prevents the manifestation of any individual living present. Thus, the living

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 85/76.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 96/86.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 39/36.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 41/38.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 9/10.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 68/61.

<sup>260</sup> The work was written during the period 1893-1917, that is, partly before *Logische Untersuchungen* and partly afterwards. The work was only published for the first time in 1969 in the *Husserliana* vol.10.

<sup>261</sup> V&P, 68/61.

present has been derived from a non-present source. Thus, the living present is not an original foundation, a starting point, rather it is formed from the continuous *différance* of the present, protentional and retentional traces.<sup>262</sup> The present is rather a kind of turning point that refers to the past yet differs from it and, on the other hand, refers to the future yet differs from that, too. This network of references prevents any possibility of talking about the present as present for oneself self-identically.<sup>263</sup> Derrida indeed claims that: “The living present springs forth out of its non-identity with itself and from the possibility of retentional trace. It is already trace.”<sup>264</sup>

Derrida’s analysis in *La voix et le phénomène* of Husserl’s concept of sign (*Zeichen*) and the character of internal speech is important because it reaches conclusions different from Husserl’s phenomenology. Husserl was conscious of the sort of problems that Derrida examines, but attempted to solve them by taking as his starting point an emphasis on the present, meaning and the presence of consciousness. Derrida does not so much put forward his own views, but rather emphasises another possibility which Husserl had also dealt with; that is, Derrida adopts from Husserl’s analysis the fact that the formation of meaning and ideality requires language and signs. But unlike Husserl, Derrida sees that in this process the interiority opens towards the outside, towards the process of absence and death. It is not a question of the immediate nearness of meaning itself in expression, but rather the linguistic meaning is formed so that it refers outside itself via the sign, and thus its formation is linked with the absence and withdrawal of the original intention, referent and signified. Derrida justifies this absence following on from Husserl’s analysis of temporality. The formation of meaning always occurs afterwards, so that some earlier meaning is referred to, and at the same time in this process meaning is re-formed, as is the reference relationship to the earlier ‘meaning’. At the same time, this earlier meaning endlessly withdraws. In linguistic expression, even in its innermost form (i.e. as inner speech), the original intention or signified does not appear as transparent and present meaning, but rather the original intention opens towards the outside in the formation of linguistic meaning, where the linguistic sign indeed formulates the meaning in an original way. *Meaning does not actually exist before linguistic expression*, but then the linguistic expression paradoxically forms the meaning, so that

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 72-73/64-65.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 76/68.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 95/85.

it refers to the original intention, which is absent, always already in the past, and thus withdraws in the process of the formation of linguistic meaning. The secondary sign is indeed the original meaning, which is, nevertheless, not a pure origin. Derrida does indeed argue that meaning is framed in the meeting of sign and experience (intention), where neither is purely the origin of meaning, but rather meaning is formed in the process where the experiential (intentional) requires a sign and a sign in its turn refers to the intentional.

Derrida's analysis does not remain, however, at the level of language. He goes on, with the help of Husserl's analysis of temporality, to dismantle the basic assumption of the metaphysics of presence, that is, the presence of consciousness and the object of knowledge in the present. The presence of the present is a kind of trace that refers to both the past and the present. Thus the presence of the present is born in relation to what it is not, and it is marked by absence. In this regard, Derrida's dismantling of the metaphysics of presence is very close to Heidegger's critique of the tradition of ontology presented in *Sein und Zeit*. Both criticise the Western philosophical tradition for presupposing that the sense of Being is understood as presence in the present. Heidegger emphasises the direction of Being forward into the future, while Derrida emphasises that one can never return to the original meaning because it withdraws. Both of them criticise the fact that in the Western philosophical tradition it has been perceived that the eternal and ideal sense of Being is attained in the presence of the present. And they both emphasise the finitude of meaning (the meaning of Being). For Heidegger, the finitude of Dasein, and for Derrida the finitude of intentional acts, is the starting point in defining the formation of meaning, which implies that meaning is always finite.

In the next section I will look in more detail at Derrida's non-concepts through which he dismantles the metaphysics of presence and outlines his own way of thinking; a thinking that differs from Husserl's phenomenology.

### **2.3. *Différance***

In his article "La différence" (1968) Derrida formulates more clearly his views about *différance*, that which constitutes presence. The article can be seen as one of the most

important early texts in which Derrida presents his ‘own theory’, rather than primarily a commentary and analysis of Husserl’s writings.

*Différance* is one of the most complex and innovative notions in Derrida's philosophy, because it is neither a word nor a concept, but rather a non-concept. It has no univocal and single meaning. Derrida describes *différance* rather as a *sheaf (faisceau)*,<sup>265</sup> economy or assembling, which has the complex structure of a weave. It permits different lines of meaning, or force, to take off in different directions.<sup>266</sup> What makes the term even more complicated is that *it does not exist*, nor does it have an essence, nor can it be understood completely, because it “bypasses the order of apprehension in general”.<sup>267</sup> It cannot be exposed, shown or become present or presented as something present.<sup>268</sup> These descriptions inevitably raise the question, how can Derrida himself depict it? One way to consider *différance* is to regard it as a transcendental notion or rather as a quasi-transcendental notion, as Rodolphe Gasché suggests in *The Tain of the Mirror*.<sup>269</sup> It is not a matter of a present or experiential phenomenon, but rather something that we can consider as the *condition* of our experience. In particular, in Derrida's writings the main issue being addressed is the condition of signification and presence: “[T]his principle of difference, as the condition for signification, affects the *totality* of the sign...”<sup>270</sup> Also he argues that “...it is the determination of Being as presence or as beingness that is interrogated by the thought of *différance*.”<sup>271</sup> In other words, through *différance*, Derrida explains the historical and epochal unfolding of Being, and in particular Being present in its different forms, as a presence of conceptual entities, a meaning, perception or consciousness. *Différance* is the condition and possibility of identities and ideal entities. Even though *différance* seems to be a transcendental notion, even in the Kantian sense, Derrida claims that it is not: “It governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority.”<sup>272</sup> There is no kingdom or *topos* of *différance*. According to Derrida, “*différance* is not. It is not a present being...”<sup>273</sup> In the

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<sup>265</sup> Dif, 3/3.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 4/3.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 4/4.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 6/5-6.

<sup>269</sup> Gasché 1986, 316.

<sup>270</sup> Dif, 11/10.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 22/21.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 22/22.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 22/21.

beginning of “La différence” Derrida even suggests that the “is” in the sentence “*différance* is...” should be crossed out. It makes the presentation of the being-present possible by never being presented as such.<sup>274</sup> What is *différance* then?

One way to understand *différance* is to consider it as a modification of Saussure's idea of linguistic value. According to Saussure, “a language is a system of pure values, determined by nothing else apart from the temporary state of its constituent elements.”<sup>275</sup> In explaining linguistic value, Saussure refers to the game of chess. In both of them, we are dealing with a system of values and with modifications to the systems. The value of the chess pieces depends on their position on the chessboard; just as in language each term has its value through its contrast with all the other terms.<sup>276</sup> The material object (for example, a knight in chess) separated from its square on the board and other conditions of play has no significance for the player. It becomes a real, concrete element only when it becomes identified with its value in the game. The same holds also for linguistic signs. The meaning of a sign is constituted only in the context of the linguistic system. Saussure describes the notion of linguistic value also as a difference in the linguistic system. He then argues:

“[I]n a language there are only differences, *and no positive terms*. Whether we take the signification or the signal, language includes neither ideas nor sounds existing prior to the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonetic differences arising out of that system. In a sign, what matters more than any idea or sound associated with it is what other signs surround it.”<sup>277</sup>

The theory of linguistic value dismantles the categories of essence and existence. Linguistic value appears only in the context of other signs, and therefore it has no stable essence or being. Rather its being is purely negative (non-present), contrastive, relative and differential. Saussure formulates the principle of differentiation as follows: “In a language, as in every other semiological system, what distinguishes a sign is what constitutes it, nothing more. Difference is what makes characteristics, just

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 6/6.

<sup>275</sup> Saussure 1983, 116/80.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 153-154/108-109,159/113.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 166/118.

as it makes values and units.”<sup>278</sup> Similar to Saussure’s description of the linguistic value as a difference in a system or a context, which makes the identity of signification possible, is Derrida’s notion of *différance* as a difference and differentiation in relation to a non-saturable context, a purely negative difference, which has no identity by itself, but only as part of, and taking part within, the play of differences.

At the beginning of “La différence” Derrida elaborates the idea of the new non-concept of *différance* through the idea of graphic intervention. The difference between the French word *différence* and the neologism *différance* cannot be heard, only read. The difference between these two notions can be recognised only in written form. By this graphic difference Derrida refers to Saussure’s idea that a change in the signal brings with it a change in the idea expressed.<sup>279</sup> However, Derrida at this point also presents a critique of Saussure’s idea of language as primarily phonetically generated. In his linguistics Saussure values speech over writing, and also, therefore, he mainly speaks of phonetic differences. For Saussure the phonetic difference will tend to acquire significance.<sup>280</sup> Graphic differences are only expressions of preliminary phonetic differences. Derrida argues that the preliminary difference between the notions of *différence* and *différance* is not constituted through phonetic differences, but rather through graphic ones. However, Derrida tries not only to deconstruct Saussure’s idea of the primariness of the phonetic over the graphic, but also to convey an idea of silent and non-present *différence*, which cannot be appropriated as such, but which anyhow affects signification. Derrida explains the idea of silent and non-present differences in relation to Saussure’s idea of phonetic writing, arguing that so-called phonetic writing can function only by admitting into its system nonphonetic ‘signs’, such as punctuation and spacing: “The difference between two phonemes is inaudible which alone permits them to be and to operate as such.”<sup>281</sup>

However, Derrida’s notion of *différance* signifies not only difference or the silence between, an interval, distance, space, the polemic and dissimilar otherness, but also active differing, the process of scission and division, which would produce

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid, 168/119.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 167/119.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. 167/119.

<sup>281</sup> Dif, 5/5.

different things and differences.<sup>282</sup> The operation or movement, which Derrida calls *différance*, is neither active nor passive, but rather an undecidable combination of active production of differences and passive difference, interval, and between. At the same time, the interval and space advance the formation of differences. Furthermore, *différance* joins the spatial difference and differing and the temporal delay, to take recourse in the temporal and temporising mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfilment of ‘desire’ or ‘will’.<sup>283</sup> In other words, *différance* combines the temporisation and spacing in a manner that signifies “the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time”.<sup>284</sup> Thus, the temporisation implies and produces spacing, differences in space, and the spatial interval, and the spacing implies and produces the temporal difference, delay.

In this description of *différance* as temporisation and spacing, one can again notice the influence of Saussure's analysis of linguistic signs, and in particular the temporal nature of linguistic signs. According to Saussure, the linguistic signifier, being auditory in nature, occupies a certain temporal space, which can be measured in just one dimension, namely, a line.<sup>285</sup> Thus the linguistic signifier as a material sign (phonetic or graphic) is necessarily arranged spatially and linearly, with every phonetic or graphic difference following each other, creating at the same time a temporal sequence. The meanings of sentences are constituted through linearly progressing phonetic or graphic utterances. This thus manifests the temporal constitution of meaning as something delayed, that is, appearing in the mediation of a detour in the linear process. However, the end of the sentence does not bring about the ‘absolute’ or stable meaning of the sentence; rather, the play of differences, the constitution of meaning, is an endless play, where the temporal and spatial (con)text cannot be delimited to a sentence or a book, but rather extends to all possible textual experience, even to that which has not yet been actualised. Therefore, Derrida’s notion of *différance* does not refer to the linear constitution of meaning, but rather to the multidimensional constitution of differences.

Derrida's notion of *différance* differs from Saussure’s idea of linguistic value and difference, in that Derrida extends the sense of the word to cover a larger area

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid, 8-9/8-9.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid, 8-9 /8-9.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, 8 /8.

<sup>285</sup> Saussure 1972, 103/69-70.

than language. He widens the principle of differentiation concerning the constitution of memory, perception, presence, consciousness and meaning. For example, he relates *différance* to Heidegger's idea of ontological difference (*ontologische Differenz*), arguing that "*différance* is certainly but the historical and epochal *unfolding* of Being or the ontological difference."<sup>286</sup> Heidegger's notion of the ontological difference<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Dif, 23/22. The expression "the historical and epochal unfolding of Being" refers to Heidegger's idea of truth as historical Being-uncovered (*Entdeckt-sein*) (Heidegger 1988, 218/261). Truth is such an unfolding of Being that it takes entities out of their hiddenness and lets them be seen in their uncoveredness (ibid, 219/262). However, this uncovering is historical, which means that it takes place in a certain "there" (*Dasein*). Heidegger insists that the disclosedness of Being is constituted by the state of mind, understanding and discourse, which pertains primordially to the world, to Being-in and Being of the 'there'(ibid, 220-221/263). Therefore, the unfolding of Being is necessarily historical and occurs through the understanding of historical Being-there (*Dasein*). However, by being historical, *Dasein* is already both in the truth and in untruth (ibid, 223/265).

<sup>287</sup> The actual term "ontological difference" (*ontologische Differenz*) does not appear in *Sein und Zeit*, although the issue to which the term refers is present. The term itself appears for the first time in *Vom Wesen des Grundes* (1929). Heidegger also discusses the ontological difference in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1935), *Identität und Differenz* (1957) and *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1950-59). Joseph J. Kockelmans has analysed in detail how the notion of ontological difference has developed in Heidegger's writings. According to Kockelmans, Heidegger's first conception of the ontological difference (in the works and lectures written between *Sein und Zeit* and *Vom Wesen des Grundes*) can be expressed in the following theses: "1) [...] the Being question is formulated in terms of ontological difference. [...] 2) The ontological difference comes about only by reason of *Dasein's* power to differentiate between Being and being. [...] 3) The final term toward which *Dasein* transcends beings is not the beingness of beings (*Seinendheit*) but rather Being itself, taken as the emergence of the difference between Being and beings." (Kockelmans 1984, 75). In later writings (1935-1962), Heidegger conceives the ontological difference in relation to language. Kockelmans continues: "Originally it is language (*logos*) which summons beings and Being, things and world. [...] By summoning things and world in this way, language sets world and things, Being and beings, apart without separating them; in this way it brings about the ontological difference." (Ibid., 88). Language is a kind of scission that gathers together two differentiated elements. Thus the difference is at the same time unity and duality, differentiating and differentiated, the tension and mutual adhesion of unity in duality (Ibid., 88). Also Hugh J. Silverman has in several writings analysed Heidegger's notion "*die ontologische Differenz*". According to Silverman the ontological difference characterises the Being of that-which-is (*Seiende*). Silverman emphasises the lived difference of the ontological difference. Thus the ontological difference refers to the nature of Being which continually differentiates itself from the essent. Silverman uses the Ralph Manheim's neologism "essent" (in his translation of *Einführung in die Metaphysik*) for the German word *Seiende*. Hence Silverman claims that "Man is always differentiating himself from other essents. At the same time, it is the difference in that man is the essent which is related to Being, and he is related to Being by differentiating himself from the essent which he is."

refers to the difference between Being (*Sein*) and being (*seiend*), that is, between that which concerns ways of Being and that which concerns beings [i.e. entities],<sup>288</sup> It is disputable, however, what Heidegger actually means by this expression. Referring to Heidegger's text *Der Spruch des Anaximander* (1946), which belongs to his later writings, Derrida is interested in the former's idea of the 'oblivion of Being', that is, the oblivion of the distinction between Being and beings (entities). Thus the ontological difference remains forgotten. However, this oblivion of the distinction belongs to the self-concealing essence of Being. It is not a mistake of the

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(Silverman 1987, 47-48). This differentiating is not effected by an act which someone voluntarily performs, rather it is the way man, or the self appears. Thus, Silverman claims that man is the relation of the essent to Being in terms of a continuously occurring event of differentiating, which is not initiated from a focal point or a center. The self (man) is essentially an identity of difference. (Ibid, 50-51). The relationship between Being and essent is intertwined, "Being is always differentiated ontologically from an essent and it always depends upon an essent in order to be" (Ibid, 50). Silverman brings forth also that for Heidegger the ontological difference is also "the "locus" of thinking". According to Silverman "The sameness of thinking and Being takes place within this *Differenz*" (Ibid. 53). In his later writings Heidegger designates the enigmatic character of Being by crossing over the word. Silverman explains that this crossing over the word *Being* refers to the "going accros", passing from one side to the other side, that occurs in the ontological difference. It symbolises the difference between Being and beings. However, the Being cannot be understood without the Being of beings. Silverman points out that the ontological genitive (the Being of beings) designates the non-sameness of the two.(Silverman 1989, 157-158) Thus the relation between Being and beings is chiasmatic (Silverman 1993, 121).

<sup>288</sup> Derrida speaks also of ontico-ontological difference. One way to consider the ontico-ontological difference is to regard it as expressing two modes of understanding. This kind of interpretation can be found in *Sein und Zeit*, where Heidegger claims that ontological inquiry aims to clarify the meaning of Being (*Sinn von Sein*) and the Being of beings (*Sein des Seienden*), while the ontical inquiry concerns entities (Heidegger 1988, 11-12/31-32). The word *ontology* is derived from the Greek word *onto*, which means being, and *logos*, which means logic, knowledge or central principle. Thus, also Heidegger uses the word *ontology* to signify knowledge of both the meaning of Being and of the central principles of Being. It describes how the meaning of Being is gathered (*legein*) in Being, while ontical inquiry concerns how different beings (i.e. entities) exist. The translators of *Sein und Zeit* into English, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, argue that ontological inquiry is concerned primarily with Being, while ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with entities and the facts about them (Macquarrie & Robinson, translators footnote 3, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* 1962, 31. Thus, the ontological way of considering entities aims at understanding Being, while the ontical way of understanding considers being through entities and as different beings. Derrida apparently uses the terms in this same sense because he speaks of it as "the difference between Being and beings (the ontological difference) as the difference between presence and the present"(Dif, 24/23).

philosophical tradition, rather it is the condition of the history of Being. History begins with the oblivion of Being and by this oblivion Being keeps to itself.<sup>289</sup> In this oblivion the relation between presencing and what is present remains unthought. The essence of presencing remains forgotten.<sup>290</sup> As Derrida concludes, “What Heidegger wants to mark is this: the difference between Being and beings, the forgotten of metaphysics, has disappeared without leaving a trace.”<sup>291</sup> Thus, a certain erasure belongs to the structure of Being. However, “the early trace” of the difference is retained in its loss in the form of presence, in a text or in the form of the proper.<sup>292</sup> Derrida emphasises Heidegger's claim that: “the distinction between Being and beings, as something forgotten, can invade our experience only if it has already unveiled itself with the presencing of what is present (*mit dem Anwesen des Anwesenden*); only if it has left a trace (*eine Spur geprägt hat*) which remains preserved (*gewart bleibt*) in the language to which Being comes.”<sup>293</sup> In language, writing and a text the trace of the ontological difference is preserved and sheltered as a trace, which refers absolutely other, that manifest itself as disappearing. The outside of the text can be conceived only through language as differing and escaping from any proper name.<sup>294</sup> In this context, Derrida argues that “*différance*, in a certain and very strange way, (is) ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being.”<sup>295</sup> *Différance* is still “[o]lder’ than Being itself”,<sup>296</sup> because it produces the categories of presence and absence. In other words, according to Derrida, also Being and presence are produced in the process of *différance*. Heidegger’s interest lay in how Being in a strange way reveals and hides in entities. For him, Being is *logos* which collects together beings and makes them visible and understandable. According to Derrida, on the other hand, Being is not the origin and *logos*, but rather it is formed in the process of the separating and separation of *différance*. Thus one can say that for Derrida *différance*, the modus of evolving, is more original than the manifestation of Being as presence. It is, however, the origin, whose originality cannot appear as a present substance.

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<sup>289</sup> Cf., Kockelmans 1984, 80-81.

<sup>290</sup> Dif, 24/23.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 25/24.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 25/24.

<sup>293</sup> Heidegger 1957, 51, Dif, 26/25.

<sup>294</sup> Dif, 26-27/25.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 23/22.

According to Derrida, *being does not actually exist before the process of différance*. Being (*seiend*) is not a spiritual substance in the mind, nor is the subject a spiritual substance in itself, but they are born by separating and differentiating from the rest.<sup>297</sup> The point of separation is not readily defined.<sup>298</sup> Derrida indeed states that the differences “have not fallen from the sky fully formed, and are no more inscribed in a *topos noētos*, than they are prescribed in the grey matter of the brain. [...] [O]ne could say that only differences can be “historical” from the outset and in each of their aspects”<sup>299</sup> Historicity means in this context that differences are changing temporally and locally so that they have no permanent identity. Historicity refers to the uniqueness and event-likeness of the process. According to Bennington, *différance* attempts to name the delay, which means that meaning is always anticipated or else re-established after the event; for example, in the structure of a sentence, tending towards its end, which will retrospectively have organised its elements. But also in the structure of a book, of a work, of a life or a tradition, every present element is stretched between a ‘past’ and ‘future’ which in themselves will never have been present.<sup>300</sup>

Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence would be perhaps more clearly understandable if he would address explicitly the critique of thinking in terms of substances. Thus he could criticise the fact that it is typical in traditional Western philosophy to look at and understand entities as substances. But Derrida criticises not only the fact that the objects of knowledge and awareness are perceived as substances, but also, moreover, the fact that being is perceived as presence in the *now moment*. In this regard, Derrida follows Heidegger’s critique of ontology in *Sein und Zeit*. According to Derrida, even the presence in the *now moment* is a consequence of the

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 28/26.

<sup>297</sup> According to Derrida, *différance* puts into question the authority of presence or of its symmetrical opposite, absence or lack. It questions the limit which forces one to perceive the meaning of Being in general as presence or absence, in the categories of being and beingness (*ousia, Seiendheit*) (Dif. 10/10). Thus one can say that it describes the intermediate form between presence and absence. The present is produced in relation to the absent.

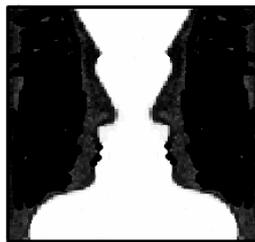
<sup>298</sup> Derrida has indeed stated that *différance* names the playing movement that ‘produces’ differences. However, the *différance* that produces differences does not exist somehow before them, in a simple and unmodified present. (Dif 12/11).

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 12/11.

<sup>300</sup> Bennington 1999, 71-72.

process of *différance*.<sup>301</sup> The presence which is identified as presence requires its continuous separation from absence. This process can never be present in itself, but is displaced and continuously withdrawing. The non-concept of *différance* carries a similar idea of time to that which Husserl analysed in *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1969). *Différance* depicts that difference and postponement through which the conceptual and ideal identity and presence are formed. The present now (moment) and being (as identity) are constituted through the retentional past now moments and protentional now moments. In this process the present now moment (instead of being originally present) receives its form only as a detour through absent 'past and future' now moments.<sup>302</sup> In other words, that which has been experienced has always already taken the detour via absence, that is, through retentions aimed at the past and protentions aimed at the future.

With the term *différance* Derrida pays attention to the limits defined as substance or entity, which, according to him, are essentially like *différance*, that is to say, they are by nature continuous process-like separation and differentiation. Thus, the being of an entity<sup>303</sup> does not actually exist before the process of *différance*; that is, before the formation of differences and the chiasmatic movement occurring on the borders. The being and presence of an entity are thus not static points or substances (*eidos*), but the being comes about in relation to other differences, by differentiating and separating from them. Thus the formation of being happens through the process of *différance*, which can most simply be perceived through chiasmatic patterns, for instance in the following pattern:



<sup>301</sup> Cf. V&P, 67-77/60-69.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Ismo Nikander 1997, 47.

<sup>303</sup> Heidegger would use the expression "the Being of an entity", but Derrida writes the term *being* with a lower case b, unless explicitly referring to Heidegger's distinction. As such, Derrida does not privilege the notion of being over other concepts, as Heidegger does. Thus, in the context of Derrida's writings, the notion of *being* [*Sein*] is written with a lower-case letter b.

One can say that *différance* occurs at the border of the figures, which define the vase and faces. The vase itself is not a vase but something in relation to the faces, from which it stands out, and correspondingly the faces are defined as faces in relation to the vase. Thus in order to see the vase one must displace and postpone the appearance of the faces, and in order to see the faces one must displace and postpone the appearance of the vase. Both receive their being in relation to each other. This resembles the central premise of Gestalt psychology about the shape receiving its meaning in relation to its background and vice versa. With the term *différance* Derrida brings out the fact that both carry in their substance a trace of the other, in which case the trace of the other brings its own addition to the perception of the substance. The visual example is not very good, however, when outlining the character of *différance*, because it is more static and more present than meanings and idealities are. In the case of the ideal objects and concepts, however, it is a question of the formation of dynamic being in the network of non-substantial differences.

The term *différance* depicts above all the process and border occurring in-between which brings forth identity. Bennington has claimed that *différance* attempts to name “the differentiability or being-different of those differences, their “production”, the “force” that maintains the system gathered in its dispersion.”<sup>304</sup> Derrida also finds a similar gap, the theme of separating and differing, that is, *différance*, in the writing of Nietzsche and Freud, “... both of whom, as is well known, and sometimes in very similar fashion, put consciousness into question in its assured certainty of itself.”<sup>305</sup> He refers to Nietzsche’s claim that “the great principal activity is unconscious.”<sup>306</sup> According to Derrida, Nietzsche sees consciousness as the effect of forces, whose essence, byways and modalities, however, are not proper to it. Force in itself is never present: it only occurs as differences in intensity.<sup>307</sup> Likewise, in *différance* it is a question about *differences between forces*. Derrida indeed claims that “*différance* is the name we might give to the ‘active’, moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces...”<sup>308</sup> The border surface where different forces meet enables identity. Thus, the same and other are defined reciprocally at the intersection of different forces.

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<sup>304</sup> Cf. Bennington 1999, 71.

<sup>305</sup> Dif, 18/17.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. 18/17.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. 18/17.

The question then arises, however, of what Nietzsche and Derrida mean by the term ‘force’. The answer cannot be found directly in their texts, but it would seem that Derrida speaks indirectly of physiological and corporal sensations and effects, about the pre-level of meaning (the frequencies of cold and hot, colour and sound, etc.), because he directly examines Nietzsche’s concept of force after Freud’s views on the physiology of perception.<sup>309</sup> The sensation does not form a clear image or perception, but is more a diffuse movement formed into perception only in the pressure between differences. Thus the sensation of a loud voice does not manifest itself in itself but in relation to silence. The sensation is defined from the differences in intensity, not so much as an independent and separate sensation, but in relation to the rest; for instance, hot is in relation to cold.

Similarly, Derrida claims that from Freud’s *Entwurf einer Psychologie* (1895) onwards the concepts of trace (*Spur*), breaching (*Bahnung*) and the forces of breaching cannot be separated from the concept of *différance*. The breaching would not exist without the difference between traces. According to Freud, the psychic characteristic called *memory* can be described only by taking into account the difference between breaches: “There is no breach without difference and no difference without trace.”<sup>310</sup> In other words, according to Freud, memories and representations do not positively (i.e. as presence) exist, but rather only receive their identity in relation to one another.

Furthermore, according to Derrida, *différance* is the historical and epochal unfolding (*déploiement*) of Being:<sup>311</sup> it describes how Being is unfolded as beings and receives its form. Typical for the metaphysics of presence is that the presence of the phenomena appearing to consciousness is seen as the original Being or essence of the phenomena. According to Derrida, the presence of the meaning of some phenomenon is only one possible definition, born in the process of *différance*. The phenomenon is open to endless different definitions depending on what difference is being made. The withdrawing typical of *différance* also explains the fact that the phenomenon cannot be fully understood. In *différance* something is always left in *reserve* (*réserve*,

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<sup>308</sup> Dif., 19/18.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 19-20/18.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 23/22.

*Vorrat*). Derrida takes the term 'reserve' from Freud,<sup>312</sup> according to whom the subconscious is some kind of reserve into which things are stored, things that are not needed, or are too big and dangerous for consciousness to deal with, but which can be returned to memory and taken into use later. According to Derrida, the reserve is the basic requirement for the preservation of life and movement, because it enables phenomena not to appear fully transparent to consciousness; instead, something is always left in reserve. Derrida's characterisation of *différance* raises the question, however, of where it occurs. He does not situate it precisely. Is it the property of the subject (transcendental subjectivity) or of the language or of being?

Hugh J. Silverman argues in *Inscriptions* (1987) that:

"If *différance* were purely static, it would have the structure of sign with its accompanying linguistic value. Since however *différance* is active – perhaps "differencing" is a more accurate translation – it also engages the signifying process which characterizes the self. *Différance*, therefore, is the self engaged in the signifying process.

Unlike signification, *différance* is actualized by negation. It cannot affirm itself. It can, at most, distance itself by being another substance or by being in another place and at another time."<sup>313</sup>

Thus with the term *différance* Derrida outlines such operations which are not placed in any foundation or area, in language or consciousness either univocally or purely. Rather, the term describes the combination of "the self engaged in the signifying process". In *The Tain of the Mirror* Gasché claims that the term is quasi-transcendental.<sup>314</sup> He does not describe *différance* through the notion of quasi-transcendentality, but rather speaks of quasi-transcendentality in the context of Derrida's notion of metaphoricity. However, Gasché's description of quasi-transcendentality brings out important features of the non-concept of *différance*.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 19/18.

<sup>313</sup> Silverman 1987, 298.

<sup>314</sup> Gasché 1986, 316.

<sup>315</sup> For example, Geoffrey Bennington refers to the quasi-transcendental nature of *différance* in *Jacques Derrida* (Bennington, 1999, 272-274). Gasché's notion of "quasi-transcendentality" can be applied also to other non-concepts of Derrida, as Derrida himself has claimed. For example, in *Limited Inc, a, b, c*, Derrida has used it in describing "iterability" as a quasi-concept (LI, 122). In *Economimes* he claims that the "quasi-" tells us something about a nature's dissimulatory exit from itself (EC, 9). Bennington has examined the different contexts in which Derrida has used the term since its first appearance in Derrida's text *Glas* (1974) (for example in the context of

The word quasi-transcendental refers to the fact that something has a similar structure and function as the transcendental, but without actually being one. Gasché does indeed differentiate between the notion of quasi-transcendental and Kant's *a priori* requirements for objective knowledge, as well as Heidegger's finite transcendentals (e.g. Being-towards-death [*Sein sum Tode*]).<sup>316</sup> As Gasché sees it, Derrida's transcendentals are a function of his inquiry into the conditions of the possibility and impossibility of the logic of philosophy.<sup>317</sup> This would mean in the case of the term *différance* that it depicts a kind of transcendental structure and mode of operation, which is not actually transcendental. This interpretation is supported by Derrida's claim that *différance* is "the possibility of conceptuality",<sup>318</sup> but the reason for difference cannot be found in a subject or a substance, in a thing in general, a being that is somewhere present, thereby eluding the play of *différance*.<sup>319</sup> For Gasché, *différance* is clearly a transcendental concept; it is a concept which also questions the transcendental reduction and even the existence of the concept of the transcendental.<sup>320</sup> According to Gasché, *différance* therefore prevents the analysis of pure consciousness, and explains why any concept concerned with consciousness cannot possibly exist because every concept, also a transcendental one, takes part in the endless play of differences. How, then, should this be understood? One could say, for instance, that the meaning formed in linguistic expression is a kind of quasi-transcendental effect, where meaning is formed by separating and withdrawing from linguistic expression. In this context, quasi-transcendentality refers also to the fact that meaning has no transcendental origin constituted by the structures of pure

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metaphor or catachresis [Rm, 21-22], with ontology [Rlw, 292], "contemporaneity" [PSY, 382], tautology [Has, 5], property [Has, 60], etc.) (Bennington 1999, 268-270). According to Bennington, the quasi-transcendental or ultra-transcendental "puts into question the very structure of transcendence, which it pulls back down onto a feature that transcendence would like to consider as empirical" (Ibid, 278). Quasi-transcendentality refers to the logic Derrida has revealed in his introduction to Husserl's "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem": "What makes possible immediately makes impossible the purity of the phenomenon made possible" (Ibid, 276-277). For example, the possibility of the repetition of the sign that allows the idealisation of the object opens the meaning to a dissemination, which threatens the repetition and transmission of the thought.

<sup>316</sup> Gasché 1986, 317.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Dif., 11/11.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 12/11.

<sup>320</sup> Gasché 1986, 194-195.

consciousness, nor an origin constituted by finite transcendental, such as, for instance, language. Rather, the formation of meaning is the result of the quasi-transcendental process. Thus, meaning constitutes both the experimental as well as the linguistic in an undecidable way. The development of language has enabled a certain ability to conceptualise, which functions with the logic of *différance*. Language has produced spatial and temporal differences, which form concepts and meanings. Thus one can see that *différance* is undecidably and simultaneously the result of the interaction between consciousness and language. Only with language is the play of differences, representation and the formation of identity made possible in the process of *différance*.

Also Bennington in his own interpretation of quasi-transcendentality emphasises the notion of undecidability linked with the structure of thought.<sup>321</sup> *Différance* thus describes the undecidability linked with the formation of meaning, structures and life. *Différance* affects all these in different ways. Bennington emphasises that quasi-transcendentality refers to the fact that the same thing which enables the existence of some phenomenon is also at the same time the prerequisite for its impossibility.<sup>322</sup> That is to say, Derrida describes with the term *différance* a process which enables being, meaning and the presence of consciousness, yet at the same time prevents them. For instance, the requirement of meaning is a sign, but at the same time meaning separates and withdraws from linguistic expression. Meaning has thus no original area in which it is formed, but rather it is formed in the process occurring between signs and meaning. At the same time as the formation of the separation of meaning occurs in language it also enables the disappearance of meaning. Meaning cannot be reactivated for oneself or for another completely identically. Likewise, the presence of the present is not the basic unit and starting point of Being, but rather is born in the passive synthesis in relation to the past and future. At the same time, this synthesis makes it impossible for presence to be fully present in itself, because it always refers outside itself, to the absent. Thus *différance* describes a dialecticality linked with the present, being, the presence of consciousness and meaning, in which these receive their identity in relation to what they are not. The

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<sup>321</sup> Bennington 1999, 276-279. On the other hand, he states: "We must not fall into the trap of believing that undecidability would at least be the right word for what we are trying to say here" (ibid., 279-280).

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 276-277.

question is about dialecticality and referability to one another without a synthesis and origin. Derrida emphasises the non-localizability (*atopos*) of *différance*, and states:

“What is written as *différance*... will be the playing movement that ‘produces’... these differences... This does not mean that the *différance* that produces differences is somehow before them, in a simple and unmodified – in-different – present. *Différance* is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus the name ‘origin’ no longer suits it.”<sup>323</sup>

One can indeed say that with the theme of *différance* Derrida rather describes that process which he has noticed as a feature characterising phenomenology and other philosophical systems using philosophical concepts such as meaning, being, time, life, reflection and structure. In the philosophical tradition thinkers have aimed to base philosophy on some original and pure foundation (presence, consciousness, etc.), but at the same time this made it necessary to stop the movement of *différance*, the undecidable shuttling between two or more possibilities which makes the setting of the foundation impossible. Rejecting *différance* has also meant rejecting the finiteness of temporality.

In this section of Chapter 2 I have presented *différance* mainly as the non-present creator of substance, being and form. *Différance* receives different meanings and becomes defined differently in Derrida’s texts in different connections. I have concentrated mainly on the characterisation of *différance* in relation to the metaphysics of presence, on how it produces the presence of substance and being. In Chapter 4, *Grammatology*, I will discuss more closely how *différance* affects the formation of linguistic meaning. In Chapter 5, *The Deconstruction of the Subject*, I will discuss how it constitutes consciousness and internal time. In the rest of the present chapter I will continue a description of the formation of presence in regard to its manifestation through the concepts of *trace*, *supplement*, *repetition*, and *economy*. One can indeed say that these terms describe the logic of *différance* and bring out different dimensions of its function. Derrida has stated, for instance, that “trace is the

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<sup>323</sup> Dif 12/11.

*différance* which opens appearance [*l'apparaître*] and signification”,<sup>324</sup> and that supplement is *différance* by another name.<sup>325</sup>

## 2.4. Trace

Derrida relates the concept of trace (*trace*) to central issues in the writings of Levinas dealing with a critique of ontology, that is: “[R]elationship to the illeity as to the alterity of a past that never was and can never be lived in the ordinary or modified form of presence.”<sup>326</sup> Levinas’ interest in *trace* as a concept has to do with *the touch of the otherness of the Other*, in which otherness is preserved as otherness. This is possible only in that the absolutely Other makes a mark in the form of a trace. Levinas characterises trace as follows:

“Its original meaning is described, for instance, by a finger print left by someone who has wanted to erase their traces while hoping to commit a perfect crime. The one who has left traces while wiping his traces has not wanted to say or do anything with these traces. He has shaken the order in an irreparable way. He is absolutely gone.”<sup>327</sup>

Trace thus refers indirectly to an otherness that has “left traces”. The irreducible Other can never be present as such, but rather it can always show afterwards in the form of a trace. Thus, what is outside the knowing subject signifies as a trace; but as a trace it does not bring transcendence into the immanent order and abolish it, but preserves the transcendence as always already past.<sup>328</sup> However, Levinas’ interpretation of the concept of trace is not unambiguous. It can be seen that Levinas emphasises the absolute past because it gives the only possibility for preserving the otherness of the Other within the field of experience (immanence). If the touch of the Other would manifest itself as an immediate presence, it could not actually be other, but it would

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<sup>324</sup> GRAM, 95/65.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 215/150.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 102-103/70. Cf. Levinas 1988b, 201.

<sup>327</sup> Levinas 1988b, 200 [Translation GG].

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 198.

always already be constituted by the immanent subject, or the Other would have to be the Same (*le même*) to start with.

In examining the development of the concept of trace in Levinas, it is clearly evident that he takes seriously Husserl's phenomenological analysis of "intentional inexistence", according to which: "In general, whether a datum manifests what is merely represented or what truly exists, what is real or what is ideal, what is possible or what is impossible, it is *a datum in the cognitive phenomenon*, in the phenomenon of thought, in the widest sense of the term."<sup>329</sup> In other words, what is given (real and ideal objects) is always already constituted by the intentional acts of the subject. Levinas is interested in whether there is any significance outside the constituting action of intentional acts, which preserves its otherness.<sup>330</sup>

In *Totalité et infini* (1961) Levinas discusses the corporeal relationship to otherness preceded by one's becoming aware, where the subjective is not dominating the world to make it finite (the Same, *le même*, totality), but rather the world preserves its limitlessness and infinity.<sup>331</sup> Levinas emphasises that there is an empirical relationship to the world, where the otherness of the world appears through abundance and excess. Thus the world is not directly constituted as my observation and as my experience through the requisites of my perceptual capacity, anticipations and projections. Levinas also brings into the epistemological debate of phenomenological

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<sup>329</sup> Husserl 1970c, 59. Husserl emphasises that "It is only in cognition that the essence of objectivity can be studied at all, with respect to all its basic forms; only in cognition is it truly given, is it evidently 'seen'." (ibid, 59).

<sup>330</sup> Levinas's critique of Husserl can itself be criticised for not taking into account the notion of *hyle* in the latter's analyses. That is to say, the object constituted by intentionality is both formed from the materia (*hyle*) received from the real world as well as from the equality (*morphe*) of the intentional act. Leila Haaparanta has described Husserl's terminology in "Intentionality and the Theory of Mind" as follows: "For Husserl, intentional experience (*intentionales Erlebnis*) consists of morfe or the noetic component, and hyle, which Husserl also calls *Data*, *Empfindungsdata*, *Empfindungsinhalt*, *hyletische Data*, *stoffliche Data*, and *Stoffe*" (Haaparanta 1994, 219). Husserl calls the noetic component and morfe also *noesis*. Noesis is an act (for example perceptual, volitional or emotional) and also a form or structure that gives a shape to the hyletic material (ibid., 219).

<sup>331</sup> Levinas emphasises the preservation of the transcendental otherness linked with the notion of erasure. The transcendental cannot appear as such, but it leaves a trace of itself. In the trace the transcendental appears through erasure. Levinas has described the notion of erasure linked with the trace through the example of the fingerprint that the criminal leaves behind. In striving for the perfect crime, the criminal wants to erase his fingerprints yet he still leaves traces of his presence on the scene of the crime.

hermeneutics the thought of an incommensurability contained within the empirical relationship, which is not formed by the forms of the perceptual senses or intentional acts. According to Levinas, intentionality is preceded by *living from* something (*vivre de...*).<sup>332</sup> As examples of non-intentional and non-solipsistic relationships to the world he mentions breathing and eating. In breathing we are in a relation to the otherness, which we have not thematised in advance as being in opposition to us.<sup>333</sup> In breathing Being, in connection with the otherness, is manifested, where the air does not appear primarily as objectivised, the object of representation, awareness and experience. Also, according to Levinas, the things which allow us to live (such as breathing) are not tools, nor even implements, in the Heideggerian sense of the word.<sup>334</sup> The things which allow us to live preserve their otherness by appearing as traces, and thus also revealing the dependency linked with the existence of the subject as another starting point.

Levinas wants to return epistemological knowledge and the observation of the empirical to that state preceding the intentional relationship in which there is only the 'revelation' (*révélation*) of the Other.<sup>335</sup> In this revelation of the Other, which differs from phenomenological appearing, there is no experiencing subject that would experience the world as its own ideas and experiences. There is only the revelation of otherness or the different forms of the world.<sup>336</sup> The subject does not experience the

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<sup>332</sup> Levinas 1979, 110.

<sup>333</sup> Levinas is not quite fair in his critique of Husserl's phenomenology as being solipsistic, because the central notion of phenomenology describing the subject's relation to the world and the mode of being is intentionality. In *Ideen I* Husserl describes intentionality as being conscious *of something* (Husserl 1950, 18, 203). Thus intentionality describes the subject's openness to the world and a correlation with the world.

<sup>334</sup> Levinas 1979, 110.

<sup>335</sup> Levinas emphasises the term *revelation* as opposed to Heidegger's term *aletheia* (truth as revealment). In *aletheia* it is a question of revealment towards *Dasein*, while in revelation it is a question of an effect coming from the outside. According to Levinas, *revealment* refers to the absolute and totalizing experience, whereas *revelation* does not refer to anything that can be totalised (Levinas 1988b, 197).

<sup>336</sup> Derrida strongly criticises Levinas in his article "Violence et métaphysique" (1967). He criticises Levinas' way of addressing the transcendental and otherness, about which, Derrida argues, one cannot actually talk and especially make philosophical theory. Levinas himself has been very aware of the problem with this analysis, and has indeed seen it as his task to speak about what one cannot speak. One can indeed say that in Levinas's writings after *Totalité et infini* there are more precise delineations of the framework in which otherness can appear as otherness and how

world as its own experience, but rather the world as an otherness is ‘revealed’ spontaneously, unexpected and different. In his later writings, particularly the article “La trace de l’autre” (1963), Levinas emphasises that the touch of otherness does not appear as present; instead it is always already past. The Other can only appear to intentional consciousness by referring to the past.<sup>337</sup>

For Derrida, as with Levinas, the trace refers to the otherness of the past, which has never been the original nor present in a modified sense.<sup>338</sup> Through the concept of the trace, Derrida questions the original presence of experience. Experience, interpreted as trace, means that for the observing consciousness there is no present experience of the world, self or even experiencing at all. The experience is already trace-like, in other words it refers to the past that has never been present. This is based on the idea that the observation of experience, self reflection, always already occurs afterwards. It does not attain the original experience as such, but only the trace, which refers to the absolute past.

Derrida’s view of trace differs, however, from Levinas’, in that the latter presents the term in order to outline such an experience which is not primarily intentional, but rather ‘preserves’ the otherness of the Other. Derrida does not give attention to the question of the preservation of the otherness of the Other [the personal Other], but rather of the presence of otherness in consciousness and experience, as well as the question of the formation of linguistic meaning in connection with otherness. Gasché has analysed these links in which Derrida uses the term trace. They are: 1. The arche-trace as the origin of all relation to an other; 2. The arche-trace as the origin of temporality; 3. The arche-trace as the origin of language and sense.<sup>339</sup> The word ‘origin’ in this context can seem misleading because it is a question of the unattainability of the origin, which the trace also describes. Gasché refers to Derrida’s claim in *De la grammatologie* that “The trace is not only disappearance of the origin – [...] it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the

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even one can talk about it at all. Simon Critchley has clarified this question in *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Levinas and Derrida* (1992, 129-137).

<sup>337</sup> Levinas characterises otherness specifically as spontaneity, being different, the alien, the unexpected and the unforeseeable. Otherness lies in opposition to the subjective (sameness).

<sup>338</sup> GRAM, 103/70.

<sup>339</sup> Gasché 1979, 198-201.

origin”.<sup>340</sup> Gasché indeed characterises the concept of trace as such an origin forming with the other, where “a trace represents a *present* mark of an *absent* (presence)”.<sup>341</sup> Thus the irreducible absence linked with the trace is linked to all reference structures. The absence or the other announces itself as such within all structures of reference as the present mark or trace of an absent presence. The other announces itself as the dissimulation of itself.<sup>342</sup> The trace is this dissimulation that refers to the Other and the past which is always already absent. The previous sentence already tells about the character of the trace as the origin of temporality. The present is formed in relation to the absence of the past and future, which appears as a trace in the presence of the present. Thus the trace is the mark of the dead time within the presence of the living present.<sup>343</sup> The trace of the origin of language and sense refers to the fact that the meaning born in the formation of linguistic meaning is a kind of trace, the present characteristic of which is absence. It is a kind of disguise which conceals as it reveals. The linguistic meaning refers to the past (intention, referent), the content of which has never been present before it has received its linguistic expression.

With the term *trace* Derrida does not refer only to the simple reference structure (the referential relationship between expression and content, and sign and referent) but also to the referential network, the formation of the present meaning in the network of the play of differences. Thus the trace refers to the present emerging as present in relation to other non-substantial traces, which in turn refer to other traces infinitely. The trace is something differing, which refers to other traces. Thus, according to Derrida: “It [the present] is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace”.<sup>344</sup> This clearly shows how Derrida sees presence as a trace.

In *La voix et le phénomène* Derrida defines trace as “the intimate relation [*rapport*] of the living present with its outside, the openness upon exteriority in general, upon the sphere of what is not ‘one’s own’ [*propre*].”<sup>345</sup> For this reason there is no pure interiority, but exteriority is always already alternating with the interiority.<sup>346</sup> With the term *interiority* one can interpret Derrida as meaning that

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<sup>340</sup> GRAM, 61

<sup>341</sup> Gasché 1979, 198.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid, 198-199.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>344</sup> Dif, 25/24.

<sup>345</sup> V&P, 96/86.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

which is traditionally seen as present, that is, the Being of consciousness, the interiority of the subject, the *me*-ness, experiences and meanings in the consciousness. With the term *exteriority*, on the other hand, Derrida refers to all that which is seen as presently being left outside the present and consciousness in the philosophical tradition (absence, finitude, the empirical, sign). The permeating theme in Derrida's writings is the questioning of the clear division between interiority and exteriority. According to him, interiority, the presence of consciousness and exteriority (absence, a sign) are not separate areas; rather, the defining of the interiority as exteriority occurs in a continuous reciprocal relationship with regards to the exteriority. The obscurity of the difference between the interior and exterior is expressed by the trace, which is the openness of the inside towards the outside. In particular, Derrida looks at the structural absence (death) contained within consciousness and meaning, described by the trace.

A corresponding view of the entwinement of inside and outside can also be seen in Merleau-Ponty's view of the chiasmatic logic of the world and the subject occurring in any observation. The chiasmatic logic of the subject and the world prevent a clear separation of the inside and the outside from one another. Chiasmatic logic refers to a reciprocal dependency; one does not exist without the other. Observation requires both interiority and exteriority in order to encounter the subject and the object.<sup>347</sup> Through the notion of chiasmus Merleau-Ponty wants to question the juxtaposition of the subject and the world. The chiasmus of the interiority and exteriority refers rather to the continuous interaction between me and the world and our reciprocal defining of each other.<sup>348</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, the question in the difference between the subject and the thing (world) is about a contacting surface. Meeting one another and touching enables the understanding of the inside and the outside. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty claims that: "what begins as a thing ends as consciousness of the thing, what begins as a 'state of consciousness' ends as a thing."<sup>349</sup>

Likewise, Derrida's and Levinas' concept of trace can be understood as a contacting surface, as a trace of something else that does not exist without the interaction between the inside and the outside. Derrida also speaks about the

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<sup>347</sup> Merleau-Ponty 1987, 132-140.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

invisibility and erasure (*sous-rature*) of the difference and the trace. The *arche-trace* (*l'arkhi-trace*), that is, arche-difference, disappears, making it unreachable. Derrida does not concentrate so much on the traditional problem of ontology, that is, the description of the relationship between the world and awareness (perception, experience), yet some of his comments indicate that one can describe this relationship through the concept of trace. For instance, in *La voix et le phénomène* he claims: “There never was any ‘perception’; and ‘presentation’ is a representation of the representation that yearns for itself therein as for its own birth or its death.”<sup>350</sup> In *De la grammatologie*, he claims that ‘experience’ belongs to the history of metaphysics and thus can only be used under erasure (*sous rature*): “‘Experience’ has always designated the relationship with a presence”<sup>351</sup> Observation, presentation and the manifestation of the thing to consciousness are traces (representations) that refer to a past referent.

Derrida’s philosophy describes the formation of the presence of essence as a play between traces. In the trace the question is about a chiasmatic point where duplication occurs. At this point the trace and that which the trace is are simultaneously one and different. The differentiation in itself is not present or attainable experientially because the trace (division, *différance*) occurs in the unity and invisible difference between the observed and the observation.<sup>352</sup> The trace occurs and is erased in the invisible difference of, for instance, the cat that is in the world and the representation of the cat. Due to the erasure of the difference, the representation of the cat is interpreted as the cat that is in the world. The trace occurs in the non-representational difference between the representation and the entity that is in the world. The question is about a kind of unity which divides, separates and produces a copy of itself. In the observation the gaze touches and is in connection with otherness, which is not me myself, but at the same time my observation about the cat is always already my observation. Thus, in the trace the question is also about a kind of erased difference between the thing itself and the observed thing. The experience and observation is only a trace which refers to the origin, which has always already gone.

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<sup>350</sup> V&P, 116/103.

<sup>351</sup> GRAM, 89-90/60-61.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 95/65.

## 2.5. Supplement, repetition and economy

Derrida has described the process of the formation of presence and substance also with the terms supplement (*supplément*) and supplementarity (*supplémentarité*): “(S)upplementarity is in reality *différance*, the operation of differing which at one and the same time both fissures and retards presence, submitting it simultaneously to primordial division and delay.”<sup>353</sup> The supplement is not completely synonymous with *différance*, though one would think so based on the above quote. Rather, it brings out further characteristics linked with the term *différance*. The French word *supplément* means supplement, supplementary part, addition and appendix.<sup>354</sup> Thus the term brings an addition, and the operations of the addition to the process of *différance*. *Différance* is not just a neutral separation and the postponement of presence, but rather an addition occurs in the process of separation. The identity of the present is complimented and receives a certain addition in relation to that from which it has been formed. The idea of the supplement can in a simplified way be illustrated with the example of the perception of colours. The colour blue receives a certain additional meaning if it is defined in relation to red or yellow. Not only does it differ from red but the red gives a certain additional tone to blue, which it would not have in itself. Derrida describes the term *supplement* in *De la grammatologie* as follows:

“The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *technè*, image, representation, convention etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function. [...] But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void.”<sup>355</sup>

Derrida’s characterisation can be interpreted in different ways. It brings out the dual nature of the supplement; on the one hand the supplement is an addition which enriches and adds presence, and on the other hand the supplement replaces absence and is thus incomplete presence. Derrida’s definition also brings out the fact that the

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<sup>353</sup> V&P, 98/88.

<sup>354</sup> *Larousse Grand Dictionnaire*, 1994.

<sup>355</sup> GRAM, 208/144-145.

image, representation, technique or convention are kinds of supplements. Representation is a supplement, which replaces that which is the representation of which it is, but at the same time it adds something which did not exist in the 'original' object. The 'original' object is erased and representation (supplement) comes in its place. Derrida always places the word *original* in inverted commas in order to emphasise that one can never speak about the original in its actual meaning, because we can not know it other than through the secondary supplement and trace. Thus, in relation to the observed, representation is incomplete presence. However, the supplement does not only settle into replace presence, but rather it adds presence, because the differences and traces carry with them the addition brought by the network of differences. At the same time, representation settles in the place of the 'original' object, replacing its absence, in which case it preserves presence on the one hand and protects from presence on the other.

Derrida links the term *supplement* to the psychoanalytical notion of *substitute* (*suppléance*). A supplement is a substitute, but that with which one would substitute the supplement would not equal it.<sup>356</sup> Derrida's understanding of *substitute* can best be understood in relation to the psychoanalytical view about *substitute behaviour*. The term *substitute behaviour* refers to the need for the subject to find a detour for the person's direct libidinal energy, in which case the repressed content of meaning is manifested through the substitute. In psychoanalysis the substitute is that which is instead of, or in the place of, the actual. Thus a substitute is non-actual in relation to the original 'life energy'. Likewise, Derrida's term 'supplement' describes the typical way for the psyche to find a non-actual detour (*simulacrum*) for the immediate presence, which paradoxically also produces presence. Presence does not appear as presence other than in relation to this detour.

Parallel to the term 'supplement', Derrida speaks repeatedly also of *supplementarity* (*supplémentarité*), which refers to the continuous replacement of one trace by another in connection with the process of *différance*. This leads to the fact that representations not only express and repeat the original presence but also recreate it by creating a relationship to the referent, which withdraws. Thus, the terms 'supplement' and 'substitute' are linked with the thought of a chain of differences and traces which supplement one another, and in which every trace substitutes and

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<sup>356</sup> GRAM, 209/145.

supplements another trace in the endless network of differences. The first image is replaced with other images, which are not complete copies, but each image carries a trace (additional meaning) in the process of making differences.

In connection with *différance*, *trace* and *supplement*, Derrida also uses the expressions *iteration* (*iteration*), *iterability* (*iterabilité*), *repetition* (*répétition*) and *copy* (*double*). Parallel to *différance*, idealisation, identification, the formation of being and meaning also all require repetition. Derrida has indeed said that identity requires repetition: Repetition, however, according to Derrida, is not completely identical repetition and copying, but rather it is essentially becoming other (*alteration*).<sup>357</sup> One can notice similarities between Derrida's way of describing the notion of repetition and the psychoanalytical view of repetition and in particular the idea of compulsive repetition. According to Freud, the psyche is prone to producing copies in order to prevent the feeling of death and loss. For instance, neurotic behaviour is a psychological event in which the psyche attempts through compulsive repetition to repress the feelings of death, perdition and loss. In his article "Das Unheimliche" (1919) Freud states how identity and the idea of an immortal soul are copies by which one aims to remove death and to preserve life. Paradoxically, at the same time as the copy strives to preserve life and to exclude death, it is itself a dead sign. From this follows, according to Freud, the experience of the *uncanny* (*Unheimlich*),<sup>358</sup> something which is both familiar and strange. The copy that was

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<sup>357</sup> Sec, 375/315. Derrida points out that the word iterability is derived from word *iter* which comes from Sanskrit word *itara*, which means *other*. Therefore, Derrida links also repetition to alterity (ibid., 375/315).

<sup>358</sup> Freud analyses the notion of the *Unheimlich* (the *uncanny*) in his article "Das Unheimlich". The word *Heimlich* has two main meanings: 1. homely, belonging to the home, not alien, intimate and friendly; but also 2. Hidden, hidden from view, hidden from others (Freud 1985, 342-344) *Unheimlich* essentially means strange and odd, the opposite of homely and known. Freud in fact based his article on Schelling's concept of *Unheimlich*, which refers to that which should be hidden and secret, but which for some reason shows itself (ibid., 345). *Unheimlich* can be interpreted as a metaphor reflecting the displacement of the content of the subconscious as conscious. Thus, the content of the subconscious, which is most deeply known and closest to the subject, which has been hidden in the subject's own inner-most place, unexpectedly comes out, transforming into something else and giving birth to an experience of the alien and the oddly familiar. For instance, when it comes to dream images one can talk about this phenomenon as that which is familiar becoming alien. Merja Hintsa suggests in her master's thesis "Mahdoton Freud" [The Impossible Freud] (1995) that Freud encounters in the *Unheimlich* an undecidability. Freud gives the term *Unheimlich* at least three different meanings, and does not say which is most suitable:

meant to preserve life and repress death becomes the sign of death. Likewise, images, representations and linguistic marks are copies through which one strives to repress absence and to preserve presence.

There is also an economic aspect to *différance*, trace and supplement. Derrida claims that “there is no economy without *différance*, it is the most general structure of economy”.<sup>359</sup> The Greek word *oikonomia* means ‘housekeeping’ and ‘economy’, and in a simplified manner the economy is thought to be determined by income and expenditure. Derrida’s use of the term *economy* can be seen to contain a corresponding idea, a continuous dynamic process between ‘income’ and ‘expenditure’, but which have no symmetrical relation to each other nor form a circular change. According to Spivak, Derrida's notion of economy is “a metaphor of energy – where two opposed forces playing each other constitute the so-called identity of a phenomenon.”<sup>360</sup> Economy does not reconcile opposites, but rather maintains the disjunction. Spivak thus claims that “Identity constituted by difference is economy”.<sup>361</sup> Also Irene E. Harvey describes Derrida's notion of economy as referring to the play of forces. Harvey argues, in *Economy of Différance*, that “The notion of economy is thus for Derrida a more primordial 'ground' than that of traditional philosophy, which is concerned with static forms, structures, substances, and essences as such.”<sup>362</sup> In the formation of presence the question is about a process where presence is both lost and increased. This economy has an affect specifically in the sign: the present intention separates in the sign; in other words, a loss of meaning occurs, but at the same time the sign enables the permanency of ideality, in which case presence increases.

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1. *Das Unheimliche* is that type of fright that leads back to something previously known (ibid., 132); 2. *Das Unheimliche* as the repressed which returns; 3. *Das Unheimliche* does not refer so much to a content or experience but rather to a structure of repetition repeating structure itself (ibid., 143).

<sup>359</sup> POS, 17/8. See also, for instance, ibid 40-41/29. Arkady Plotnitsky claims that Derrida's notion of "general economy" refers to a mode of theory that relates the configurations it considers to the loss of meaning. The loss of meaning is regarded as ineluctable within any given system. Plotnitsky considers Nietzsche as the first practitioner of general economy and the physicist Nils Bohr as its second (Plotnitsky 1994, 1).

<sup>360</sup> Spivak, Translator's Preface in *Of Grammatology* p. xlii.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid, xlii.

<sup>362</sup> Harvey 1986, 209.

Derrida pays particular attention to the notion of economy in his essay on Bataille and Hegel titled “De l'économie retrainte à l'économie general” (1967). It was George Bataille who introduced the notions of *restricted economy* and *general economy*. For Bataille ‘general economy’ makes apparent that excesses of energy are produced and that these excesses cannot be utilized: the excessive energy can only be lost and without any meaning it is a useless and senseless loss.<sup>363</sup> The ‘restricted economy’ is limited to commercial values: it is limited to meaning and the established value of the objects and to their circulation. Bataille considers Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung* as an example of restricted economy, because it describes the circularity of the *logos* and the knowledge-gathering comprehension.<sup>364</sup> Derrida defines general economy as folding the horizons of knowledge and its figures of meaning so that they will be related to the non-basis of expenditure, not to the *telos* of meaning, but to the indefinite destruction of value.<sup>365</sup> Derrida is interested of Bataille's notion of general economy, because it describes features and effects that Derrida elaborates with the notion of (general) writing. He has brought forth similar ideas about death, the absolute loss of meaning belonging to writing as its condition, which is the non-basis of the expenditure of meaning. Writing, as well as general economy, describes the ruptures that belong to the presence and the closure of metaphysics. Neither writing nor general economy describe the 'unknowledge', that is, 'the loss of meaning', because it unknowable. They describe the effects of the other of knowledge as it appears within knowledge.<sup>366</sup> Thus the economic character of *différance* is conceived as a play in which whoever loses wins: the loss of meaning, death and expenditure without reserve are the conditions for the possibility of new meaning, representation and dissemination. Hence Derrida claims that “*différance* maintains our relationship with that which we necessarily misconstrue, and which exceeds the alternatives presence and absence.”<sup>367</sup>

The notion of economy in Derrida is linked also with his interpretation of how consciousness reflects and represents. Reflection is not the pure mirroring of reality nor is representation the mental copy of the object in the world; but rather reflection creates a certain addition to the original, and at the same time also a loss occurs. Thus,

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<sup>363</sup> Bataille 1943, 233.

<sup>364</sup> Rge, 271.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 270.

representations, images, observations and memories are not stable and ideal entities but, like economy, lie within the continuous process between consumption and income. Representations do not form a static area of being, which once built would remain the same; rather, they are general economies which are in a continuous interaction with their environment. Individual images and observations receive 'income', new content and meanings, from outside the economy and at the same time the economy consumes other contents and meanings. With the concept of economy it is possible to depict the notion of context in a new way. Representations are in continuous interaction, to which another context gives resources within the economy of the representation.

Derrida's notion of economy has also been influenced by the psychoanalytical view of the *psychic economy*. Freud terms 'economy' the concurrent and mutually opposing action of two primal instincts – Eros and the death-instinct. In the psychoanalytical point of view perfect fulfilment can be seen as a dead state, while the state of continuous lack is seen as the force enabling life and movement. In the state of perfect fulfilment the psyche no longer strives for anything. It leads to inner peace, which corresponds to the state of death.<sup>368</sup> Derrida has indeed said, following the basic principle of psychoanalysis, that a perfect pleasure in itself would be another name for death.<sup>369</sup> Lack, for which Derrida, following psychoanalysis, uses the term 'castration', on the other hand enables life. Death, lack and absence are not for Derrida factors outside economy but rather prerequisites for the whole functioning and living economy, because they prevent perfect fulfilment. From this scarcity rises the desire for fulfilment. Scarcity is the motive for the whole process striving for fulfilment (e.g. the presence of meaning). Traditional philosophy, particularly phenomenology, has had as its starting point the presence of life and being. But, according to the deconstructive viewpoint, the prerequisite for economy is absence, which guarantees life and movement. Continuous presence would mean death because no movement is possible within it. Thus Derrida transfers the psychoanalytical view of economy to concern man's way of perceiving reality and the nature of knowledge. Knowledge and meanings are not, according to him, static essences or substances, but essentially dynamic. Meaning is not enclosed as an internal entity of consciousness,

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<sup>367</sup> Dif, 21/20.

<sup>368</sup> Borch-Jacobsen 1991, 94-96.

<sup>369</sup> GRAM, 223/155.

but rather is formed within a continuous interaction with the outside. Harvey claims that “[w]ith Derrida we turn toward a universe (indeed a second one) of movement, of force, of play, which nonetheless contains or exhibits a certain 'calculus' and a certain 'system'. In shifting, however, from a 'substantial' universe to one that is essentially in motion, Derrida proposes a certain 'dislocation of the proper', a certain 'inappropriateness', which is essential to *différance* as such.”<sup>370</sup>

## 2.6. The deconstruction of the tradition of Western metaphysics

The deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence is part of the wider critique of Western metaphysics. The tradition of Western metaphysics refers rather loosely to the tradition of so-called continental philosophy from Plato to the present day. As Silverman claims that “Metaphysics began, at some point – though Derrida does not date its *arché*. He only remarks that it developed out of the exteriority of writing and the exteriority of the signifier.”<sup>371</sup> The deconstruction of Western metaphysics has within it several different aims, such as, for instance, the deconstruction of logocentrism, metaphysics proper and phonocentrism.<sup>372</sup> It is also essentially linked with the dismantling of the concepts of foundation, origin and the proper.

Derrida first presents the term logocentrism (*logocentrisme*) in *De la grammatologie* (1967) and then later also in several other texts. *Logocentrism* means, as it implies, the centrality of *logos*. In the philosophical tradition, *logos* means reason, judgement, concept, definition, ground, relationship, rational faculty, proportion and speech.<sup>373</sup> Derrida uses the term *logos* to a large extent in the same way as Heidegger does in *Sein und Zeit*, where he states that *logos* is an utterance which lets something be seen.<sup>374</sup> But it is also a question about a ‘synthesis’, letting something be seen in its togetherness (*Beisammen*) with something, letting it be seen

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<sup>370</sup> Harvey 1986, 210.

<sup>371</sup> Silverman 1987, 281, 301.

<sup>372</sup> The deconstruction of metaphysics concerns also the phallogocentrism, the ethnocentrism and the egocentrism of Western metaphysics (Cf., Silverman 1987, 286, 303).

<sup>373</sup> Peters 1967, 110. Heidegger 1979, 32/55.

<sup>374</sup> Heidegger 1979, 32-33/56.

as something.<sup>375</sup> Thus according to Silverman for Heidegger the *logos* “is the unifying Reason which gives form and structure to all that *is*. Logos therefore holds the central spot in that it establishes an encompassing totality which brings diversity together under one roof.”<sup>376</sup> Heidegger links *logos* also to the revelation of truth: “The ‘Being-true’ of the *logos* as *aletheia* [‘truth’] means that in saying as showing the entities *of which* one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness; one must let them be seen as something unhidden; that is they must be discovered.”<sup>377</sup> In a Heideggerian spirit, Derrida characterises logocentrism as a tradition where speech has a central roll in the revelation of the sense of Being. In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida states that “...the essence of the *phoné* would immediately proximate to that which within ‘thought’ as *logos* relates to ‘meaning’, it produces it, receives it, speaks it, ‘composes’ it.”<sup>378</sup> According to Silverman in logocentrism “the centrality of Logos is due to its all-pervasiveness, for it is, in that way, the point of reference and return for all that is said, expressed and meant.”<sup>379</sup> Logocentrism is thus also phonocentrism.<sup>380</sup> The latter is formed from the French words *phono*, meaning sound, speech and the phonic element (in turn derived from the Greek word *phone*, meaning 'sound' or 'voice'), and *-centrism* meaning centre (in turn derived from the Latin *centrum*, meaning stationary point of a compass, and the Greek *kentron*, meaning 'needle'); thus meaning the centrality of sound, speech and phonic element. According to Derrida, phonocentrism refers to the “absolute proximity of voice and Being, of

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Silverman 1987, 287.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 33/56. Also Heidegger points out in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1953) that the concept of *logos* means 'word' and 'discourse', and the verb *legein* means 'to speak', as in dialogue or monologue. However, his aim is to show that originally *logos* did not mean speech or discourse, because its basic meaning is 'collection' and 'to collect'. (Heidegger 1987, 124-125) Heidegger considers *logos* as the original collecting of collectedness, the primal gathering principle (ibid, 128).

<sup>378</sup> GRAM 21/11.

<sup>379</sup> Silverman 1987, 286.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid. In *Positions* Derrida states that logocentrism is a wider concept than phonocentrism (POS, 70/51). One can say that Derrida substitutes to some extent the ‘metaphysics of presence’ by the word logocentrism, because the latter would support the determination of the Being of the entity as presence (GRAM, 23/12). In *Positions* Derrida characterises logocentrism also as fundamentally an idealism: “It [logocentrism] is the matrix of idealism. Idealism is its most direct representation, the most constantly dominant force. And the dismantling of logocentrism is simultaneously - a fortiori – a deconstruction of idealism or spiritualism in all its variants” (POS, 69-70/51).

voice and the meaning of Being, of voice and the ideality of meaning.”<sup>381</sup> In other words, the voice has been seen as expressing meaning as such, without the formation of meaning needing a language. Speech and sound are thus thought to be the immediate expression of meaning.

Derrida claims that the tradition of Western philosophy has been governed by the primariness of speech over writing.<sup>382</sup> Speech is traditionally seen to have a more direct and immediate connection to meaning than writing. It is seen as expressing meaning without any mediating factor, that is, without language. Instead, writing has always been seen as requiring a language system. The written text is produced and understood through the rules and grammar of language. From the point of view of communication, writing has been seen as particularly problematic, because in a text the relationship of signs to the referent and the intentions of the author is broken. The written signs carry meaning irrespective of those meanings attached to the signs by the author.

According to Derrida, Plato’s views on writing presented in the dialogue *Phaedrus* have to a large extent directed that philosophical tradition which accords speech to be more primary than writing. Plato, speaking with the voice of Socrates, argues that the written word is only an image of the living word of knowledge which has a soul, that is, speech.<sup>383</sup> In being understood, speech is written into the mind of the student, whereas in the written text a big mistake has occurred, which Socrates describes as follows:

“...[W]riting has one grave fault in common with painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of books. You would imagine that they

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<sup>381</sup> GRAM, 23/12.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 23/11, 31/26; POS, 31/21. Derrida’s view is opposite to that of Heidegger has presented in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (1953). Heidegger claims that the tradition of Western philosophy has been characterised by the centrality of writing, and that language has primarily been understood as written letters. Grammar has been seen to express language in Being. Heidegger states: “The Greeks looked at language from a visual point of view, that is, starting from the written language. (...) Consequently grammar represents language in Being. But through the flow of speech language sweeps away into the impermanent. Thus down to our own time, language has been interpreted grammatically” (Heidegger 1987, 64). Derrida has never commented upon Heidegger’s claim.

<sup>383</sup> Plato 276a.

had intelligence, but if you require any explanation of something that has been said, they preserve one unwavering meaning. And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere, all alike, among those who understand them and among strangers, and do not know to whom they should or should not reply; and if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect the; for the book cannot protect or defend itself.”<sup>384</sup>

In other words, writing produces living images but does not offer directives regarding how to interpret them. They produce and carry meanings irrespective of their narrator. At the same time it also becomes less clear what was really intended to be said with the written text. Every reader forms an interpretation within his/her own context. Instead, the speaking teacher can better convey his/her own thoughts to his/her students, because the context can be discussed and the teacher can aim his/her words in accordance to each pupil. Until the person knows the truth of the particulars of which s/he is speaking, so argues Socrates, they can be disposed in such a way that the simple form of speech may be addressed to the simpler nature, and the complex form to the more complex nature.<sup>385</sup> Derrida pays attention to a contradiction in Plato’s text, which he sees as characteristic in general for the tradition emphasising phonocentrism. Plato presents writing in a paradoxical way as both positive and negative. Socrates tells a story of the genealogy of writing, according to which the inventor of writing was an ancient Egyptian, Theuth. As Theuth presented writing to the king of all Egypt, Thamus, he said, “This discipline (*to mathēma*), my King, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories (*sophōterous kai mnēmonikōterous*): my invention is a recipe (*pharmakon*) for both memory and wisdom.”<sup>386</sup> But at the same time, King Thamus argues, it is a poison because it weakens the memory:

“The fact is that this invention will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it because they will not need to exercise their memories, being able to rely on what is written, using the stimulus of external marks that are alien to themselves rather than, from within, their own unaided powers

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 275d-c.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 277c.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 274e.

to call things to mind. So it is not a remedy, but for reminding that you have discovered.”<sup>387</sup>

Derrida pays attention to the term *pharmakon*, which means both medicine and poison, because it reveals the ambivalence linked with writing within the tradition of phonocentrism. Writing is apparently good for memory, the extension of memory, and at the same time it is essentially bad, it weakens the capacity for remembering, because people support themselves on the written text rather than endeavouring to remember things themselves. Derrida argues that there is a certain play and *chiasmus* prescribed by the ambivalence of the writing as a *pharmakon*. The *pharmakon* is “ambivalent” because it constitutes the medium in which opposites (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing) are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves. Thus the *pharmakon* is the *différance* of difference, the production of difference. The writing as *pharmakon* is a bottomless fund of differences without being anything in itself.<sup>388</sup> Plato's attitude to writing is critical because it produces the opposite effect from what is expected, because it is external to the living, “which is the right-here of the inside”.<sup>389</sup> Written signs do not belong to the order of the *phusis*, since they are not alive, and Plato values the living present over death. Only in the living presence of physis life and memory can truth as *alētheia* appear. In writing the truth takes “shelter in its crypt”, because written signs can represent even after the death of the writer. Thus writing is a kind of simulacrum, the mime of memory, of knowledge, of truth.<sup>390</sup> In Plato's text, writing is described as a kind of orphan who no longer recognises its origin. Thus the specificity of writing is bound to the absence of the father, “the speaking subject”.<sup>391</sup>

Derrida questions the view according to primariness to speech over writing, and even shows that speech requires writing, because speech in fact *is* writing. In other words, *speech requires a linguistic system*.<sup>392</sup> Speaking also requires language, the meanings within which the speaker cannot fully control. Also, in speaking the

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 275a.

<sup>388</sup> DIS, 145-146 /127.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 119 /104.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 120/105.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 86-87/77.

<sup>392</sup> Paradoxically, also Plato proposes a similar idea about the intertwining of speech and writing in having Socrates give the following metaphor: “[A]n intelligent word graven in the soul of the learner.” (ibid., 276a).

“speaking subject” must use an external medium, go through a detour in order to produce thoughts. In order to appear, the external, that is, the graphic, has to be intertwined with the “inner” sphere, that is, with “inner” thoughts. Meanings do not appear transparent in speech, which the listener would understand fully in the same way each time, but rather the meanings are transmitted to the listener via the linguistic element, which s/he interprets in her/his own way in her/his own context. In the speech situation, however, the listener is better able to check what the speaker means. In the discussion situation it is easier to discuss the context, but the complete melting of contexts or an immediate exchange of meanings is not possible.

The deconstruction of the tradition of Western metaphysics is closely linked with the deconstruction of the metaphysics of the proper (*métaphysique de la propre*). The French word *propre* means ‘something belonging to someone’, and ‘meant for someone’, as well as ‘typical’, ‘proper’, ‘suitable’, ‘characteristic’, ‘applicable’ and ‘pure’. *Propre sens* means ‘proper sense’,<sup>393</sup> that is, the ‘actual basic meaning’. Thus the term the *metaphysics of the proper* refers to the attempt to look for the proper, own, actual, pure and original essence. Derrida has characterised the deconstruction of *metaphysics of the proper* as follows:

“Wherever the values of property, of a proper meaning [*sens propre*], of proximity to the self [*proximité à soi*], of etymology, etc. imposed themselves in relation to the body, consciousness, language, writing, etc., I have attempted to analyse the metaphysical desire and presuppositions that were at work.”<sup>394</sup>

In other words, the metaphysics of proper can be characterised by the attempt to value some phenomenon as real and actual if it occurs in consciousness or if it can be bodily experienced. For example, it is generally thought that the current and real meaning manifests itself in consciousness. The metaphysics of proper occurs in another form in the belief that the actual and original meaning of a word can be found in its etymology, that the oldest meaning is the most original and pure meaning. One can say that the metaphysics of proper is linked above all to the belief that things have

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<sup>393</sup> In the English translation of *Positions*, the expression 'propre sens' is translated as 'proper meaning' (For example POS, 54).

<sup>394</sup> POS, 74/54-55.

some ultimate, original and pure essence, which is preserved as the same and self-identically.

The metaphysics of proper is clearly evident, for instance, in Descartes' philosophy, which tries to remove everything unessential and contingent, so that one can study consciousness as pure consciousness. The same project of pure consciousness continues in Husserl's philosophy. In *Die Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie* (1930) it is evident in the continuous use of the word 'pure'; for instance, Husserl speaks about a "pure phenomenology" (*die reine Phänomenologie*) and "the eidos, the pure essence" (*Das Eidos, das reine Wesen*),<sup>395</sup> "the pure Self" (*das reine Ich*)<sup>396</sup> or "the pure consciousness" (*das reine Bewußtsein*).<sup>397</sup>

As Derrida himself emphasises, his critique of the metaphysics of the proper also concerns Heidegger's philosophy. Derrida states in *Positions* that the starting point of his critique of Heidegger has been specifically the latter's term 'propriety'<sup>398</sup> (*Eigentlichkeit*) and the metaphysics of the proper linked with it.<sup>399</sup> In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger presents the conceptual pairs 'propriety' (or authenticity) (*Eigentlichkeit*) and 'impropriety' (or inauthenticity) (*Uneigentlichkeit*):<sup>400</sup> "Dasein is authentically

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<sup>395</sup> Husserl 1976b, 16.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>398</sup> In *Positions* Derrida translates Heidegger's notion of *Eigentlichkeit* unconventionally as 'propre' (proper) or 'propriété' ('propriety'). This term has usually, been translated into English as 'authenticity', and likewise *Uneigentlichkeit* as 'inauthenticity'. According to Silverman "*Eigentlichkeit* is literally own-li-ness or more precisely simply ownness – that which is most *properly oneself*." (Silverman 1987, 306). Thus, Silverman proposes that *eigentlich* could be translated to English as *ownly*, and authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) as *ownness*. He points out that *proprius* in Latin was associated specifically with meanings "one's own, particular, or special". Thus what is proper is not only suitable, fit or acceptable but it belongs to oneself and is particularly "mine". (*Ibid.* 309)

<sup>399</sup> Derrida states that what he writes "does not resemble a text of Heideggerian filiation", that he has marked quite explicitly a departure from the Heideggerian problematic, and that this departure is related to the concepts of *origin* and *fall*. His departure, he states, "intervenes as concerns the value *proper* (propriety, propi-ate, appropriation, the entire family of *Eigentlichkeit*, *Eigen*, *Ereignis*) which is perhaps the most continuous and most difficult thread of Heidegger's thinking. (I will take this occasion to specify, in passing, that I have also explicitly criticised this value of propriety and of original authenticity, and that I even, if it can be put thus, started there (...)" POS, 74/54.

<sup>400</sup> Silverman presents, in *Inscriptions*, an interesting interpretation of Heidegger's notions of *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit*. He claims that "Common to both *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* is the *Eigen*. To be *Eigen* is to be the occurrence

*itself* in the primordial individualization”.<sup>401</sup> This means that the authentic *Being-one's-Self* does not mean substantiality, simplicity and personality as characterized of Selfhood, but rather a thrown entity. Dasein's authentic existence is constituted by an anticipatory resoluteness. Such resoluteness and projecting contain Dasein's primordial Self-constancy and totality.<sup>402</sup> According to Heidegger, “Anticipatory resoluteness, [--] is *Being towards* one's ownmost, distinctive potentiality-for-Being”.<sup>403</sup> Another perspective on authenticity is to take as a starting point Heidegger's analysis of Dasein as a uniquely spatio-temporal Being. The world reveals itself to Dasein historically, that is, spatio-temporally. Dasein is inauthentic if it strives to be universal or objective, because it then would not be in accordance with its way of Being, that is, as something spatio-temporal. When Dasein tries to adapt to the Being of 'the they' (das Man) it falls outside itself. According to Heidegger, “The Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self* – that is, from the self which has been taken hold of in its own way [*eigens ergriffenen*]. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been *dispersed* into 'the they'.”<sup>404</sup> 'The they' define the referential context of significance and the entities are interpreted within the limits which have been established with 'the they's' averageness.<sup>405</sup> In other words, the revealing of collective truth lies in inauthenticity. The authentic revealing of truth is tied to Dasein's own temporal mode of Being (which Heidegger has described with the expressions *Being-towards-death*, *Care (Sorgen)*, *anticipatory resoluteness*).

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(*Ereignis*) between the authentic (*Eigentlichkeit*) and the inauthentic (*Uneigentlichkeit*). [...] Out of the difference between the authentic and the inauthentic (as articulated in *Sein und Zeit*), there is an identity of difference – the *Eigen*. We are our own. What is most proper to us is what is neither ontic nor ontological, neither inauthentic nor authentic, but the difference in-between. We are the *authors* of our own language – language speaks us as authors of our own speech. Our authority is the authenticity which is proper to us, which even becomes our property. Our property cannot stand apart from what is said, nor from the care which we call our own in the saying of it. Our property is not in the material (*hylé*) of the thing – nor is it in its Being. Property (*Er-eignis*) happens as Logos” (Silverman 1987, 290-291). According to Silverman “*Eigentlichkeit* is situated in a difference (*das ontologische Differenz*) and therefore does not have a center as such” (Ibid, 306).

<sup>401</sup> Heidegger 1979, 323/369.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 323/370.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 325/372.

<sup>404</sup> Heidegger 1979, 129/167.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 129/167.

One can see that for Heidegger the valuing of authenticity/propriety is tied to the defining of the foundation and basic structure of Dasein's Being.<sup>406</sup> The authentic/proper is the individual life formed from the own temporal locality, because man's primordial mode of Being is, according to Heidegger, unique, situational and temporal. In his article "Ousia et gramme" (1967) Derrida questions the juxtaposition between authentic and inauthentic (i.e. proper and improper) Being. According to him, the juxtaposition between the original and the derived way of Being is metaphysical. Derrida posits in his critique of the central problem of *Sein und Zeit* the following question: Why define temporality as proper (*propre, eigentlich*) or correspondingly as improper (*impropre, uneigentlich*) when all ethical evaluations have already been put into parenthesis?<sup>407</sup> Instead of emphasising the original value of proper, Derrida states that the original and derived as well as the authentic and inauthentic are determined in relation to one another. In other words, one can say that Heidegger's *destruktion* and Derrida's deconstruction differ from each other in that Heidegger sets out to look for the original propriety of temporality and Derrida in turn tries to show that there is no original propriety. What has been seen as original is historically and culturally defined in relation to what at a particular moment is seen as inauthentic. Gasché lucidly analyses the difference between Heidegger's and Derrida's thoughts, claiming that:

“Heidegger's investigation is into difference *itself*, into the true *essence* of difference, not into difference that would simply be the same as the whole of Being (...) and that would unite what is set forth within it, whereas Derrida's inquiries are concerned with a difference that is not phenomenologizable, that has no 'itself' to itself but that, in its irreducible plurality, ceaselessly differs from itself. In Derrida, this difference links identity based on self-relation to difference, each time in a different

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<sup>406</sup> Heidegger denied that his description of Dasein would contain claims concerning substance. In the article "Brief über den Humanismus" (1967) he makes very critical comments about the defining of man's essence. According to him, humanistic ethics fails in that it is always based on some presupposed definition about man's essence; for instance, that man is ultimately good or selfish. According to Heidegger, man's essence cannot be defined, and instead he proposes only a formal ontological description of the subject. Dasein is only the structure that is common in all that is, and its content and meaning varies through the history of Being.

<sup>407</sup> O&g, 74.

manner, and such a manner that what is held together does not form a whole.”<sup>408</sup>

Furthermore, the difference between Heidegger and Derrida demonstrates the difference between German philosophy before the Second World War and French philosophy after it. Heidegger does not question the unity of Being, its centrality and fundamentality, as the post war French philosophy. Silverman describes the difference between Heidegger and Derrida as being chiasmatic:

“Hence like the difference between the signifier and the signified, which together constitute the oppositional sign unit, the difference between Heidegger and Derrida itself marks the bar, the limit, the barrier between German tradition and French tradition and yet two traditions whose common border both establishes difference and builds a common market, economic strategy, and intellectual collaboration. [...] The line therefore is not only a theoretical line, a critical line, a philosophical line, but also a political and textual line, a line that marks all sorts of differences between Heidegger and Derrida while at the same time bringing them together into a vital relation.”<sup>409</sup>

All in all the deconstruction of the metaphysics of proper is centrally linked also with the deconstruction of different hierarchic binary oppositions. According to Derrida, the juxtaposition of concepts is often hierarchic, where one concept is seen as the original and the other as secondary to it.<sup>410</sup> For example, in *De la grammatologie* Derrida looks at the following hierarchical binary oppositions, of which the first is seen as the proper and original and the latter as secondary and derivative: nature/culture, nature/*logos*, *physis/nomos*, *physis/tékhnē*, speech-writing, and presence/absence. Derrida then analyses the hierarchical binary oppositions in Rousseau’s writings. Typical for Romanticism, Rousseau presents nature as more valuable and fundamental than culture and, following the same logic, he values speech above writing, seeing the latter as a secondary substitute of the former. Derrida analyses Rousseau’s use of the word *substitute*, from which he formulates the idea of the logic of the supplement. According to Derrida, the original is not original in itself,

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<sup>408</sup> Gasché 1986, 87-88.

<sup>409</sup> Silverman 1989, 167.

<sup>410</sup> POS, 56-57/41.

instead it is defined as original in relation to the secondary and improper. He claims that the Western philosophical tradition has been guided by the search for the authentic and original foundation (*arche*). Change and arbitrariness have been seen as inauthentic and permanence as real. So what does Derrida then offer in place of logocentrism, holism and metaphysics proper? I turn to that next.

## 2.7. The closure of metaphysics and the possibility of transgression

Derrida's critique of the tradition of Western metaphysics raises the question of whether Derrida's thinking and deconstruction lead to the transgression of the metaphysics of presence and the tradition of logocentrism. Indeed, can one speak, as John D. Caputo does, about a post-metaphysics coming after metaphysics?<sup>411</sup> Derrida himself has put forward such an interpretation, stating for instance:

“I wished to reach the point of a certain exteriority in relation to the totality of the age of logocentrism. Starting from this point of exteriority, a certain deconstruction of that totality which is also a traced path, of that orb (*orbis*) which is also orbitary (*orbita*), might be broached.”<sup>412</sup>

However, he has strongly emphasised in several different contexts that it is not possible to step over the tradition of the metaphysics of presence or the tradition of logocentrism in any pure transgressive sense.<sup>413</sup> For instance, in *Positions* he writes:

“There *is not* a transgression, if one understands by that a pure and simple landing into beyond of metaphysics, at a point which would be, let us not forget, first of all a point of language or writing. Now, even in aggression or transgressions, we are consorting with a code to which metaphysics is tied irreducibly, such that every transgressive gesture reenclodes us – precisely by giving us a hold on the closure of metaphysics – within this closure.”<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Caputo 1987, 236.

<sup>412</sup> GRAM, 231/161-162.

<sup>413</sup> See, for instance, D&o, 111 and POS, 21/12.

<sup>414</sup> POS, 21/12

Derrida also uses the term closure (*clôture*) in connection with the critique of the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism. The French word *clôture* means fence, wall and gate, that is, areas that are demarcated and enclosed. According to Derrida, it is typical for the tradition of Western philosophy to create metaphysical theories which are enclosed static systems. The closure is born out of the philosophical aim to present a metaphysical explanation that is as coherent, all-encompassing and permanent as possible. Deconstruction opens up fixed conceptual structures and systems, and follows that movement in which the structures have been formed in relationship to what is outside them, and which they close outside themselves and define as secondary and improper. Thus deconstruction brings out the dynamism in the building up of the closure. The closure is indeed a structure which refers outside itself and receives its meaning in relation to this outside. Thus the closure is no circular border surrounding the homogenous area, but rather it is internally heterogeneous and contains openings and contradictions which enable its deconstruction.

But does Derrida offer anything instead of the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism? One can say that he offers a viewpoint about the heterogeneity and processuality of reality. Gasché has said that Derrida's philosophy could best be described by the term 'heterology', because the structures Derrida reveals are in a relation of a certain alterity to the discourse of philosophy.<sup>415</sup> The presuppositions in Derrida's philosophy – the undecidables such as 'arche-trace', 'différance', and 'supplementarity' – may be compared to the founding of founding principles, but their own nature cannot be studied in the phenomenological sense in terms of essence.<sup>416</sup> According to Gasché: "*Heterology* means 'science of' or 'discourse on' the Other".<sup>417</sup> Gasché describes heterology as follows:

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<sup>415</sup> Gasché 1986, 88. He refers with this to the source of reflexivity (self-awareness), which escapes reflection. Gasché claims that "Derrida acknowledges an irreducible doubling of the logical origin, a caesura at the heart of the grounding principles and of the principal conditioning relation of thought. Like Flach, he conceives of this caesura in terms of alterity rather than in terms of negativity and contradiction" (ibid., 94-95).

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 100.

“The impure and unconditional heterology focuses on an alterity that does not lend itself to phenomenologization, that escapes presentation of itself *in propria persona*. This ‘radical’ alterity thus marks a ‘space’ of exteriority at the border of philosophy, whether or not philosophy is explicitly phenomenological.”<sup>418</sup>

In heterology the manifestation of some phenomena or substance is often seen as the interaction between several different factors. The phenomena can thus not be reduced to a single factor, but rather it is born in the meeting between several different phenomena.

Derrida’s deconstructions bring out the undecidability linked with all philosophical systems. Derrida has indeed said that one of the central aims of his critique is specifically Hegel’s term *Aufhebung*.<sup>419</sup> In Hegel’s philosophy of dialectics the term refers to the preservation, overturning and transgression of opposites. The basic idea in dialectics is that opposites are seen to be overturned and united in a higher concept, that is, synthesis.<sup>420</sup> Derrida claims that deconstruction is aimed essentially against Hegelian dialectics:

“In fact, I attempt to bring the critical operation to bear against the unceasing reappropriation of this work of the simulacrum by a dialectics of the Hegelian type (which even idealizes and ‘semantizes’ the value of *work*), for Hegelian idealism consists precisely of a *relève* of the binary oppositions of classical idealism, a resolution of contradiction into a third term that comes in order to *aufheben*, to deny while raising up, while idealizing, while sublimating into an anamnestic interiority (*Erinnerung*), while *interning* difference in a self-presence.”<sup>421</sup>

Derrida criticises Hegelian dialectics for forgetting the difference between opposites. It is idealised and internalised such that the differences between opposites disappear. Classical binary opposites (such as reason/feeling, nature/culture, and

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>419</sup> POS, 59/43.

<sup>420</sup> Hegel presents his view about the dialecticness of Being in, for instance, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1832). I will look at the relationship of Hegel’s dialectics to Derrida’s deconstruction more closely in Chapter 6.2, Deconstruction as double writing.

meaning/expression) are defined as opposites such that the one is defined by closing it outside the other. In Hegelian dialectics the exteriority linked with the differences is then forgotten. For instance, when reason is defined in relation to feeling, it is seen as something different from it; thus, one can claim, for instance, that reason is the ability to understand objectively, realistically and without subjective desires, feelings or hopes. In such a definition of reason, feeling occurs through its very absence and negation. It is a question of chiasmatic logic, where the concept receives its meaning by defining itself as the absence of its opposite. Derrida's notion of deconstruction aims specifically at showing the chiasmaticity between opposites, that is, the simultaneous reference of concepts to each other, and showing the difference between binary oppositions. Hegelian dialectics, on the other hand, strives to find a higher concept, a synthesis, which can explain the opposites within a certain sphere of a concept under which they exist. Thus the movement and the conflict between opposites are deflated. Derrida, however, is interested in how the terms (the binary opposites) receive their meaning in relation to each other. He emphasises the continuous tension, movement and shuttling between opposites influencing the definitions of identities. Indeed, he often speaks about the undecidability of terms and concepts.

Derrida first uses the non-concept of undecidability (*indécidable*) in *Introduction à "L'Origine de la géométrie" de Husserl* (1962).<sup>422</sup> For Derrida the

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<sup>421</sup> POS, 59/43.

<sup>422</sup> Derrida refers in his *Introduction à "L'Origine de la géométrie" de Husserl* and in the article "La double séance" to mathematician Kurt Gödel's article "Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme" (1931). According to Gödel, propositions are contained in sufficiently expressive formal axiomatic systems, which are in that sense undecidable in the systems in question, that is, that neither they nor their negations can be proved within the said systems. The question about the truth of such a proposition remains open in such a system. More precisely, the system can be presented both with interpretations where the proposition in question is true as well as with interpretations where it is false (Gödel 1986 [1931], 195). Even though the formal system in itself does not offer any method of solution for evaluating the truth value of such a proposition, the system nevertheless can have some 'standard' interpretation, in which such an 'undecidable' proposition has an unambiguous truth value, in other words its truth value can be solved with a 'meta-mathematical' observation. Derrida applies Gödel's notion of undecidable propositions contained in axiomatic systems to his own analysis of textuality. One must however note that Gödel's analysis concerns formal axiomatic systems, in connection with which it is possible to separate syntactic observations (the questions about provability of clauses in the system) and semantic observations

term refers to the claim that a concept in a text can be interpreted in at least two different ways, and sometimes with interpretations in opposition to each other (for

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(questions about the truth values of clauses in the interpretations of the system) and to talk about the intended ‘correct’ semantic interpretation of the syntactically defined system. Such a separation cannot be done in connection with natural language and Derrida’s analysis concerns undecidable propositions and concepts contained in natural language and textuality. Gödel’s proof is formal, whereas Derrida’s description of undecidability is semantic, and the question is not about proof but rather about a metaphor through which textuality is outlined. From the point of view of Derrida scholarship it is interesting how Derrida applies the ideas of Gödel’s article. He applies Gödel’s views on undecidability in his critique of totalising thinking and logocentrism and pinpoints undecidable concepts in philosophical texts. However, those terms which Derrida names as “undecidables”, such as *pharmakon*, supplement, hymen, gram etc., are analogies and *only* analogies. The ‘undecidable’ words or propositions contained in philosophical or literary texts are such that the text does not offer any efficient method for solving their meaning. There is no efficient solution from which it is possible to deduce what the word in question means. An example given by Derrida of ‘undecidability’ is found in his analysis in “La pharmacie de Platon” in *La dissémination* of the word *pharmakon*, which occurs in Plato’s *Phaedrus* dialogue. Derrida aims to show that the word *pharmakon* is a kind of undecidable (DIS, 138), which can be given two contradictory interpretations: poison or remedy. Plato’s text itself does not offer a method for solving the contradiction. The Greek word *pharmakon* can be interpreted as either poison or remedy, such that the interpretation decisively changes Plato’s views on writing. If *pharmakon* is interpreted as a poison, Plato says that writing is poison because we no longer rely on memory. On the other hand, if *pharmakon* is interpreted as a remedy writing would be seen as medicine, thanks to which we no longer need to rely on memory. Thus the text is seen as being analogous to a formal system, and any sentence, the truth value of which cannot be ascertained on the basis of the text, or equally a singular word, the meaning of which cannot be ascertained from the text, would correspond to the undecidable proposition in the system. Analogously, meta-mathematical observations would correspond to the case where other texts would be searched in the interpretation, with the help of which the issue could be resolved (or one would ask directly from the author, if s/he is alive, or one would examine “reality”, etc.). Through this way of thinking one would get to see more closely the analogous relationship between Gödel’s theorem of undecidables and Derrida’s textual undecidability. Thus one might think that when some unclear part of the text has been solved, that its explanation could then be added to the text. One could hope that in going about it in this way, one would finally end up with a fully unambiguous text that can be interpreted only in one way. Gasché’s results show that this does not happen in connection with formal systems. No matter how many such clauses would be added to the system, which are undecidable in the original system and which in semantic observation can be shown to be true, there would nevertheless exist such true propositions that cannot be proved within the system and which, in other words, within the system would remain undecidable. Analogously, one can claim that there can never be a final interpretation to a text, and if a new text were to be written that would contain the original text and a ‘complete’ explanation of it, then in the new text there would still be parts which would require new explanations.

instance, as we saw above, *pharmakon* meaning either poison or medicine). The undecidable unites and separates these different interpretations and levels. Derrida calls, for instance, the terms *différance*, *supplement*, *gram* and *pharmakon* 'undecidables'. He says of the undecidability of *différance* that "I have attempted to distinguish *différance* (whose *a* marks, among other things, its productive and conflicting characteristics) from Hegelian difference",<sup>423</sup> and "If there were a definition of *différance*, it would be precisely the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian *relève wherever* it operates."<sup>424</sup> Thus undecidability refers to a conflict without synthesis (*Aufhebung*). Pasanen does indeed characterise as 'undecidable' those terms which have a double meaning, and because of the excess of meaning their logical status is undecidable and conflictual.<sup>425</sup> Undecidability can be characterised also as a kind of acting in-between, as an open and incomplete meaning.<sup>426</sup> Undecidability refers to the chiasmatic relation between different othernesses. These 'different' (even heterogeneous) elements cannot be studied without simultaneous conflicts, and one element will always appear as conflicting when studied in the system typical for an other. At the same time, these conflicting elements require each other and, similarly to language and meaning, they cannot be thought of separately. They refer to each other and require each other when closing the other outside itself as a contradiction. In *Force de loi* (1994) Derrida states that the undecidable not only wavers between two contradictory and carefully defined

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<sup>423</sup> POS, 59/43.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 55/41.

<sup>425</sup> Pasanen 1988, 109.

<sup>426</sup> According to David Hoy, Derrida takes the term 'undecidable' into use more in the Freudian than the Gödelian sense. Thus, for Derrida undecidability refers to two meanings contained by individual words. According to Hoy, Derrida derives the ambiguity of the undecidable rather from the syntactic level, whereas, for instance, Julia Kristeva derives it from the semantic level (Hoy 1985, 54-55). Hoy is correct, in that for Kristeva the undecidability of the semiotic *khôra* is about semantic undecidability on a deeper level than in Derrida's texts. However, one can argue that Derrida's notion of undecidability—does not belong only structurally or only on the level of syntax, but the question is also of a semantic undecidability, which is due to the endless intertextuality of the texts and, on the other hand, to the ambiguity linked with the words themselves. Derrida himself has claimed in a footnote in *Positions*, that "the 'undecidable', which is not contradiction in the Hegelian form of contradiction, situates, in a rigorously Freudian sense, the *unconscious* of philosophical contradiction, the unconscious which ignores contradiction to the extent that contradiction belongs to the logic of speech, discourse, consciousness, presence,

meanings and rules, but also it is an experience of what is alien and heterogeneous in regards to the sphere of calculations and rules. Nevertheless, it must submit to the impossible solution while at the same time keeping account of justice and the rule.<sup>427</sup> Derrida speaks in this context about the undecidability of the law and the individual case. No single law can define all individual cases, because then it would no longer be a general law. At the same time, the individual case does not appear as such except in relation to the law. For instance, when we aim to be just we have to face the undecidability which is born from the justice that aims for legal applicability and the uniqueness of the individual case. Thus ethical activity requires taking into account both the uniqueness of the individual situation and the generality of the law, shuttling between these two incommensurables, both of which must be required in order for the activity to be just.

In his doctoral thesis *Atopologies of Deconstruction* (2000) Jari Kauppinen explains how Derrida has elaborated the idea of atopologies in his writings. He describes atopology through the term *khôra*, which Derrida adopted from Plato. In *khôra* time and space come together, so that the question is about the spatiality of space or, using Derrida's term, spacing, that is, the becoming-space of time, and becoming-time of space.<sup>428</sup> It is a question of the impossible place and spatiality, deconstruction and deferred/differing origins. Furthermore, it refers to "something singular, an event like a circumcision, the circular movement of an in-scription that happens at once, both in the temporal and spatial sense of a turning."<sup>429</sup> One can indeed say that Derrida outlines the 'origin' behind philosophical thinking, systems and metaphysics, which is not actually an origin but a dividing, differing space, the space of the 'forming of form', which is not actually any space before its formation in philosophy, thinking and language. This 'preceding' precedes presence and absence. Therefore 'the non-origin of the origin' precedes linguistic articulation, even though 'it' actually becomes known through linguistic expression. At the same time, it defers and differs from the linguistic expression. In this regard, Derrida's thinking differs most radically from the philosophical tradition: the origin cannot be reached through philosophical reflection, so that it would always remain the same. Instead, the

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truth, etc." (POS, 60/101). This description of 'undecidable' would suggest that Derrida's notion is quite close to that of Kristeva's.

<sup>427</sup> FI, 24; LV, 22.

<sup>428</sup> Kauppinen 2000, 14.

reflection aimed at the origin produces the origin again as deferred from it. Derrida thus questions the origin of presence, the search for origins, permanence and self-identity in his critique of the metaphysics of presence. In the next chapter I will look more closely at Derrida's views on meaning and language.

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

### 3. The deconstruction of meaning

One of Derrida's best known and most oft-quoted claims is "*There is nothing outside of the text*" (*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*).<sup>430</sup> This statement has even been seen to characterise the main theme and argument in his writings. It has thus been thought that according to Derrida everything is linguistic and, as such, a part of general textuality. It is possible to isolate several other similarly provocative statements in his writings. He has said, for instance, that "(t)here is no conceptual realm beyond language which would allow a term to have a univocal semantic content over and above its inscription in language."<sup>431</sup> In this context he often speaks of writing (*écriture*). In *De la grammatologie* he claims that "... writing is... the condition of the possibility of ideal objects and therefore of scientific objectivity."<sup>432</sup> Writing, for Derrida however, is not only a requirement for ideal objects and knowledge, for it also has an effect on the level of perception. For instance, in his article "Freud et la scène de l'écriture" he claims that "Writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself [is conscious of itself]",<sup>433</sup> in other words, writing also influences the constitution of perception. Derrida's claims often raise questions, such as: How can Derrida deny the semantic content outside language? What does Derrida mean by saying that ideal and conceptual objects require writing? What does Derrida mean by the term 'writing' if it replaces perception before one can be aware of the perception?

It would seem that Derrida denies the influence of experience in the formation of meaning, and claims that everything is linguistic. Such a view is also supported by his comments about the subject. For instance, in the interview "Deconstruction and the Other" he criticises the view of the subject as a metalinguistic substance, as an identity outside language, as well as the notion of the subject as a pure self-present

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<sup>430</sup> GRAM, 227/158. Translation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Derek Attridge translates the sentence as "There is no outside-the-text" (Attridge 1992, 102). Spivak also offers the alternative translation "There is no outside-text" in parenthesis. Attridge states in the footnote of his translation that this is one of the best known and most misunderstood sentences. According to him, the sentence does not mean that there would be nothing outside the text, but rather that there is nothing that would completely avoid the effects of general textuality and *différance* (ibid., 102).

<sup>431</sup> D&o, 111.

<sup>432</sup> GRAM, 42/27.

<sup>433</sup> F&scé, 332/224.

*cogito*. What we understand by the subject is, according to him, based on a linguistic description.<sup>434</sup> With these comments he would seem to reject the experiential subject revealed in self-reflection, and to argue that such a subject is only a linguistic fiction. Such claims easily lead one to think that Derrida is claiming that there is nothing outside the language. In the above interview, however, he clarifies the aims of his research as follows:

"I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language. It is in fact saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the 'other' and the 'other of language'."<sup>435</sup>

Derrida's comment raises the question of whether it is possible to interpret his central terms as referring to something else than language. He seldom uses the word 'language' (*le langage*). Instead he uses the expressions 'writing' (*écriture*), arche-writing (*arkhi-écriture*), *différance*, the play of difference (*le jeu des différences*), *text*, as well as 'trace' (*la trace*): these do not perhaps refer only to language, but describe perhaps rather some movement and otherness beyond language, which also affect the use of language. Thus one of my aims in the present study has been to examine how language-centred Derrida's views of meanings, experience and the subject really are. To what extent does he share the Wittgensteinian notion that "*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*"?<sup>436</sup> Or is it possible to find in Derrida's writings a description of the *otherness* of language? Does he completely reject the view about the formation of non-linguistic meaning? With these questions in mind, I examine the question of the relation between subjectivity (intentionality, perception, experience) and language. Is language for Derrida just a tool with the help of which one transmits thoughts (i.e. communication) or is he supporting a non-instrumentalist view of language as a condition for thinking? To what extent is language expression and to what extent is it a prerequisite to thinking?

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<sup>434</sup> "The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language" (D&o, 125).

<sup>435</sup> D&o, 123.

<sup>436</sup> Wittgenstein 1966, 114/115 § 5.6.

The term 'language' refers in the present study to spoken and written language as defined by Saussure (via his students' transcriptions) in *Cours de la linguistique général* (1916). Saussure's view of language can be seen as a good starting point, firstly because Derrida's view on language has to a large extent been formed through Saussure's ideas, and secondly because Saussure made a very systematic description of linguistic language. According to Saussure, language is a social institution based on an agreement which the members of society have approved of.<sup>437</sup> It is not only expressions, letters, sounds and combinations of sounds, for words themselves already carry meaning. Language is thus a system of signs, where signs express ideas.<sup>438</sup> The basic concept of Saussurean linguistics is the sign (*signé*), which is formed from the concept (or signified) (*signifié*) and the 'sound image' (or signifier) (*signifiant*). The connection between the 'signifier' and 'signified' is socially institutionalised, in other words, the connection between the 'signifier' side of the sign and some 'signified' depends upon an agreement. Likewise for Derrida, language is not mainly expression, material or empirical letters but signs formed from the unity between signifier and signified.

However, both Saussure's and Derrida's views of language raise the following questions: What is the relationship of linguistic meaning to the experience of the subject and to subjective meanings? Is it even possible, from their viewpoint, to speak about experiential and subjective meaning? If one accepts the subjective and experiential meaning, then what is the relationship between language and experience? What actually occurs in thinking? What is the nature of the invisible non-material images and representations?

The term 'meaning' is one of the most problematic concepts in the history of philosophy, because it refers to several things: to subjective, grammatical and contextual meanings.<sup>439</sup> Theories of meaning vary depending on whether one is dealing with the internal or external meanings of the subject. Is the meaning a property of the subject or of language? One encounters several different concepts of meaning in Derrida's writings, each depending on which philosophers' views he is

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<sup>437</sup> Saussure 1972, 37/76.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>439</sup> For example, according to Veikko Rantala, it is possible to differentiate between at least five different views of what is meant by meaning: 1. general, public grammatical, conventional, literary; 2. private, of the speaker or writer; 3. contextual; 4. primary; and 5, secondary (Rantala 1994, 161-163).

analysing. The most common of these concepts is 'sense' (*sens*, *Sinn*), 'reference' (*Bedeutung*),<sup>440</sup> meaning-to-say (*vouloir-dire*)<sup>441</sup> signification (*signification*) and transcendental signified (*le signifié transcendantal*). Derrida has analysed mainly Husserl's views on meaning (as 'sense', in German *Sinn*). Thus, also this study will refer to the word 'meaning' as 'sense' in the Husserlian connotation of the word. Derrida states:

“All experience is the experience of meaning (*Sinn*). Everything that appears to consciousness, everything that is for consciousness in general, is meaning. Meaning is the phenomenality of the phenomenon.”<sup>442</sup>

In other words, the term sense (*sens*) refers to the inner experiential (*noetic-noematic*) meaning of the subject, which does not require language. Husserl uses Frege's differentiation between the concepts of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* in a slightly different way. While Frege's term *Sinn* means the sense of linguistic expression and the term *Bedeutung* means its referent,<sup>443</sup> Husserl uses the expression *Sinn* when talking about

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<sup>440</sup> In the translation of different German philosophers, *Bedeutung* is variously translated as 'meaning', 'signification' or 'reference'. Derrida mentions that in *Logische Untersuchungen* Husserl rejected Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. POS, 30/42.

<sup>441</sup> In Alan Bass' translation of *Positions*, 'vouloir-dire' is translated simply as 'meaning' (e.g. "What is 'meaning'", POS 5, 98) or meaning-to-say (POS, 14). With the notion of *vouloir-dire* Derrida wants to emphasize that Edmund Husserl's notion of *Bedeutung* carries with it the connotation "will-to-say".

<sup>442</sup> POS 30/42.

<sup>443</sup> Frege presents in his article "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" an example which has become classic, of how the terms *Sinn* (sense) and *Bedeutung* (reference) differ from one another. The proper names 'evening star' and 'morning star' have two different *Sinn* but the same *Bedeutung*; that is, the planet Venus (Frege 1967, 144). In other words, the same *Bedeutung* (reference) can have several different *Sinn*-s (senses). Thus, one can say in a generalising way that the term *Sinn* refers with Frege to the subject's internal meanings and the term *Bedeutung* to the referent of the linguistic expression. In other words, the deeper interpretation of Frege's concepts, which for instance Haaparanta has presented in *Frege's Doctrine of Being* (1985), emphasises that Frege's *Sinn* is cognitive. (Haaparanta 1985, 64). Thus, for Frege, *Sinn* is not, however, primarily the *Sinn* of names but the *Sinn* of reference. The same object can be given in different ways, in which case different *Sinns* correspond to different ways of knowing the object. Thus the object can have in principle an endless amount of names, which correspond to different forms of presentation about the object (ibid. 63-65). The term *Bedeutung*, on the other hand, means the 'reference', the object (*Gegenstand*). According to Haaparanta, Frege makes this differentiation so that it

meaning in its most common meaning, that is, all experience is meaning, and *Bedeutung*<sup>444</sup> for the object of the linguistic statement. In other words, *Sinn* refers to the prepredicative and *Bedeutung* to the linguistic meaning.<sup>445</sup> In *La voix et le phénomène* Derrida presents the term *vouloir-dire* (translated into English as 'meaning-to-say' or simply as 'meaning') as a translation of Husserl's term *Bedeutung*. According to Derrida, a transcendental voluntarism is characteristic of Husserl's concept of *Bedeutung*: sense (*sens*) wants to become signified.<sup>446</sup> In other words, according to Derrida, Husserl's concept of *Bedeutung* describes how the internal experience and sense (*Sinn*) want to become expressed in language and guide the use of language.

In Saussure's linguistics the term 'signification' refers to the experiential meaning which requires essentially language in order for it to be formed into meaning. The concept of signification occurs in Derrida's texts mainly in connection with his analysis of Saussure's texts. Saussure stated that the internal psychological meaning of the subject, which also has a connection to the brain, is called signification.<sup>447</sup> The *transcendental signified*, on the other hand, is a term proposed by Derrida, which means (as the words imply) the content or the internal meaning of the subject existing in pure consciousness.

I call a linguistic system requiring meaning a 'linguistic meaning'. Due to the influence of language, the linguistic meaning is different than the prelinguistic *sense*. This raises the question, however, of the internal experiential meaning of the subject, which is formed through the linguistic system. There is also a meaning contained in language, which is not in the consciousness of any empirical subject. The meaning contained in language is formed from those social conventions and agreements that define how language is used and what each word means. This level of meaning is

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would be possible to study intentional contexts in the framework of extensional logic (ibid., 71).

<sup>444</sup> POS, 30/42.

<sup>445</sup> However, this interpretation of Husserl's notions of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung* is one important interpretation, but not the only one. For example, in *Logische Untersuchungen* Husserl presents another pair of notions to describe meaning; *Bedeutung* and *Gegenstand*. Thus he uses in this context the term *Bedeutung* in another meaning which is close to Frege's notion of *Sinn*. (See Haaparanta 1985).

<sup>446</sup> V&P, 37.

<sup>447</sup> Saussure 1972, 98/131.

upheld by the characterisations in dictionaries and grammar. Saussure speaks in this regard of the linguistic system (*le langage*).

In *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1939) Husserl presents a theory about the prepredicative experience (*Erfahrung*) which precedes judgement (*Urteil*):

“The theory of prepredicative experience, of precisely that which gives in advance the most original substrates in objective self-evidence, is the proper first element of the phenomenological theory of judgement. The investigation must begin with the prepredicative consciousness of experience and, going on from there, pursue the development of self-evidences of higher levels.”<sup>448</sup>

The prepredicative experience refers in Husserl specifically to the level of *noematic* meaning, intentional objects (*noema*) preceding language, which language tries to represent. Thus, following Husserl’s argument, I shall consider how Derrida answers the question of the role of prepredicative experience in the formation of judgements. I call the intentional objects preceding language *the prepredicative experience*, as Husserl suggested. I use in particular the term *sense (sens)* or *transcendental signified* to refer to “meanings” existing on the prepredicative level of experience. One debatable point is indeed whether one can speak at all of meaning on the prelinguistic level, or whether the contents of the experience on the prelinguistic level are merely images and associations. One can claim, for instance, that associations and images are only a preliminary stage of meaning and it is only language that produces the manifestation of meaning. This is also linked with the question of how meaning is defined, and whether meaning is subjective or intersubjective. Does meaning require language, thus making the prepredicative experience intersubjective?

It has also been proposed that understanding meaning requires interpreting something as something,<sup>449</sup> in which case images and associations do not require understanding the meaning of something. We can have an image, for instance, of a hammer-shaped object, yet not know what the object is used for. Thus we have an image of a hammer, but only when we understand what we can do with a hammer

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<sup>448</sup> Husserl 1972, 21/ Husserl 1973, 27.

<sup>449</sup> Husserl and Heidegger, among others, have claimed that the understanding of the meaning of something entails interpreting it *as* something (*als etwas*) (cf. Heidegger 1979, 68/97; Husserl 1984, 592 § 15).

does the meaning of the hammer become apparent to us. This raises the question of whether there can be an interpretation about the meaning of something without language. For instance, according to both Husserl and Heidegger, there can be some prepredicative recognition of *something as something* (*etwas als etwas*).<sup>450</sup> We can interpret a hammer as a hammer based on, for example, visual experience. Language, however, brings a large store of meanings which are only revealed with language. Such a concept of meaning, which requires interpreting some phenomenon *as* something, makes possible the principle difference between the content and meaning of consciousness. The content of consciousness is only a perception, observation, image or association formed from experience. Understanding the meaning, on the other hand, requires interpreting the content of the experience *as* something. Derrida, however, does not focus on this kind of difference between meaning and the content of consciousness gained from experience. I would say that it is possible to find another kind of differentiation between meaning and the prepredicative level, which I will look at more closely in the following chapters.

My aim here is develop different interpretations from Derrida's claims, and to consider the relationships between them. Derrida's writings offer at least four different interpretations of the relationship between language and prepredicative experience: 1) A radically language-centred interpretation of meaning; 2) An interpretation emphasising the supplementary relationship between language and prepredicative experience; 3) An interpretation emphasising the level of the prepredicative level of experience; 4) An interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of the formation of meaning. These highlight the differences of interpretation of Derrida's writings in relation to what is regarded as the most important factor in the

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<sup>450</sup> For example, Husserl states in *Logische Untersuchungen* II, 2: "We recognize an object, e.g. as an ancient Roman milestone, its scratchings as weather-worn inscriptions, although no words are aroused at once, or indeed at all. We recognize a tool as a drill, but its name will not come back to us, etc." (Husserl 1984, §15, 592/ Husserl 1970 §15, 222) In other words, according to Husserl, we recognise something as a Roman road stone, and its grooves as weathered writing, even though they don't look like words at all, and the tool as a drill even though we can't think of the word for it. Similarly, Heidegger claims in *Sein und Zeit* that there is no such pure and 'proximally given' entities as 'Things': rather 'Things' are understood in one's concerned dealings. Heidegger calls such 'Things' 'equipment' (*Zeug*): "Equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to...' [*etwas um-zu...*"]". A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to', such as serviceability, conduciveness,

formation of meaning. My aim is to look at these different emphases in interpretation through Derrida's own arguments and to discuss the limitations of various interpretations as well as the new insights they bring forth.

### 3.1. A radically language-centred interpretation of meaning

By *radically language-centred interpretation* I mean the notion that the manifestation and existence of meaning requires language, and that meaning does not exist without linguistic expression. Viewpoints leading to the *radically language-centred interpretation of meaning* can be found in Derrida's writings, for instance in connection with the critique of the transcendental signified<sup>451</sup> in *Positions*.<sup>452</sup> By *transcendental signified* Derrida means a meaning or content existing in consciousness that would exist irrespective of language. The transcendental signified does not refer to other signifieds nor does its existence require the existence of any kind of linguistic expression. It transcends the chain of signifiers and at a specific moment no longer acts as a signifier itself.<sup>453</sup> According to Derrida, the transcendental signified is linked to the notion that the signifier is expression (expressivity) only. Thus it is thought that meaning precedes linguistic expression as a transcendental signified outside language. Derrida particularly criticises the view that has dominated phenomenology and semiotics about the prelinguistic and pre-semiotic layeredness of

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usability, manipulability. In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an *assignment* or *reference* of something to something." (Heidegger 1979, 68/97).

<sup>451</sup> Derrida's term *transcendental signified* does not accord with the set of terms regarding transcendental philosophy proposed by Kant, because the question is not about forms of consciousness, but rather the contents of consciousness. The *transcendental signified* refers to the contents of consciousness not to a meaning outside consciousness (transcendent). Saussure's term 'signified', on the other hand, refers to the ideal side of a sign, its meaning. Derrida's term can be interpreted from the meaning of the word transcendental as 'being above', so that the former is seen as being the highest point in a chain of signifiers, so that it cannot signify anything. It is a kind of ultimate ideal meaning which cannot be an expression for another meaning.

<sup>452</sup> Derrida presents a systematic critique of the transcendental signified in *De la grammatologie* and *L'écriture et différence*. One can more clearly derive the language-centred interpretation of the critique of the transcendental signified from Derrida's statements in the interviews published as *Positions* than from his other works.

meaning which precedes the signification process or system. The signification process is then seen as only bringing out the meaning, transporting it, translating it, communicating, embodying or expressing it because language is only interpreted as expression.<sup>454</sup>

According to Derrida, presenting language as expression is a kind of structural delusion produced by language, culture and the point of time.<sup>455</sup> He sees similarities between this structural delusion and Kant's view of transcendental illusion. Thus the meaning as a pure phenomenon of consciousness would be a transcendental illusion, in other words a delusion of consciousness. According to Derrida, it is impossible to fully detach oneself from this structural delusion, because it is impossible to avoid the influence of language, which makes possible the fact that language presents itself as an expressive re-presentation, a translation on the outside of what was constituted inside.<sup>456</sup> This structural delusion is born from *différance*, which produces the difference between signified and signifier, even though ultimately, according to Derrida, "the signified is inseparable from the signifier, that the signified and signifier are the two sides of one and the same production."<sup>457</sup> In other words, in the process of the formation of meaning the contents and expression are formed simultaneously, but immediately after this process the content and expression separate from each other. Meaning withdraws and the same expression can receive endlessly new meanings.

Derrida claims that translating a language supports the notion of an autonomous meaning that would exist irrespective of linguistic expression.<sup>458</sup> He has analysed problems linked with language translation, particularly in his article "Les tours de Babel". According to Derrida, in translation the question is not only of replacing one linguistic expression with another synonymous one, but also about transformation. The whole text changes when it is translated into another language. The translation is a new interpretation and thought structure of the original text. Also

<sup>453</sup> POS, 30/19.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 44/31.

<sup>455</sup> Michael Reddy has proposed a similar idea in his article "The Conduit of Metaphor" (1979). He claims that the way in which we speak about meanings is guided by certain metaphors. These metaphors make us imagine that meanings are ideal entities and that linguistic expressions are containers. Thus, communication appears as transmitting.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid. 45/33.

<sup>457</sup> POS, 28/18.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 31/20.

listening and reading is translation work in which the whole meaning of the text is transformed and in which the whole text changes.

In *The Tain of the Mirror* (1986) Rodolphe Gasché presents the view that Derrida's term *writing* can be interpreted as quasi-transcendental.<sup>459</sup> According to Gasché, transcendentals are not phenomena of consciousness but they act as if they were.<sup>460</sup> From Gasché's interpretation, one can derive the view that language as such is not transcendental but rather that it begins to act within consciousness such that it produces the existence of the phenomena of consciousness, particularly meaning. Meaning can thus be interpreted as some kind of quasi-transcendental. But meaning as such is not the content in consciousness before language; rather, meaning begins to function as a phenomenon of consciousness along with the development of the linguistic reference system.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Kant brought the term 'transcendental' into philosophical terminology in a systematic form in *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* (1781). By this he means the structure of consciousness of the subject, the formal requirements of handling knowledge (categories) and the formal requirements of observation. Kant begins the philosophical tradition stemming from an ontological differentiation according to which what we know is different from how things are (*das Ding an sich selbst*). He also brings into the philosophical tradition the view about the formulation of knowledge resulting from the structure of the subject. One can see Husserlian phenomenology as a continuation of this tradition, in trying to ascertain the influence of the transcendental subject in the formation of meaning. Generalising, one can say that the task of transcendental philosophy is to critically study our ability for knowledge, above all setting its limits and area of expertise. Its aim is to study the *a priori* conditions of knowledge and the abilities and functions of human consciousness.

<sup>460</sup> Gasché 1986, 316.

<sup>461</sup> One must note, however, that Gasché's views on quasi-transcendentality can be interpreted differently if one starts with his claim that he bases his views of quasi-transcendentality on Heidegger's view on transcendence, rather than on Kant's transcendent forms. Gasché differentiates between 'quasi-transcendentals' and 'immanent transcendentals'. He uses the latter term to describe those existentialist structures which constitute Being understood and interpreted as Being. Immanent transcendentals are by nature essentially finite, from which it follows that they deal with questions concerning the essence of Being. Thus, they preserve the difference between empirical and *a priori* order (Gasché 1985, 317). Quasi-transcendentals, on the other hand, lie at the edge of the difference between the transcendental and empirical (*ibid.*, 317). In other words, quasi-transcendentals are not in the Kantian sense *a priori* prerequisites for knowledge, that is, properties of pure consciousness (transcendental subject) nor in the Heideggerian sense structures for understanding *Dasein*. Instead, they are prerequisites for the possibility and impossibility of the conceptual difference between the subject and the object (*Dasein* and Being) (*ibid.*, 316). Thus writing, as a quasi-transcendental phenomenon, can be interpreted as that

In her article "Gasché on de Man and Derrida" (1992) Outi Pasanen criticises Gasché's interpretation of Derrida's central terms as quasi-transcendentals. According to Pasanen, Gasché modifies Derrida's philosophy so that it follows transcendental philosophy.<sup>462</sup> According to her, most of the claims in *The Tain of the Mirror* about quasi-transcendentals cannot be interpreted as anything but the neutralisation of language, which therefore allows one to present Derrida's philosophy as being in line with traditional philosophy.<sup>463</sup> As I myself see it, Gasché's interpretation of language as quasi-transcendental is not a neutralisation of the effect of language in the manner of a transcendental philosophy, but rather it brings forth the uniqueness of language, that is, the fact that language produces the idealities of meaning and the subject.<sup>464</sup>

The radically language-centred interpretation of thinking emphasises the influence of language in formulating meanings and thoughts, but it also has far-reaching consequences for the concepts of subjectivity and consciousness. It is possible to think that the consciousness of the subject (transcendental subjectivity) is born via the reference relationship contained in the linguistic sign. The actual linguistic sign *consciousness* produces the ideality of consciousness such that it is thought that consciousness refers to some ideality that is not concretely present. Such an abstract ideality can be thought of and understood via language, so that it is thought to exist in a similar way as concrete entities represented by language. In other words, we deduce that abstract and ideal entities are similar spiritual substances as the representations of concrete entities (such as, for instance, representations of a house,

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which enables one to make the conceptual difference between the subject and the object. Thus, it can be seen that quasi-transcendentals are concerned specifically with the possibility of the difference between the subject and the object. They do not exist in consciousness or in the world. They produce the sphere of transcendence as something differing from the objects, but they themselves are not transcendental. These characterisations of quasi-transcendentals refer mainly to the non-concepts of *différance* and *trace*.

<sup>462</sup> Pasanen 1992b, 111.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>464</sup> On the other hand, Gasché's characterisation of *différance*, trace and repetition as infrastructures makes Derrida's philosophy into a transcendental philosophy which does not describe the influence language has on the formation of meaning. Pasanen's critique of Gasché is in that sense well founded, in that he characterises infrastructures as prerequisites for structures and meanings characteristic of continental transcendental philosophy. More recent research has tried to show that also linguistic transcendental philosophy can exist. It is argued, for instance, that Wittgenstein made such linguistic transcendental philosophy. See Carver 1994, 13-14, 282; Pihlström 1998, 255.

table, chair, etc.). Derrida's claim in the interview with Richard Kearney supports this: "The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language"<sup>465</sup> In other words, descriptions of consciousness and the subject always occur via language, and throughout the history of language the subject has usually been described as a meta-linguistic substance or identity, a *cogito* existing in itself. Derrida, however, claims that these descriptions of the subject are always already descriptions made through language. Consciousness and the subject cannot be approached without linguistic descriptions, which also affect the understanding of these idealities.

The language-centred view of thinking has been evident during the 20th century in the thinking of various philosophers, linguists and psychologists. Saussure raised the issue of the influence of language in the formation of meaning already at the beginning of the 20th century. According to him, from a psychological point of view our thinking is a structureless and formless mass without verbal expressions. Signs enable ideas to be distinguished from one another in a clear and permanent way. No idea can be formed and nothing can be differentiated in advance of the linguistic system.<sup>466</sup> Likewise, Wittgenstein highlighted the importance of language for thinking: "A thought is a proposition with a sense."<sup>467</sup> He thus proposes that philosophy "must set limits to what can be thought; and in doing so, to what cannot be thought".<sup>468</sup> However, Wittgenstein links thinking to language in a different way than Derrida. Wittgenstein does not so much think about the essential nature or relationship of the prepredicative experience to language, but rather for him thinking is a matter of meaningful sentences corresponding to the state of affairs in the world.<sup>469</sup>

Several studies have also been carried out within empirical psychology concerning the influence of language on thinking. One can mention, for instance, Jean Piaget's observations about the development of the child's thinking and the structure

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<sup>465</sup> D&o, 125.

<sup>466</sup> Saussure 1972, 110.

<sup>467</sup> "Der Gedanke ist der Sinnvolle Satz." (Wittgenstein 1966, 34/35 §4).

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 48/49 §4.114.

<sup>469</sup> According to Wittgenstein: "A *state of affairs* (a state of things) is combination of objects (things)." (ibid., 6/7 § 2.01). However, the term *a state of affairs* (*Der Sachverhalt*) describes the *possible* relationship between entities, while the term *fact* (*Die Tatsache*) already contains the notion that some state of affair exists in the world (ibid., 6/7 § 2).

of language. Also empirical observations about so-called wild children found living alone in isolated locations and children who are born deaf and who have not had any common language with other people support the views about the influence of language for thinking. Neurologist Oliver Sacks has described in *Seeing Voices* (1989) how the conceptual thinking of the deaf and dumb only develops through sign language. Congenitally deaf people were still in the mid-19th century seen as mentally retarded, because a person without language could not participate in culture and share its way of perceiving reality in the same way as a person with language. Sacks states that those congenitally deaf people who have not learnt sign language lack a sense of history and with it the ability to see the autobiographical and historical dimension in their own life.<sup>470</sup> Thinking and observations are then limited to the near environment only,<sup>471</sup> while the use of imagery and hypothetical thinking and even the ability to understand questions are completely lacking. Sacks' work shows in a very concrete way how language affects thinking and even produces ways of thinking. Sack's book, however, also contains evidence of writings by deaf and dumb people where they tell about their own thinking *before* acquiring language, which would thus testify to the existence of thinking which does not require language. Such non-linguistic thinking would occur mainly via imagery.

The claims Derrida puts forward in *Positions* differ, however, from general language-centredness, in that he would seem to deny the existence of any kind of layer of prepredicative meaning. The question arises, however, of how radical and deep language-centredness is. Language-centredness in its most radical form, which *Positions* could be argued as representing, often causes problems. It seems to reject the experiential influence forming individual meanings. Thus the question arises: what does language refer to, or what does language tell about? Radical language-centredness is not able to explain the rather common experience of prepredicative experiences, intentions and intuitions, which are difficult to express through language. We have to somehow search for a linguistic expression for a prepredicative intuition. Radical language-centredness also seems to be in conflict with the notion that when we use language in speaking and writing we feel that some internal intention or intuition guides us. If language is the basis for everything then what makes our speech or writings meaningful? Usually we feel that we speak or write about some

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<sup>470</sup> Sacks 1989, 52.

experience or thought which precedes language. Through language we try on the one hand to clarify the contents of our mind and on the other hand to transmit them to others.

Radical language-centredness denies the subject's role as the user of language. According to this view, we don't use language, but rather language uses us. Such a view easily leads to the image that language is an incomprehensible machinery existing outside the subject, which produces thoughts for man, who has no thoughts without language. Language on the other hand produces thoughts according to its own laws irrespective of the subject's experience. It is possible to imagine such a view of the relationship between language and the subject, but in practice it removes all meaningfulness from the use of language, discussion and writing. Such a view of language removes the personal responsibility, the pursuit for truthfulness and significance. Language would thus have no connection to the experiencing subjectivity. This changes the view of communication, because in such a scenario language is not used in order to tell about one's own experiences and personal meanings to others, but rather language produces our experiences and tells its story irrespective of us.

The radically language-centred interpretation is seen to be rather unsystematic in the critiques of Derrida's views (e.g. Eco 1992, Itkonen 1987),<sup>472</sup> but also in the interpretations that support his writings (e.g. Rorty 1982a). These interpretations are very simplifying, and do not bring forth the multi-dimensional view about the formation of meaning contained in Derrida's writings. For example, Christopher Norris has criticised "the idea of deconstruction as *a priori* committed to an extreme 'textualist' version of the argument that reality is a purely linguistic construction".<sup>473</sup> Also Nicholas Royle has emphasised that the sense of deconstruction goes beyond language and "certainly beyond any ordinary sense of the word 'language'".<sup>474</sup> Henry Staten has argued that that Derrida's formulation "The thing is a sign" is no reduction of things to language, no radical subjectivism and least of all a hermetic solipsism.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>472</sup> I will look at the critique of Derrida's views more closely in Chapter 4.8, "The critique of Derrida's concept of language".

<sup>473</sup> Norris 1997, 38.

<sup>474</sup> Royle 2001, 11.

<sup>475</sup> Staten 1985, 58.

### 3.2. The supplementary relationship between language and prepredicative experience

Derrida's views about language, the formation of meaning and writing can be interpreted in a different way than as described above. When looking at Derrida's overall production, one could claim that he does not fully reject the view about the influence of consciousness and prepredicative intentions in the formation of meaning. For example, he claims in *Limited Inc., a,b,c*:

“I must first recall that *at no time* does *Sec* [“Signature, événement, contexte”] invoke the *absence*, pure and simple, of intentionality. Nor is there any break, simple or radical, with intentionality. What the text questions is not intention or intentionality but their *telos*, which orients and organizes the movement and the possibility of a fulfilment, realisation, and *actualisation* in a plenitude that would be *present* to and identical with itself.”<sup>476</sup>

Derrida also claims that “What is at work here is something like a law of undecidable contamination”.<sup>477</sup> This law of undecidable contamination can be described as the supplementary relation between language and prepredicative experience: language and sense supplement one another. Thus it is thought that consciousness would require language in order for there to be meanings and, on the other hand, language requires consciousness in order for the language to mean. In this context consciousness does not mean *conscious* consciousness but rather (transcendental) subjectivity in its entirety. In other words, it is thought that consciousness is formed from conscious and unconscious nonsubstantial traces (perception and memory traces), and these traces are in interaction with one another, producing new traces. Using the term ‘consciousness’ in connection with Derrida’s philosophy is problematic because he has specifically questioned the view of consciousness as a kind of spiritual substance or identity present to itself. Despite this, I use the term ‘consciousness’ so that I can give a name to what lies on the opposite side of language, and which influences the formation of meaning. With the term ‘consciousness’ I am not referring in this context to any spiritual substance but rather

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<sup>476</sup> LI, 56.

to a material and concrete subjectivity. Consciousness can thus not be studied in self-reflection as a totality, that is, as it is, but rather consciousness is essentially hidden and only partly revealed. Thus, with the term 'consciousness' I aim to name this hidden and partly revealed mental process.

I have derived my interpretation of the relationship between language and consciousness from the analysis Outi Pasanen has presented in her thesis *Writing as Spacing* (1992) and an article "Gasché on de Man and Derrida: Forgetting the Moment of Crisis" (1992). Pasanen discusses whether Derrida's term *writing* should be understood as a transcendental or empirical concept. According to her, Derrida's intention is to bring forth the notion of writing as *undecidable* (*indécidable*) as something oscillating between the empirical and transcendental. Pasanen does not use the word 'language' but analyses writing. However, Pasanen's thesis and article are concerned essentially with the question of what the relationship is between language and consciousness in Derrida's writings. Her characterisation of the relationship between the transcendental subject and writing is enlightening:

"Transcendental subjectivity needs the supplement of writing in order to guarantee the absolute ideal Objectivity, but writing needs the supplement of transcendental life in order to carry sense: their relation is that of a constant referral to each other, in short, a relation of supplementarity."<sup>478</sup>

Pasanen emphasises that the foundation for meaning is not the transcendental subject nor writing but the continuous oscillation between them.<sup>479</sup> It is not possible to give here a simple explanation of what Derrida means by the term *writing* (*écriture*): I shall discuss it in more detail in the next section of this chapter. Thus I will not so much look at Pasanen's interpretation of writing in this section, but use her analysis as a model, with the help of which I can explain Derrida's view of the relationship between language and consciousness. Thus language and consciousness can be seen as supplementary to one another. As mentioned above, language requires consciousness in order to carry meaning, and consciousness in turn requires language in order to produce the ideality of sense and in order to guarantee the existence of this

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>478</sup> Pasanen 1992a 220-222, 1992b, 113-114.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 144.

ideality.<sup>480</sup> The question of meaning is based on the continuous oscillation between consciousness and language, language receiving its meaning by referring to the contents in consciousness, and the contents in consciousness receiving their identity through language.

One can find in Derrida's writings several descriptions supporting the above interpretation. For instance, in connection with the Rousseau analysis in *De la grammatologie*, Derrida indeed states that it is inconceivable to reason that everything begins through the intermediary.<sup>481</sup> Language is the intermediary between sense (*sens*) and referent. In other words, linguistic expression is taken into use as a kind of intermediary, the aim of which is to mediate the sense to the self or to another subject. But paradoxically, however, language also produces an identity and dispersion of meaning which would not exist before the linguistic sign. Derrida indeed states that "In a certain sense, 'thought' means nothing",<sup>482</sup> because there is no thought before its formation through language.

Derrida's interpretation of the supplementary relationship between language and sense reveals his characterisation of the origin without origin (*l'origine sans l'origine*), as well as of heterology. Meaning has been produced heterogeneously. Thus, it is not reduced to one factor, such as the transcendental subject, experience or language. The consciousness of the subject and meanings come about when heterogeneous elements, the transcendental subject and language meet. One can speak about a kind of emergence.<sup>483</sup> The meaning formed along with language is something more than the sum of its parts (i.e. language plus subject).

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<sup>480</sup> I would not claim that Pasanen's term 'transcendental subjectivity' could be 'translated' directly as 'consciousness' or that it could be 'translated' directly in this context (or in any context of Derrida's philosophy) as the concept of language (cf. Pasanen 1992b, 98). With the choice of the terms 'transcendental subjectivity' and 'transcendental life' Pasanen avoids the problems linked with the terms 'subject' and 'consciousness', such as the problems linked with the relationship between substantiality and consciousness. My own interpretation of the relationship between language and consciousness has been directly influenced by Pasanen's, but I have not fully followed her because I have consciously wanted to analyse Derrida's views on the relationship between language and meaning. Derrida's term *writing* also adds problems when attempting to outline his views on the relationship between language and the subject.

<sup>481</sup> GRAM, 157/226.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 93/142.

<sup>483</sup> According to the notion of emergence proposed by C. Lloyd Morgan, evolution forms levels that cannot be explained or reduced to earlier levels. According to him,

Pasanen suggests that Derrida's view of writing is something which cannot be thought of on the basis of traditional philosophy, because he questions the existence of consciousness and particularly the content in consciousness (the transcendental signified). Derrida's view differs from the traditional philosophical starting point in that he does not base meaning on some foundation or essence but the process in between. Consciousness is not the origin of meaning, but nor does Derrida suggest that language would be the origin of meaning, but rather meaning is created in the oscillation occurring between these two.

This interpretation reveals the radically different starting point of Derrida's philosophy, but also its conformity. In the philosophical tradition it is rather generally accepted that language requires consciousness, in other words, in Pasanen's terms, a "transcendental life" in order to transport and carry sense.<sup>484</sup> A rather more uncommon viewpoint still within the philosophical tradition is that consciousness, and particularly the occurrence of meaning, requires external resources (a system of signs, repetition, spatialization and separation) in order to become conscious of itself.<sup>485</sup> Language is a kind of detour through which consciousness can be conscious of itself and its meanings.

The interpretation of the supplementary relationship between language and sense beings forth the same view as the radically language-centred interpretation, in that the manifestation of meaning requires language, which guarantees the ideality of meaning. It differs, however, from the radically language-centred interpretation, in that language does not function separately from consciousness, but rather consciousness<sup>486</sup> gives a sense to the expressions of language. This interpretation highlights the nature of language as the undecidability of *both* the inside *and* the outside. In other words, language acts both *inside* the subject in shaping meanings and outside, that is, independent, of the subject. This interpretation, however, leaves open

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psycho-physiological phenomena, life, mind, and spirit (God) are all emergent levels. The emergent levels have developed so that the appearance of a new one is surprising and continuous: it is a question of a kind of interruption.

<sup>484</sup> Pasanen 1992b, 112.

<sup>485</sup> In the history of philosophy Berkeley proposed a similar deduction of the relationship between God and being. According to him, God has created being so that he could observe himself. God has in a way created an outside to himself so that he can observe himself through it.

the question of what guides the formation of meaning and what linguistic signs are chosen. It also leaves open the question of what is the activity of consciousness, that is, what is transcendental life. However, it is possible to find descriptions of prepredicative experience in Derrida's writings, even though he is sceptical towards that notion as it is used in Husserl's writings. I would indeed claim that in *De la grammatologie* Derrida has presented a description of this otherness affecting language; this is what I shall discuss next.

### 3.3. The interpretation of prepredicative experience.

It is also possible to derive an interpretation of Derrida's writings which posits that he describes specifically the process of the formation of prepredicative experience and prelinguistic sense through the terms *différance*, *trace*, *play of differences* and *writing*.<sup>487</sup> This interpretation is supported by Derrida's claims about a term first presented in *De la grammatologie*, arche-writing (*archi-écriture*). The prefix *arche* means in French the highest superlative, head-, top-, or arche-.<sup>488</sup> The term arche-writing thus refers to the most fundamental kind of writing. It has to be emphasised that is not a question about writing in the everyday graphic sense, but a process which is the prerequisite for a linguistic system.<sup>489</sup> According to Derrida, the linguistic sign

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<sup>486</sup> The terms *life of consciousness* and *transcendental life* are in that sense appropriate in that they describe consciousness as a dynamic process, and not that consciousness would be formed from any static contents.

<sup>487</sup> Cf. V&P, 95/85. Also Staten emphasises that Derrida analyses the structure of lived experience in terms of the Saussurean concept of significative value (play of differences) (Staten 1985, 59): "Derrida radicalizes Saussure's concept of the differential form of language by assimilating it to Husserl's concept of ideality" (ibid., 59).

<sup>488</sup> The word *arche* is derived from the Greek word *arkhe*, meaning beginning, power and main-, typically forming the first part of both Greek and Latin words. It is also used in honorary titles, conferring upon them more value: for instance, *archiatre* derived from the Greek word *arkhiatros*, the chief healer, or *architect* derived from *arkitekton*, the chief builder. In Aristotle's *Metaphysics* the term *arkhe* refers to the most common principles of what is and thinking: "The start is the first" (Aristotle 1013a). Derrida's term arche-writing refers to the original (*arche-*) writing. In this sense one can say that Derrida gets caught in his choice of terms, as well as in his attempt content-wise to describe arche-writing in regard to the metaphysics of origin and propriety that he criticises.

<sup>489</sup> GRAM, 88/60.

requires arche-writing.<sup>490</sup> However, arche-writing is not just a prerequisite for the linguistic system of signs, but also it affects the process of the formation of meanings on the prepredicative level. Derrida speaks in this context about experience as arche-writing,<sup>491</sup> and discusses the character of memory and the mental trace (*image psychique*).<sup>492</sup>

Derrida refers in connection with the concept of arche-writing to Freud's observations in *Die Traumdeutung* (1901) about the formation of dreams. According to Freud, the structuring of dreams is comparable to writing rather than to language, and to a hieroglyphic rather than to a phonetic writing.<sup>493</sup> Freud searches for a model of writing that would not be reducible to speech, but which would also contain hieroglyphics, as well as pictographic, ideogrammatic and phonic elements. According to Derrida, Freud makes psychical writing such an original product that our ordinary concept of writing only appears as a metaphor of psychical writing.<sup>494</sup> Likewise, Derrida aims with the concept arche-writing to name a common model of psychic writing that would contain pictographic, ideogrammatic, and phonic grammar.<sup>495</sup> One can say that with the concept of arche-writing Derrida describes a general method of thinking and structuring of meaning, which also produces the contents of consciousness materialising in the form of dreams. Arche-writing can thus be interpreted as a kind of mental process and in particular as the structure of retentional trace and memory.<sup>496</sup> In *La voix et le phénomène* Derrida describes "a proto-writing" i.e. arche-writing "at work at the origin of sense".<sup>497</sup> Just as "the living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself and from the possibility of retentional trace",<sup>498</sup> the sense springs forth from the possibility of retentional trace. Derrida describes this process as following:

"Sense, being temporal in nature, as Husserl recognised, is never simply present; it is always already engaged in the

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid., 77/52.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 89/60.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 94/64.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 99-100/68.

<sup>494</sup> F&scè, 310/209.

<sup>495</sup> Cf., Sec, 312.

<sup>496</sup> Cf, Pasanen 1992a, 129.

<sup>497</sup> V&P, 95/85.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

‘movement’ of the trace, that is, in the order of ‘signification’. It has always already issued forth from itself into the ‘expressive stratum’ of lived experience. Since the trace is the intimate relation of the living present with its outside, the openness upon exteriority in general, upon the sphere of what is not ‘one’s own’, etc., *the temporalization of sense is, from the outset, a ‘spacing’.*”<sup>499</sup>

In analysing Freud’s articles “Entwurf einer Psychologie” (1895) and “Notiz über den Wunderblock” (1925) in his article “Freud et la scène de l’écriture” (1967) Derrida gives a lucid explanation of the character of arche-writing as a spacing.<sup>500</sup> In the article Derrida analyses Freud’s analogy between perception as a psychical event and the writing apparatus of the ‘mystic writing-pad’ (*Wunderblock*). Freud emphasises that it is a question about a metaphorical model, and not so much a neurological description of the observation event. Derrida claims that “[W]e shall not have to ask if a writing apparatus – for example the one described in the ‘Note on the Mystic Pad’ – is a *good* metaphor for representing the working of the psyche, but rather what apparatus we must create in order to represent psychical writing.”<sup>501</sup> The *Wunderblock* is a kind of notebook which consists of wax board with carbon paper on top. The carbon paper in turn is made up of a transparent celluloid membrane and wax paper. When you write on this carbon paper the writing is not transferred to the top-most celluloid membrane but to the wax paper below it. Correspondingly, the writing disappears from the wax paper when the celluloid membrane is removed from the wax paper.

Freud compares the transparent celluloid membrane to the external protection of the observation, the task of which is to lessen the force of external stimuli. Beneath it is the layer which receives the stimuli. When the celluloid membrane is raised the writing disappears from the wax paper, yet it remains engraved in the wax board. According to Freud, the level which receives the stimuli does not form any permanent

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 96/86. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida describes arche-writing as a spacing, which marks the *dead time* within the presence of the living present (GRAM, 99/68).

<sup>500</sup> Staten argues that “Derrida generalizes the ordinary sense of writing, holding on to the pure form of the concept prior to its realization in a signifying substance. [...] The transcendental concept of writing is thus nothing but the general possibility of sign [...] this means that *within* my own experience, as the possibility of that experience, the ‘spacing’ or partial nonpresence of writing is at work. I am not fully present to myself, not fully wakeful [...]” (Staten 1985, 61).

<sup>501</sup> F&scé, 297/199.

traces but they must be stored in the memory.<sup>502</sup> The drawing of a trace is a two-way process made up of that which is engraved and that which is erased.<sup>503</sup> Derrida claims that according to Freud the aim of this double movement is to alleviate the force of incoming stimuli, and to protect consciousness from too much presence by deferring the 'dangerous investment' (*Besetzung*) by constituting a reserve (*Vorrat*).<sup>504</sup> Thus, according to Freud, memory is the ability to become other in a singular event, which in Derrida's terminology means that memory is repetition (iteration), which simultaneously becomes other (alteration). In other words, the difference between receiving the stimulus and the memory of it is akin to *différance*. The stimulus is inscribed in two levels, the immediately receiving level and memory. Perception is thus already an experience of the stimulus written into the memory. Thus, writing (iteration and alteration) precedes perception.

Derrida sees an analogy between the perceptual event described by Freud and his own term *différance*. Perception is the process of *différance*, that is, separating from oneself and becoming other. Perception becomes in the process of *différance* a memory trace. Thus, according to Derrida, "'Memory' or writing is the opening of that process of appearance itself".<sup>505</sup> The ideal presence of the present is constituted through memory. Based on this, Derrida draws the conclusion that 'perception' has always already prepared the representation.<sup>506</sup> Thus he finds the logic of the supplement in the event of perception. The memory trace replaces the perception and at the same time adds something to it that was not originally there. The 'original perception' occurs only retrospectively in relation to the non-original, in relation to which it occurs as absent. The perception occurs as a perception only retrospectively in relation to the representation and even then as the absence of the original event of perception. This analogy also brings forth the thought, typical for Derrida's philosophy, about the disappearance and erasure of the origin. The disappearance and erasure of the origin are due to repression. The task of repression is to protect the psyche from too much stimuli (a dangerous cathexis), in other words, in Derrida's terminology, from too much presence.<sup>507</sup> Due to the disappearance and repression of

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<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 332, Freud 1978, 230.

<sup>503</sup> Freud 1978, 230.

<sup>504</sup> Dif, 19/18.

<sup>505</sup> F&scé, 332/224.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 334/226.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 300/202.

the origin, everything begins with reproduction; in other words, everything begins with representation, the memory trace, which replaces perception. The observed can be read only after the observation as a past,<sup>508</sup> as a trace.<sup>509</sup> The perception appears as a perception only retrospectively, and we have no way of accessing the original, because the starting point is always a reproduction which refers to the origin which has been erased. The disappearance of the original presence, as described by Derrida, can be explained with the phenomenon of time; for instance, the now-moment is unreachable in the same way that the experience which exists within the now-moment is unreachable. Always when we try and understand what the now moment or experience is, we always already observe it as the past. Thus, according to Staten:

“[T]he primordial *presentation* of perception would be contaminated by re-presentation, by intrusion of a content not itself belonging to originary presence. That the absolute, idealized Now of perception *must* be “accommodated” to the not-now of retention is certain [...]. The nonpresent not-now thus becomes the condition of possibility for the appearing of the phenomenon [...].”<sup>510</sup>

According to Freud, psychic writing is an energetic system. Thus, ideas, thoughts and psychic structures are not organic elements in a localised nervous system but something in between them.<sup>511</sup> Likewise for Derrida, arche-writing can be interpreted as an energetic system. In the article *La différance* he compares his own views to Nietzsche’s concept of consciousness born out of the influence of different powers. The force is nothing substantial, but one can only talk about the differences in intensity between forces.<sup>512</sup> In a similar manner, Derrida claims that psychic life is not the transparency of meaning or the opacity of force, but rather it manifests itself in the

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>509</sup> According to Staten: “The trace structure is the transcendental structure of experience; no this-here is given to experience except as its identity is marked by *différance*, by reference to a not-this and a not-now. The trace structure, as the structure of the Now and of the sign, is the possibility of experience and meaning. The possibility of a particular language is first the transcendental possibility of a trace in general [...]. The trace in general is the pure form of signification” (Staten 1985, 53).

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>511</sup> F&scé, 318/215

<sup>512</sup> Dif, 18-19/17.

difference between the movements of the forces.<sup>513</sup> This again raises the question, what *is* force? Is the concept too abstract to be able to describe the event of the forming of sense compared to, for instance, the concepts of *sense data* or *hyle*? According to Derrida, the force produces meaning only through the power of repetition.<sup>514</sup> This also raises the question: what is repeated? Derrida's answer presumably would be that the process of the formation of sense requires the repetition of traces, differing and deferring differences that can be called a movement of forces. Derrida emphasises the dynamic nature of the formation of sense, in contrast to a static notion of sense as an autonomous identity or idea. Thus, according to Staten, "The full object is an unattainable limit-idea."<sup>515</sup>

It can be generally said of Derrida's philosophy that it interprets those phenomena that the memory brings to the meaning event. Memory enables representation, the inscription of traces and repeatability, which enables identity.<sup>516</sup> Thus memory is not merely one psychic property among others; it is one of the main elements of the psyche, because memory brings along possibilities of repression as well as the erasure of the *trace*.<sup>517</sup> In Derrida's terminology, memory produces the *différance* linked with the event of the formation of meaning. The memory trace is in place of the 'original' trace, and produces the 'original' trace as a withdrawal and absence. Thus it seems to me that Derrida admits the existence of a prepredicative and prelinguistic level, which is one of the main elements of the psyche.

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<sup>513</sup> F&scé, 299/201.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid, 316/213.

<sup>515</sup> Staten 1985, 56.

<sup>516</sup> The importance of memory for the concrete experiencing of life emerges in different instances of memory loss. In his book *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* (1985), neurologist Oliver Sacks deals with the question of memory loss. He describes from a neurologist's viewpoint how the destruction of the ability to remember affects the loss of identity. The cases described by Sacks would seem to be concrete evidence of what Derrida has brought forth in his philosophy about the importance of repeatable traces and signs for the birth of identity. He has attempted to put himself in the position of how his patients suffering from different brain damages experience the world. For instance, in his essay *Sailor Jim* he describes an old sailor who has lost his memory and in a sense lives in the continuous present. According to Sacks, Jim doesn't know whether he is happy or unhappy because there is nothing he could compare it to.

<sup>517</sup> According to Derrida "Memory, thus, is not a psychical property among others; it is the very essence of the psyche: resistance, and precisely, thereby, an opening to the effraction of the trace" (F&scé, 299/201).

Derrida's critique concerning prepredicative and prelinguistic meaning is aimed at how the prepredicative and prelinguistic levels are described. He criticises the idea of the prepredicative level as being an already well-constituted level, where the meaning exists in itself as an autonomous and entire totality (*eidōs*). Thus, it is thought that meaning exists ideally without any intermediary material factor. Instead, Derrida wants to emphasise that on the prepredicative level, sense does not ideally and autonomously exist as an idea (*eidōs*), but rather the formation of the sense is always already written in the sensible and spatial element called the exterior, that is, memory.<sup>518</sup>

Furthermore, Derrida emphasises that the prepredicative sense is in continuous movement and develops in the pressure conflict of forces, in which case it is by nature trace-like. 'Perceptions' and 'experiences' are written into memory so that the original perception or experience is no longer present, and we can return to it only in the form of a representation, as a memory. Just as Derrida expands the concept of writing to concern mental processes (memory and perception), likewise he expands the concept of representation to concern the functioning of memory. For Derrida, we can no longer get to the level of the immediate and pure experience, because experience has already turned into a representation and a sign. The basic form of arche-writing, that is, the trace, is non-representational in the existing difference between the world and the lived world, between the world and the experience of the world. The point where the world and the experience of the world separate from one another cannot be pinpointed because it can never be present. The experience of the world writes itself into memory and is thus a representation of the world. It is not the present world but its representation. Thus, the signified is essentially and originally a trace that is always already in the position of the signifier.<sup>519</sup> Sense (*sens*) is thus essentially a trace that refers to 'experience', which in its turn is a trace. In other words, the sense refers to the past that has never fully been present.

According to Derrida, it is possible to find a similar critique of the transcendental signified in Charles Peirce's writings. He refers to Peirce's definition in *Elements of Logic*, according to which a sign is:

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<sup>518</sup> GRAM, 103/70.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-108/73.

“(a)nything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way, this interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*.”<sup>520</sup>

According to Derrida, Peirce moves in a direction that could be called the deconstruction of the transcendental signified. Thus the thing itself is considered as a sign.<sup>521</sup> Derrida has correspondingly said that the so-called ‘thing itself’ is always a *representamen* shielded from the simplicity of intuitive evidence: it functions only by giving rise to an interpretant<sup>522</sup> that itself becomes a sign, and so on to infinity.<sup>523</sup> In other words, the ‘thing itself’ is already a representative (*representamen*), representation or sign existing in the mind, and this representative acts so that it requires an interpreter, which in turn will become a sign, which in turn requires an interpreter, and so on to infinity.

Derrida’s critique of the transcendental signified indeed can be seen to concern specifically the autonomy and identity of the mental idea, content or image. In other words, the so-called mental image is always already a trace produced by memory. Derrida’s claim that the signified is “always already in the position of the signifier”<sup>524</sup> can be interpreted as saying that the ‘content of consciousness’ (the signified) is itself a sign, which receives its meaning by referring outside itself to another signified or signifieds. Derrida paraphrases Peirce, that from the moment when there is significance there is nothing more than signs.<sup>525</sup> Thus, the sign does not only mean the linguistic concept of sign: Peirce expands the concept of sign to

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<sup>520</sup> Peirce 1965, 302.

<sup>521</sup> GRAM, 72/49.

<sup>522</sup> The concept of interpretant has an important position in Peirce’s semiotics. According to Umberto Eco and Manfred Bierwisch, the term refers to a mental representation, which the sign brings forth or to an intermediary representation. Particularly in the latter sense, it is seen that the interpretant differs from the meaning. The interpretant is thus a sign which interprets, explains and develops an earlier sign. Thus a process of endless semiosis is created, where the meaning of representation is revealed as representation, which is interpreted with the help of a new representation, and on so to infinity. The interpretant has a double position: on the one hand, the sign intermediates between the interpretant sign and its object and, on the other hand, the interpretant functions between the sign and its external object. In the latter meaning, the interpretant can be interpreted to be an immediate object or meaning (Eco and Bierwisch in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics II*, 1986, 385-386).

<sup>523</sup> GRAM, 72/49.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 108/73.

concern all phenomena dealing with the function of reference. Thus by the term *sign* he means a phenomenon where something receives its meaning and content in relation to some other outside the self which it itself is not.<sup>526</sup>

There is a link between Derrida's analysis of the concept of the sign and arche-writing, in that arche-writing has the structure of the sign. Arche-writing is writing that occurs through signs, referring outside itself and receiving its meaning from outside itself. It is not present in itself or by supporting itself on itself, but only by referring outside itself to other signs. Thus there is no highest signified (transcendental signified) which would act as a kind of stopping point or fixed point for the forming of meaning, but rather the transcendental signified is always already in the position of the signifier, that is, it refers outside itself to other signs. Meaning is thus not present in consciousness as a kind of mental content, which would be present

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<sup>525</sup> Peirce: "We think only in signs" (Peirce, 1965, 169; cited in GRAM 70/48).

<sup>526</sup> One must note, however, that the concept of sign is different for Peirce and Saussure. Peirce's concept of sign is more multidimensional than Saussure's. Indeed, one speaks of the triadicness of Peirce's concept of sign and the dyadic nature of Saussure's. The three components of Peirce's concept of sign are: 1. The dynamic object, 2. The *representamen*, and 3. The immediate object or interpretant. For Saussure the sign is comprised of the signifier and signified. One can say that in a very loose sense Peirce's concept of *representamen* corresponds to Saussure's signifier and Peirce's immediate object to Saussure's signified (See Eco, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics Vol.II*, 1986, 385). If the term 'interpretant' is interpreted as a mental representation that only emerges with the sign (ibid., Vol.I, 385), then also the interpretant can in a very loose sense be interpreted as the signified. Peirce also separates the interpretant from meaning, and speaks about it as an intermediary representation (ibid., 386). One can indeed say that the interpretant functions as an intermediary factor between the *representamen* and object in such a way that the *representamen* relation typical for the sign is actualised only when the *representamen* is experienced as a sign which refers to something outside itself. Thus is born the mental interpretation, the interpretant of the *representamen*, which refers, however, to the same object as the *representamen* (cf. Vehkavaara 1999, 172). Saussure's theory was meant to create a scientific basis for modern linguistics, and thus he described the sign as the basic unit of linguistic analysis. However, he does not discuss the relationship of the sign to the reality, world or thinking outside the sign; he only analyses the sign's way of meaning as a part of the language. Peirce's view of the sign, however, is a part of a wider attempt to understand the nature of thinking and the relationship of representations to reality. In other words, Peirce's concept of sign takes into account an angle outside language, and furthermore, his semiotics does not concern only linguistic signs but also, more widely, all signs. Thus, in *De la grammatologie* Derrida analyses different notions linked with the notion of sign, making links between Peirce's view of the interpretant and Saussure's view on the chain of signifiers. Derrida uses Peirce's view as a tool to criticise Saussure's

autonomously, just supporting itself on itself, but rather meaning exists only in a reference relationship outside of itself, from where it gets its meaning, but which it can never fully be in terms of presence. According to Derrida, only an infinite being could experience the world as present, because he himself would be the world and its experience. This presence is called God.<sup>527</sup>

In *Signéponge* Derrida presents a new metaphor for the prepredicative experience and intention, the *Thing (la Chose)*. He deals with the question of the Thing in connection with Francis Ponge's poetry. The Thing is a voiceless demand, a kind of silent imperative, which gives orders to the writer and speaker. They are responsible for the Thing such that it is not a question of an optional responsibility but an absolute and categorical answering to the call of the Thing. One can see a link between Derrida's views as presented in *Signéponge* and Heidegger's analysis of the Thing (*Das Ding*).<sup>528</sup> Heidegger's characterisation of the Thing (*das Ding*) can be interpreted in more than one way. One way is to consider it as an attempt to look at what exists in another way than how the representative, objectifying or goal-oriented observation does. But there is also an attempt with Heidegger to study what the Being of entities is as such; in other words, to think about the *thingness of the Thing*.<sup>529</sup> For Derrida, too, the Thing is something which is otherwise than a representation, but he is interested, however, in how this non-representative thing represents itself, and how it guides speaking and writing.

Another starting point for interpretation, from which Derrida's analysis of the Thing can be better understood, is Lacan's views on the Thing (*la Chose*). According to Hannu Sivenius, the notion of *La Chose* in Lacan's thinking refers to the subconscious,<sup>530</sup> and it is possible to see links between Derrida's view of the Thing and Lacan's view of the subconscious. According to Mikkel Borsche-Jacobsen, the subconscious for Lacan is voiceless and silent.<sup>531</sup> At the same time, it demands to be expressed from within this voicelessness and silence. Likewise, meaning without

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view on the transcendental signified, which Derrida sees as conflicting with Saussure's own view about the play of differences.

<sup>527</sup> GRAM, 104/71.

<sup>528</sup> Heidegger has dealt with the question of *The Thing (Das Ding)* in his article "Das Ding", which was part of a larger lecture series given at the Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste 1950, published in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1961).

<sup>529</sup> Heidegger 1996, 57.

<sup>530</sup> Sivenius 1988, 210.

<sup>531</sup> Borch-Jacobsen 1991, 180.

linguistic expression is *La Chose*, a silent demand or vanishing point. For Derrida also 'meaning'<sup>532</sup> or the prepredicative sense requires language in order to be formed and in order to receive the presence and identity which it requires. Derrida indeed states in his article "Signature, événement, contexte" that "There is no conceptual realm beyond the language which would allow the term to have a univocal semantic content over and above its inscription in language."<sup>533</sup> But it is important to note in this claim that the question is about a univocal semantic content, rather than Derrida denying the existence of the prepredicative form of signification, the trace structure. The prepredicative traces do not have an intersubjective identity, nor form an objective ideality. This raises the question of what is the relationship between the level of the prelinguistic traces and the linguistic level. Thus, in the following chapter I will look at the relationship between these levels in greater detail.

### 3.4. The bi-levelness of the formation of meaning

By the term 'bi-levelness of meaning' I mean that the process of the formation of meaning implies two levels: 1. The prepredicative level, and 2. The linguistic level. In this interpretation, my aim is to combine the radically language-centred interpretation, the interpretation concerning the supplementary relationship between language and meaning, and the interpretation emphasising the level of prepredicative meaning.

Derrida makes no clear differentiation between the terms *arche-writing* and *writing*: he states that he continues to use the term *writing* instead of *arche-writing* because it essentially communicates with the vulgar concept of *writing*.<sup>534</sup> It is specifically this vagueness about what the relationship between Derrida's *arche-writing* and vulgar or everyday writing is, that contributes to the ambiguity regarding how language-centred his view of meaning really is. The concept of *writing* seems sometimes to mean spoken and written *language*, and sometimes something which goes beyond and precedes language. For instance, the claim that "The system of

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<sup>532</sup> I use quotation marks here because according to Derridian thinking 'meaning' does not exist in itself, as something autonomous, and forming a clear identity before language. Only language grants meaning its identity.

<sup>533</sup> Sec, 111.

<sup>534</sup> GRAM, 83/56.

writing in general is not exterior to the system of language in general”,<sup>535</sup> easily leads to the interpretation that Derrida’s term *writing* describes language as a system. On the other hand, such claims by Derrida as “[T]he linguistic sign implies an originary writing”<sup>536</sup> leads to the interpretation that writing precedes language.

Following the analysis of the previous chapter, I call the process of the formation of the prepredicative, the *arche-writing level*, and the process requiring the formation of meaning I call the *writing level*. The arche-writing level consists of the movement of prepredicative traces. At the writing level one can actually talk about meaning (signification, conceptual meaning), which also is a trace. However, the borderline between writing and arche-writing is not clear; they merge, so that it is not clearly recognisable what is arche-writing and what is writing. One can say that one permeating theme in Derrida’s work is the questioning of the clearly demarcated separation between the purely prepredicative level and the linguistic level.

One can claim that with the general quasi-concept of writing Derrida questions the clear separation between these levels, because the arche-writing level cannot become the content of consciousness without repeatable signs (writing). Thus arche-writing and writing supplement each other. Arche-writing requires writing, so that the prepredicative traces could be formed into intersubjective meanings, and writing in its turn requires the arche-writing (the prepredicative traces) so that the expressions would carry sense. The constitution of the meaning level requires language, which enables the transformation from a purely neurological and physiological level of recording observations to a level of ideal entities. The process of the formation of the prepredicative meaning, on the other hand, is characterised by the terms *différance*, trace and the play of differences.

At the writing level, one can talk about actual meanings, signifieds, ideal objects and concepts, because the language enables the possibility of ideality of meaning and the impossibility of the repetition of meaning. With the term *ideality of meaning* one means in this context that meaning occurs as a signified ideality after the linguistic signification process. Such meaning can be called ideal, firstly because, due to the language system, it is objective (i.e. intersubjective) and secondly because it is repeatable, enabling the preservation of meaning. At the same time, the possibility of the drift of meaning, alteration and recontextualization (dissemination) contaminates

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 63/43.

the ‘original intention’. The viewpoints that have emerged in the radically language-centred interpretation describe the constitution of this level. The arche-writing level in turn describes the inscription of experience into memory. At the arche-writing level there are no clear meanings, spiritual entities or ideas (*eidōs*), but only the movement of traces under erasure. This signified has not materialised, but is rather in a state of continuous movement. The arche-writing level is made up of the movement of traces and neurons, a kind of economy of forces. Thus, ‘meaning’ on this level is the movement of prepredicative and non-semiotic traces. The arche-writing level is the origin without origin (*l’origine sans l’origine*), from which the actual level of meaning is constituted and receives its sense. Arche-writing is by nature an elusive inscription of traces. Also, the linguistic level is in constant movement, because of the contextual play of differences. The linguistic meaning and ideality is formed through the endless play of differences, which corrupt the identity of an ideality.

In *Visual Thinking* (1969) Rudolf Arnheim argues that visual images are part flashes and hints; they are by nature obscure and transforming flashes of form or direction that do not very much resemble their object.<sup>537</sup> Likewise, it is possible to think that Derridian prepredicative traces are kinds of flashes and hints that by nature are differences, which only appear in relation to other differences, and which transform in relation to one another. Such an interpretation, however, would conflict with the linguistic starting point as described by Derrida in *Positions*, because the identification of the movement of sense would not require a materially repeatable sign, signifier or language, but rather sense would occur and appear in the body, in the pressure conflict occurring in consciousness. For instance, the visual image itself would be produced in the pressure conflict of different visual traces.

The problem arising in this double level interpretation of meaning is whether it makes Derrida’s term arche-writing too much of a transcendental philosophical concept, in which case it describes the way in which transcendental subjectivity uses the trace structure to form a signification. Pasanen brings forth this viewpoint in her article “Gasché on De Man and Derrida: Forgetting the Moment of Crisis”, in which she criticises the emphasis given to the transcendental value of the term arche-writing, because it makes Derrida’s writing into philosophy in the sense of belonging to the Western philosophical and metaphysical tradition. Pasanen, however, admits that the

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 77/52.

concept of arche-writing cannot be seen purely as an empirical concept, but rather it refers to transcendentality.<sup>538</sup> Her critique presumably concerns the fact that arche-writing becomes a philosophical foundation and basic concept if it is thought to describe the activity of transcendental subjectivity, whereas for her arche-writing presupposes a kind of oscillation between transcendental life and language.<sup>539</sup> However, Derrida's term arche-writing does not lose its heuristic value if it is thought that it describes the way in which transcendental subjectivity forms prepredicative traces. Thus the term arche-writing presupposes that prepredicative mental processes resemble writing in the sense that traces are material representations which always already refer to other representations.

The arche-writing level is thus the 'other of language' to which Derrida refers in the interview with Richard Kearney, "Deconstruction and the Other" (1982),<sup>540</sup> and which his writings above all aim to describe. The terms *trace*, *différance* and *repetition* describe the activity of this level as well as the linguistic level. *Différance* can be extended to concern the formation of experience in general, the auditory, kinaesthetic, haptic and visual traces. The physiological level occurs on the psychic level as arche-writing. It is apparent that a central issue in Derrida's writing is a critique of the transcendental signified from the viewpoint of both language and arche-writing. Thus, the transcendental signified opens out in two directions: it has no identity in itself, but rather its identity is created in relation to the world and language. Thus it is a multi-levelled weave of differences, which evolves by separating itself from 1. the world (references), 2. arche-traces (memories) and 3. the linguistic system. The content of consciousness lives and receives its meaning in relation to these exteriorities. Its identity is defined and delayed only as a reference relationship to different exteriorities.

Derrida himself does not present the viewpoint of bi-levelness in explicit terms, nor does he systematically elaborate the theme of arche-writing. Indeed, it seems that he would not accept such a notion: in *Positions* he questions the existence of the prelinguistic, pre-semiotic and prepredicative levels of meaning. Furthermore, Derrida criticises the notion that there could be complete and autonomous

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<sup>537</sup> Arnheim 1969, 109.

<sup>538</sup> Pasanen 1992b, 108-109.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

<sup>540</sup> D&O, 123.

prepredicative meanings. Instead, the prepredicative “contents” in consciousness can be seen as incomplete, insubstantial and temporal traces that refer to other traces, and receive their relative shape only through language. According to Derrida, that which is called 'sense' (*sens*)<sup>541</sup> is always constituted by a tissue of differences. The assumed inside of meaning has always already been influenced by its outside, so that each word claimed to be simple is marked by the trace of some other word.<sup>542</sup> Language is thus not expression, which communicates the meaning (idea) in the mind to the other people, but rather it is the condition of ideal and intersubjective meaning, which does not exist without language being intersubjectively repeatable. At the same time as language enables the ideality and permanence of ideal objects, it also removes the meaning from prepredicative traces and images attached to it, and sets meaning in a relationship to an external language system. Then the linguistic expressions are meaningful in the absence of the original intention and can be contextualized in several ways, which makes the permanence and repetition of the ideal object as it was first intended impossible. Thus language does not guarantee the absolute identical repetition of the ‘original intention’, but instead it gives a possibility of a drift of meaning, *différance* and alteration.

However, this raises the question: What is the relationship between arche-writing and the linguistic level? According to Freud, it is impossible to translate psychic writing because it is an energetic system. Likewise, according to Derrida, the unconscious cannot be translated as such because its contents are tied to their material expression.<sup>543</sup> For example, dream images cannot be interpreted and translated into the linguistic language because the linguistic interpretation creates new meanings from the dream images. Derrida goes even further, however, by claiming that the conscious text is not a translation of the subconscious text because there is no unconscious text or truth which could be moved to another order. The unconscious text or truth cannot be understood in the original or modified form of presence

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<sup>541</sup> In the English translation of *Positions* Alan Bass translates Derrida's term *le "sens"* as "meaning". I myself, however, in preferring to use the word “sense” wish to emphasise the prepredicative sense as opposed to linguistic meaning.

<sup>542</sup> POS, 45-46/33.

<sup>543</sup> According to Derrida, "If the trace, arche-phenomenon of 'memory', [...] belongs to the very movement of signification, then signification is *a priori* written, whether or not inscribed or not, in the form or another, in a 'sensible' and 'spatial' element that is called "exterior" (GRAM, 103/70).

because it is the weave of traces and differences.<sup>544</sup> The unconscious can only send psychic representatives such that it moves and separates itself (*différance*).<sup>545</sup> For instance, a fish appearing in a dream cannot be translated simply as a symbol of religiousness and sexuality, but rather it is a psychic representative that has moved and separated from the subconscious level. The linguistic interpretation already entails a displacement, where meanings linked with the material appearance of the dream image can no longer be preserved in the translation. The set of dream images can be given different interpretations according to each person's personal life situation, but they cannot be given an exhaustive interpretation. Likewise, the bodily experiences and perceptions belong to the subconscious level, in which case, when moving from the bodily experience level to the linguistic level, the question is about interpretation and translation. The traces of the bodily experience level are not translated as such to consciousness, because their meaning is tied to their material form. Between the different levels the question is about a supplementation, which always adds something to the original, but at the same time semantic loss also occurs. In the same way, when moving from the arche-writing level to the writing level it is a question of a translation which adds something to the 'origin' while, again, semantic loss also occurs. In other words, "*conscious*" writing is a supplement. However, Derrida emphasises that there is no conscious writing, because of the unmotivatedness of the sign, the play of differences and the endless intertextuality (the possibility to contextualize). The corruption of meaning is always possible.<sup>546</sup>

What Derrida tries to achieve through the concept of arche-writing is what in the phenomenological tradition is called *experience (Erlebnis)*. According to Derrida, in the metaphysics of presence experience has always been seen as something present. Instead, according to Derrida, one can only speak about it *under erasure (sous rature)*,<sup>547</sup> because there is no present experience. Derrida has indeed said that "(t)here never was any perception; and 'presentation' is a representation of

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<sup>544</sup> F&scé, 313-314/211.

<sup>545</sup> Dif, 19/18.

<sup>546</sup> LI, 77.

<sup>547</sup> According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Derrida's concept of 'under erasure' (*sous rature*) differs from Heidegger's concept, in that for Heidegger the Being (Sein) under erasure means a presence that cannot be articulated, while Derrida's trace under erasure is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience ("Translator's Preface", *Of Grammatology*, p. xvii).

the representation”,<sup>548</sup> but “writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself (is conscious of itself)”.<sup>549</sup> There are only traces in the mind that refer to an ‘experience’ that was never present. He analyses the concept of experience central to phenomenology, and through it derives his view of experience as arche-writing. He bases his argument on Husserl’s view on the content of intentional consciousness (*noema*). By intentionality (*noesis*) Husserl does not refer to intending or deliberate intentions, but rather to consciousness being continually directed outside itself into the world. Likewise, Derrida describes perception as a trace, as the openness of the subject outside itself<sup>550</sup> – “the first relation of life to its other”.<sup>551</sup> According to Husserl, the intentional object is made up of the intentional act (*morphé*) as well as the materially given (hyletic) element.<sup>552</sup> The intentional act is in turn the transcendental subject’s way to form the contents of consciousness.<sup>553</sup> The intentional object is thus not purely part of the world or the subject, but rather it is constituted by the intentions of the subject. However, Derrida’s view differs from Husserl’s. For Husserl the intention of phenomenology is to study the formal prerequisites of the

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<sup>548</sup> V&P, 116/103.

<sup>549</sup> F&scé, 332/224.

<sup>550</sup> V&P, 96/86.

<sup>551</sup> F&scé, 334/ 226.

<sup>552</sup> According to Matti Juntunen, Husserl partly gives up this formulation in his later self-critiques, because hyle is a non-intentional component, which means that it does not occur at all in phenomenological reflection: “In fact this distinction has been adopted from the dogmatically traditional philosophical psychology” (Juntunen 1986, 112). Thus, according to Juntunen, when giving up the distinction between hyle and noesis Husserl indeed holds on to the difference between noesis and noema (ibid., 112).

<sup>553</sup> Leila Haaparanta has proposed a similar interpretation of Husserl’s concept of intentionality, calling it a ‘geometrical model’. Thus, noesis, that is, the intentional act, is interpreted as mental work or mental constructing, which has hyle as its material, and the *noema* is the finished work or the construction (Haaparanta 1994b, 221). Haaparanta emphasises in her interpretation the constructive nature of the intentional act, in which case the construing or formal shaping (*Auffassung*) and meaning-giving (*Sinnegebung*) carried out by the intentional act (noesis) are essentially constructing the world of the objects of experience from the formless matter (*hyle*) (Haaparanta 1994b, 221). Haaparanta claims that “The given objects which we have are like the model figures for one who tries to solve geometrical problems. They can be analysed, which is precisely what a phenomenologist does. By means of the method of analysis, he finds the constituents of the given objects, that is, noemas which are the results of constructing-activities” (Ibid, 221). Thus in the phenomenological analysis we can go backwards both to the material (*hyle*) of the construction and the form (cognitive perceptual, emotional and volitional acts) which is our contribution to the construction.

subject, that is, to study those ways in which the subject forms intentional objects in order to separate from knowledge its subjective and objective parts, that is, to study what is incidental in experience and what is intersubjective, that is, to study what is essential in experience. According to Matti Juntunen, this does not mean, however, that ideal objects would be reduced to constituting experiences. The question is rather about a completely opposite aim: the intention of the examination aimed at intentional acts is to legitimise the 'objectivity' of ideal objects.<sup>554</sup> Derrida, instead, is interested in a *différance*-like difference between the intentional object and the 'thing itself'; in which case the observed evolves by separating from 'the thing itself', so that this difference seems to be under erasure. For Derrida the trace following this *différance* or 'perception' is a starting point that cannot be transgressed. There is no path to 'the thing itself' such as it is, there is just a trace from that which refers to it, but which also differs from it. We can approach the thing in itself only via traces which refer to other traces.

In *Feu de la Cendre* (1987) Derrida proposes a new quasi-concept, *cinders* (*endre*), to describe the relation between language and its other. He discusses the "figurative" fire that is still burning at the origin of language and which can be felt in the cinders of language. The term *cinders* can be considered as a new metaphor for describing the trace-structure of language. Ned Lukacher explains Derrida's idea as follows: "The fire has always already consumed access to the origin of language and thus to the truth of being. But by leaving cinder remains, it allows the relation between the coming of language and truth of being to persist, to smoulder within the ashes."<sup>555</sup> Thus "The coming of language as a means of a thought and expression is always also the withdrawal within language of the trace, the trait, the *re-trait* of its concealed origin."<sup>556</sup> The "original intention", what makes one speak and to write, is described as a burning of fire, an inner vibration, which becomes cinders in naming something. In cinders we can still feel the heat of the burning, but the "original fire" has always withdrawn from any word.

There are several problems with the interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of the formation of meaning. It must account for the traditional critique concerning transcendental philosophy, namely, how can consciousness study its own

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<sup>554</sup> Juntunen 1986, 62.

<sup>555</sup> Lukacher 1991, 2.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

action? Also, how can the subconscious otherness affecting language be described when that otherness can never be present? According to Gasché, Derrida is very much aware of the paradoxes and contradictions linked with the analysis of consciousness. This is evident, says Gasché, when Derrida highlights in his deconstruction the conflicts linked with the analysis of consciousness, and dismantles the notion of autoaffection, and along with it all forms of self-reflexivity.<sup>557</sup> Gasché's own view, that writing is quasi-transcendental, avoids the problems produced by the transcendental philosophical viewpoint, because he looks at consciousness in as far as it occurs through the structure supplementing language. Thus the *a priori* forms of consciousness are not examined, nor is consciousness itself as such. But the interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of the formation of meaning cannot avoid these problems, and is thus easily open to criticism.

### **3.5. An evaluation of the different interpretations of the relationship between language and the prepredicative level**

All in all, Derrida's views about the relationship between language and meaning lend themselves to many interpretations. The four different interpretations of this relationship which I have presented above do not necessarily differ radically from each other. It is rather a question of differences of emphasis: 1. In the radically language-centred interpretation the effect of language on meanings is emphasised; 2. In the interpretation emphasising the supplementary relationship between language and prepredicative experience, the dual dependency of language and consciousness is highlighted; 3. In the interpretation emphasising the prepredicative experience the formation of the prelinguistic traces is emphasised, an aspect that is left out in the radically language-centred view; 4. In the interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of meaning, however, there is an attempt to fit together the first three interpretations. However, the interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of meaning is closest to the argumentation found in Derrida's own texts, because his quasi-concepts of trace, *différance* and arche-writing can be applied to concern in a wider sense the nature of prepredicative experience and not only linguistic and conceptual thinking. From the

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<sup>557</sup> Gasché 1985, 41.

point of view of the bi-levelness of meaning, different interpretations supplement each other, and accordingly such a view of meaning would be the most all-encompassing one. In such an interpretation there is an attempt to solve the ambiguity linked with Derrida's concepts, and to encompass the contradictory views within a larger whole.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that the above four interpretations differ radically from each other. It is a question not only about differences of emphasis but differences on a deeper ontological level. Interpreted in terms of ontology, the radically language-centred interpretation is a purely materialist starting point. In it one does not need to assume the existence of consciousness, but rather consciousness as an ideal entity is created through language. The interpretation emphasising the supplementary relationship between language and prepredicative traces presents a heterogeneous origin of meaning; that is, meaning is born in the interaction of the life of consciousness and language. Meaning cannot be reduced to either, but rather it occurs in connection with their joining one another. The interpretation emphasising the level of prepredicative sense, on the other hand, highlights the view, according to which Derrida's terms *arche-writing*, *différance* and *trace* can be interpreted as descriptions of the prepredicative experience and, more specifically, as a description of the function of memory and prepredicative representation. The interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of meaning includes the ontological view, according to which the prepredicative experience influences the formation of meaning as well as the language system. The prepredicative experience is not constituted by isolated and autonomous transcendental signifieds that language tries to express or refer to, but rather it is a network of dynamic traces that refer to other traces. Through language it is possible to re-constitute these traces. But it is then a question of a transformation, translation and supplementation, in which the 'original' is produced again, yet differently. Language enables the birth of an intersubjective and repeatable conceptual ideality from dynamic and non-substantial traces. But at the same time, due to the function of language, 'meaning' drifts. The linguistic meaning has no stable identity. The linguistic sign functions without the 'original intention' or 'original meaning', and it can be contextualized differently.

Due to ontological differences, the different interpretations contradict each other. From the viewpoint of the radically language-centred interpretation, one cannot necessarily accept the viewpoints of the layer of prepredicative meaning and the bi-levelness of meaning. From this same viewpoint it is also possible to criticise the view

of mental writing (arche-writing) because it emphasises the influence of the empirical and material sign in the formation of the idealities of meaning. The radically language-centred interpretation can be criticised, however, because it denies the existence of psychic and prelinguistic meaning, and thus makes the use of language non-sensical.

These four interpretations of the relationship between language and prepredicative ‘experience’ show that it is possible to derive ontologically very different and even contradictory conclusions from Derrida’s writings. On the other hand, the fact that it is possible to draw several different interpretations from his writings reflects the undecidability contained within them in regards to what he means by the terms *writing*, *trace* and *the play of differences*. It reflects the more common philosophical problem about what is the ontological position of language, consciousness and meaning. Are meanings dependent on the subject or language? Is meaning a property of the subject or of language? Is there thinking without language, or does thinking require language?

Despite the fact that Derrida’s view about the relationship between language and prepredicative “experience” can be interpreted in several different ways, I would argue that the most meaningful interpretation is the one from the point of view of the bi-levelness of the formation of meaning, because it explains how language produces meaning, but at the same time it does not deny the influence of the prepredicative experience in the formation of linguistic meaning. When moving from the prepredicative level to the predicative level, the question is about translation: language not only expresses the movement of prepredicative traces (arche-writing) but also re-produces the ideality of meaning. The question is about translation, which changes the original arche-writing (prepredicative text).

In the introduction to this chapter I posited the question of how language-centred Derrida’s view on the formation of meaning actually is. After discussing these different interpretations of Derrida’s position, I would claim that his writings represent an extremely language-centred view of meaning. Language produces both the possibility and the impossibility of the conceptual ideality of meaning, which does not exist prior language. At the same time, one can claim that Derrida’s view of meaning is not completely reduced to language, but the formation of meaning is influenced along with language by the prepredicative experience, the processes of *arche-writing*, *traces* and *différance*. The spacing (the process of *différance*), which

occurs within the phenomenon of time, acts as an arche-phenomenon of *différance* typical also for linguistic language. In the next chapter I will look in greater detail at the nature of linguistic meaning as *différance* and the play of differences.

## 4. Grammatology

In *De la grammatologie* Derrida presents provocative claims about *grammatology* as the *general science of writing* (*une science général de l'écriture*)<sup>558</sup> and the science of textuality,<sup>559</sup> which, he suggests, would be a *science of science*.<sup>560</sup> He argues that “The concept of writing should define the field of a science”, because the possibility of science and historicity is tied to the possibility of writing.<sup>561</sup> In this chapter my intention is to discuss what Derrida means by grammatology and writing. How does grammatology differ from other theories of meaning, for instance, from semiology? Is it a theory of meaning, a science or practice? Derrida often replaces the word *meaning* with the terms *the play of differences*, *textuality* and *writing*. Thus I will examine in more detail how he perceives meaning through these terms, as well as the nature of this meaning.

Derrida claims in *De la grammatologie* that “The grammatologist least of all can avoid questioning himself about the essence of his object in the form of a question of origin: ‘What is writing?’ means ‘Where and when does writing begin?’”<sup>562</sup> Following Derrida’s claims, I intend to ask what is writing and where does it begin, because the term ‘writing’ is so central to both the understanding of his texts and the point of view of critical inquiry. As I already explained in the previous chapter, the term *writing* (*écriture*) has many different meanings, some of which seem to be in conflict with others. I will discuss possible reasons why Derrida has ended up with the term *writing*, and accordingly look for the deeper meaning of the term. Is *writing* another name for language? Is he attempting with this term to describe the nature of language in general, or is he trying to describe something which would be the prerequisite for language? The starting point for my interpretation is the same one I presented in the previous chapter about the bi-levelness of the formation of meaning, that is, that the formation of meaning requires both the prepredicative experience and

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<sup>558</sup> GRAM, 43-44/27-28.

<sup>559</sup> POS, 46/34.

<sup>560</sup> GRAM, 43/27-28.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 42/27.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 43/28.

language. The prepredicative experience is characterised by the movement of traces (arche-synthesis of protentional and retentional traces), and it is only the iterable signs of language that make the ideality of meaning both possible and impossible by submitting it to the repetition that is an alteration.

#### 4.1. From semiology to grammatology (from sign to trace)

The term *grammatology* is a Derrida-coined neologism derived from the Greek word *gramma*, in French *gram*, meaning *letter* or *the smallest measuring unit*, and from the French suffix *'-logie'*, meaning *discourse*, *discipline* and *science*, from the Greek word *lógos*, meaning speech, account, reason, definition, rational faculty and proportion.<sup>563</sup> Thus, there is a dual meaning linked to the word: on the one hand, the *discipline of the letter*, and on the other hand, the *discipline of the smallest meaningful unit*. With this latter connotation Derrida brings forth the view that the word is not the smallest factor in the semantic event, but rather that the word as a sign consists of even smaller parts that produce its meaning. Derrida calls these smallest meaningful units *grams* (*gramme*). However, this “unit” or “difference” does not exist substantially, but is continually reformed in the process of *différance*. Derrida states in *Positions* that *gram* is *différance*, and thus it describes “a structure and a movement no longer conceivable on the basis of the opposition presence/absence”.<sup>564</sup> In other words, the term *gram* refers to the difference that is neither purely present nor absent. It is rather a question about a difference which does not exist beforehand, but is shaped as part of the network of differences in relation to other differences. Thus, according to Derrida, the *gram* becomes the most common concept of semiology, and semiology becomes a part of grammatology.<sup>565</sup> The meaning of the word is not formed through the referent relationship but as a unit which is a part of the textuality of the whole language.

In adopting grammatology, it also follows that Derrida abandons the static view of the sign (*signe*). The differentiation between the signified and signifier is based not only on the differentiation between expression and content, but rather the dual character of the sign, the expression (signifier) and the meaning (signified), is

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<sup>563</sup> Peters 1967, 110.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., 38/27.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., 38/26.

based also on *différance*. The expression of a linguistic sign is the other of the same (i.e. meaning). *Différance* creates the contrast of inside and outside<sup>566</sup> (i.e. meaning and expression) contained within the linguistic sign. The sign also has the structure of a *trace*, that is, it expresses the closest relationship of the inside (meaning) to its outside. The meaning is born in the relationship to its outside, and opens in the linguistic sign outside the “sphere”, which is not its own. The meaning is thus not present in consciousness as a kind of mental substance, point or entity, but rather the assumed inside of a sign has always already been influenced by its outside.

Along with the semiological sign (*signe*), Derrida also uses a different concept, *marque* (for instance, in *De la grammatologie*, *Limited Inc. a,b,c* and *Positions*). While the French word *signe* means ‘sign’, and its verb form, *signe*, means ‘to sign’, as well as ‘to enforce’, ‘to witness’ and ‘to approve’, the French word *marque* also means ‘sign’ but connotes more a trace than *signe*, because it also means ‘identification mark’, ‘birth mark’ and ‘brand’.<sup>567</sup> One could think that Derrida attempts to use the term *marque* to bring out the idea that it is a question of a differentiating and notable trace, as part of the system of differences. *Marque* would reflect the part where the smallest units of meaning (grams) as well as *différance* can be distinguished; it can be interpreted to mean the smallest meaningful unit, in other words, gram or *différance*. Therefore, it would be tempting to describe grammatology as a critical study of the smallest possible meaningful fact that produces meaning. But such a description would miss the point, because it would be grammatological knowledge, which differs from grammatology as a practice.<sup>568</sup>

Derrida claims in *Positions* that “Grammatology must deconstruct everything that ties the concept and norms of scientificity to ontotheology, logocentrism, phonocentrism.”<sup>569</sup> In *De la grammatologie* Derrida claims that “the practice of science in fact has never ceased to protest the imperialism of *Logos*”,<sup>570</sup> which

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<sup>566</sup> POS, 45/33.

<sup>567</sup> “[T]here is...[a] simulated play on etymology here. The series in French is *marque, marge, marche*. “*Marche*” in French has the sense not only of “*march*”, but also of “*step*”, “*degree*”, “*action of movement by walking*”, etc. (...) [T]his etymological play, whether simulated or real, serves as an inscription of “*concepts*” that simultaneously mean either or neither of their usual senses.” (Translator’s note by Alan Bass in *Positions*, 101).

<sup>568</sup> GRAM, 109/74.

<sup>569</sup> POS, 48/35.

<sup>570</sup> GRAM, 12/3.

appears in the classical metaphysical presumption that would link *logos* to *phoné*. What is problematic in this connection is the assumption that the meaning and idea (*logos*) appear in their most purest and immediate form in speech (*phoné*). Speech is the formation of meaning in its selfsameness. The Western scientific tradition, and especially the philosophical tradition, has ignored and repressed the effects of language as writing in order to maintain the possibility of the repetition of the original intention and meaning. This possibility of repeating the original meaning is the precondition for science in general, because science implies the possibility of the stability and repeatability of its concepts, which makes communication among scholars possible. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida follows the argumentation of several philosophers and linguists (Saussure, Plato, Husserl, Rousseau), that have attempted to keep the dangers of writing, such as the alteration of meaning, outside of the formation of meaning in speech. Derrida shows that the dangers of writing belong also to speech and phonetic writing. Speech, as well as writing, implies a repetition of signs and, therefore, it is not secure from the risks of the drifting of meaning or even from the loss of meaning, and the absence of the original intention and referent, the play of differences, *différance* and the endless chains of signifiers. By undoing the fundamental conditions of logocentrism, grammatology “risks destroying the concept of science as well.”<sup>571</sup> In *Positions* Derrida claims that “it *inscribes* and *delimits* science”<sup>572</sup> by showing how the scientific practice relies on writing and textuality, which does not offer any stable ground for knowledge. For these reasons also, it is problematic to call grammatology a science.<sup>573</sup> In *Positions* Derrida claims that “grammatology is less another science, a new discipline charged with a new content and domain, than the vigilant practice of (...) textual division.”<sup>574</sup> Derrida describes this practice of textual division as a kind of double register: “it must simultaneously go beyond metaphysical positivism and scientism, and accentuate whatever in the effective work of science contributes to freeing it of the metaphysical bonds that have borne on its definition and its movement since its beginning.”<sup>575</sup> This description

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid., 109/74.

<sup>572</sup> POS, 49/36.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 36/50, GRAM., 109/74.

<sup>574</sup> POS., 36/50.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid., 48-49/35.

shows that grammatology is a deconstructive practice. Hence Silverman claims that “‘deconstruction’ is what ‘grammatology’ does.”<sup>576</sup>

All in all, in grammatology the question is about looking at the formation of meaning as a dynamic process of *différance*, as the play of writing and differences or traces. Meaning is not a static point in the mind, but rather is formed in the network of differences. In the following section my intention is to look at grammatology from the point of view of writing and the play of differences.

#### 4.2. The science of writing

*Writing (écriture)* is one of the central yet hardest to interpret terms in grammatology. The French word *écriture* means 'writing', 'the way and style of writing', 'handwriting' and the 'written work'. But Derrida gives the term several new meanings and expands the concept to also include phenomena that in the use of everyday language are not linked with *writing*. One of the most debated questions among scholars of deconstruction has been: What is its relationship of Derrida's concept of *writing* to everyday language? Also, does it imply an extension of the notion of writing? For example, Gasché warns confusing Derrida's notion of writing with the commonly used concept of writing by claiming that “Major writing, as Derrida calls the arche-synthesis of writing (...) is not reducible to the sensible or visible presence of the graphic or the 'literal'.<sup>[577]</sup> General writing, having nothing mundane about it, is beyond being...”<sup>578</sup> Hence, for Gasché arche-writing refers to a quasi-transcendental synthesis “that accounts for the necessary corruption of the idealities, or transcendental of all sorts, by what they are defined against, and at the very moment

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<sup>576</sup> Silverman 1994, 59. Gregory L. Ulmer elaborates Derrida's ideas about grammatological practice in regard to pedagogy in the humanities. He claims that grammatology signifies a new compositional attitude: "Grammatology as composition (Writing) is not confined to books or articles, but is addressed more comprehensively to the needs of multichanneled performance – in the classroom and in video and film as well. [...] It is a research undertaken in a dramatic rather than in a conceptual form." (Ulmer 1985, xii-xiii). Thus Ulmer develops a sort of post(e)-pedagogy, which would be an applied grammatology.

<sup>577</sup> Gasché refers here to Derrida's claim that "I have often insisted on the fact that 'writing' or the 'text' are not reducible *either* to the sensible or visible presence of the graphic or the 'literal'." (POS, 65/87-88).

<sup>578</sup> Gasché 1986, 274.

of their constitution.”<sup>579</sup> Harvey similarly claims that the movement from writing to arche-writing is “the shift from the *is* structure of the *Logos* to the *as* structure of that which founds it.”<sup>580</sup> Hence the trace would be another name for (arche)writing.<sup>581</sup> Also Spivak claims that “Writing, then, is the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace. This is a broader concept than the empirical concept of writing”.<sup>582</sup> But contrary views have also been presented; for example, in her PhD dissertation *Writing as Spacing* (1992) Outi Pasanen attacked interpretations that emphasise the absolute irreducibility of Derrida's notion of writing to the empirical notion of writing. She criticises in particular Gasché's interpretation that arche-writing is necessarily “transcendental” and that empirical writing only metaphorically represents it.<sup>583</sup> Her claim is that “writing as spacing is a question on both the transcendental and the empirical levels, and yet it is neither transcendental nor empirical”.<sup>584</sup> A third option for interpreting Derrida's notion of writing is to consider it as describing empirical, scriptural writing, which indeed is what Rorty claims in his essay “Philosophy as a Kind of Writing” (1982).

The difficulty in placing and naming the *topos* where writing occurs is due to the undecidable nature of writing. Many Derrida scholars can agree with the statement that “writing is undecidable”, but dispute what that actually means. I shall present one solution — which is also disputable. My argument is that Derrida's notion of writing is an undecidable in the sense that writing describes the act of producing linguistic meaning (in speech or in writing in the everyday sense) and the simultaneous disappearance of the animating intention in this process. Undecidability describes the wavering between two possibilities that cannot be thought together in the same context. The two possible ways of describing the process of meaning cannot be subsumed under one coherent theory of meaning; rather, the description of the process of meaning implies taking account two perspectives that have a conflicting and

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<sup>579</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>580</sup> Harvey 1986, 155.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>582</sup> Spivak 1997, in “Translator's Preface” in *Of Grammatology* xxxix.

<sup>583</sup> Pasanen 1992a, 42, Pasanen 1992b, 107, Gasché 1986, 273. Pasanen does not pay attention to the fact that Gasché uses quotation marks every time he claims that arche-writing is “transcendental”. In doing so Gasché emphasises the quasi-transcendental nature of writing (which, in fact, is close to what Pasanen claims about writing) as the spacing occurring at both the transcendental and empirical levels.

<sup>584</sup> Pasanen 1992a, 42.

chiasmatic relation. The one perspective considers how meaning is formed in a movement from the “inside” to an “outside” expression, while the other describes how the “outside” forms the “inside”. Something awaits being said in order for it to come into existence, and which immediately differs from its “expression”. At the same time, there is nothing until it has received its linguistic or other kind of material identity. The undecidability of writing is due to the chiasmatic process of producing meaning, where neither the language (mundane, empirical) nor the “experience of a subject” can be considered as the originary birthplace of meaning; rather, in the process of meaning the field of language, linguistic expression, texts and the “subjective components” (memory and experience traces) are intertwined in such a way that the relation between them cannot be described as a logical causality starting from some origin and leading to its end. Instead, the end is the same as the beginning, that is, the linguistic expression (as the end of a process of meaning) is at the same time the origin of meaning. Therefore, writing names the undecidable and chiasmatic intertwinement of the auxiliary means of language with the interiority, where the interiority appears as a trace, always differing from its auxiliary expressions. Hence, this kind of interpretation of the notion of writing would combine the possibilities presented by Gasché, Harvey, Pasanen, Spivak and Rorty. Derrida's notion of writing, as opposed to the everyday notion of writing, describes the larger process of meaning: it names the chiasmatic event, where the “inner process” and the material side of language meet. However, Derrida often speaks of writing in the everyday sense, and reveals the effects of writing that the philosophical tradition has overlooked, because of its unquestioned phonocentrism. Derrida's main claim in this respect is that the objectivity of science is dependent upon the continuous repetition of idealities after the event of their creation. This repetition is possible only because of writing, which at the same time makes it impossible, because the repetition will always in fact be an alteration. The meaning of a text or sign (whether it is oral or written) alters in their repetition because they are grafted in a different context than the event of their creation.

In *De la grammatologie* Derrida does indeed state that the non-concept of *writing* “essentially communicates with the vulgar concept of writing”.<sup>585</sup> This raises the question of how these concepts communicate with one another. What is this

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<sup>585</sup> GRAM, 83/56.

communication in general? Does it mean similarity, for instance? Analogies can be found between Derrida's term *writing* and its everyday language meaning. Firstly, in *writing* the materiality of language and signs emerges stronger than in speech. Derrida has in several different instances paid attention to the notion that in speech the material element of language is forgotten, for when speaking it is as if one is in an immediate connection with the meanings.<sup>586</sup> In his own writings he emphasises that in speech, too, language – material signs – is used to enable the manifestation and preservation of an ideal content. According to Derrida, the ideal content does not exist as something identifiable before its material manifestation. The content is born simultaneously with the material expression. For instance, according to the theory of so-called ideational meaning, the meanings are ideas conveyed by linguistic expressions. In this instance it is seen that meaning precedes and exists independently of the linguistic expression.<sup>587</sup> According to Derrida, the linguistic expression produces the linguistic content and makes it visible. Emphasising the materiality of language also leads to the situation where linguistic expressions cannot be translated into other languages such that their content would be preserved unchanged. Meanings are also contained in the material expression of linguistic meaning, which makes it impossible to translate expressions retaining the same meaning. This manifests itself particularly clearly in the translation of literature and philosophy, because in both of these cases connotations linked with specific words are consciously utilised. Pure translations of contents remove the graphic expression, the meanings linked with tones and sounds, as well as on the other hand cultural meanings.

The second point of convergence between Derrida's term *écriture* (writing) and the concept of the writing in everyday language is that just as writing can immediately lose its connection with the referent after having been written (and similarly in all uses of language) the original referent has always already disappeared in communication through speech. Derrida has indeed observed that writing entails two kinds of absence: the absence of a sender and the absence of a referent.<sup>588</sup> This does not only mean the actual absence of both a sender and referent but also that one

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<sup>586</sup> V&P, 86-90/ 77-81, GRAM, 17/ 7-8, POS, 36/25.

<sup>587</sup> For instance, Aristotle, John Locke and William of Ockham are seen as supporters of the theory of ideational meaning. Thus it is thought that the spoken and written language only mean in a secondary way and conventionally, whereas the mental language means naturally and originally. See Haaparanta 1994, 27.

<sup>588</sup> Sec, 379-380/318-319.

never has a connection to the meanings of the speaker or writer. Spivak, among others, emphasises this meaning in her interpretation of *writing* as a non-concept. According to Spivak, with the term *writing* Derrida expresses the idea of perennial alterity linked with the structure of the sign. The sign cannot be understood as a homogeneous unity that would function as a bridge between the origin (referent) and its end point (meaning), as it is thought to do in semiology, because the relation to the referent is broken.<sup>589</sup> In “Signature, événement, context”, Derrida describes “the essential predicates in a minimal determination of the classical concept of writing” as following:

“1. A written sign, in the usual sense of the word, is... a mark which remains, which is not exhausted in the present of its inscription, and which can give a rise to an iteration both in the absence of and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it. (...)

2. By the same token, a written sign carries with it a force of breaking with its context, that is the set of presences which organize the moment of its inscription. (...)

3. This force of rupture is due to the spacing which constitutes the written sign: the spacing which separates it from other elements of the internal contextual chain (the always open possibility of its extraction and grafting), but also from all the forms of a present referent (past or to come in the modified form of the present past or to come) that is objective or subjective. (...)<sup>590</sup>

In *Limited inc, a, b, c*, Derrida gives three characteristics of writing: 1) A written sign and a text can function independently of the intentionality of the sender or author, 2) A written sign and a text can be read even though the reader does not know the 'original' context and 3) Characteristic of the structure of the written sign is *spacing*, that is, *différance*, which refers to the fact that at the 'moment' of forming a meaning through signs the meaning differs and defers from that sign. The trait particular to writing is the possibility of its repeatability or iterability in another event in the absence of the sender, his/her intentions, and the context of its original 'utterance'.

<sup>589</sup> Spivak in the *Translator's Preface in Of Grammatology* 1997, xxxix.

<sup>590</sup> Sec, 377/317.

However, as mentioned above, Derrida has emphasised that the repetition and iteration is always an alteration.<sup>591</sup> The written text is reconstituted and recontextualised in different readings in new contexts, with different animations of intentions and meanings.

According to Bennington, writing is a form of telecommunication, that is, it “communicates my thoughts to far distances, during my absence, even after my death.”<sup>592</sup> Similarly, Pasanen claims that “Writing in this sense is 'testamentary', in other words, it will function beyond 'my death' and independent of the life my intentions would like to give it.”<sup>593</sup> The death of the author or writer has been one of the most misunderstood arguments in Derrida's writings.<sup>594</sup> In *Limited inc, a, b, c*, he emphasises several times *the possibility of the absence of the sender*:

“If one admits that writing (and the mark in general) *must be able* to function in the absence of the sender, the receiver, the context of production, etc., that implies that this power, this *being able*, this *possibility* is *always* inscribed, hence *necessarily* inscribed *as possibility* in the functioning or the functional structure of the mark.”<sup>595</sup>

The death and absence of the sender, the original intention and the receiver as the inscribed possibilities and conditions of writing reveal the irreducible uncertainty of the essential structure of writing and linguistic expression in general. Bennington describes this uncertainty as an uncertainty of “whether what I write is really what I meant, fully *compos mentis*, at the moment of writing”, whether I wrote it seriously or not.<sup>596</sup> Writing can never fully 'express' the author's thoughts or realise his/her

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<sup>591</sup> LI, 44, 71.

<sup>592</sup> Bennington 1999, 43, 50, Sec, 372/313.

<sup>593</sup> Pasanen 1992a, 37.

<sup>594</sup> Roland Barthes, is most often associated with the expression "the death of the author". See, for example, his essay "La mort de l'auteur" in *Mantéia* (1968). Barthes claims in the above essay that "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing." (Barthes 1977a, 142). After the event of writing the voice loses its origin and the author enters into his own death. According to Barthes, the author is never more than the instance of writing (ibid. 145). Barthes' famous argument is that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author." (ibid., 148).

<sup>595</sup> LI, 48.

<sup>596</sup> Bennington 1999, 51.

intentions. Hence Bennington claims that the death of the sender “opens writing to the general alterity of its destination, but simultaneously forbids any sure or total arrival at such a destination: the presumed unity of a text, marked in principle by its author’s signature, thus has to wait on the other’s countersignature.”<sup>597</sup> From this it follows that reading has no ending, that is, that the text never comes to rest in a unity or meaning finally revealed or discovered.<sup>598</sup>

In *De la grammatologie* Derrida shows how the Western philosophical tradition has been characterised by the view that writing is secondary to speech, that is, secondary in relation to the presence of meaning in speech or thinking. Writing has been seen only as a notation system, the mark of a sign, whereas speech has been seen as having an immediate connection to meanings.<sup>599</sup> Writing has been seen as a material and artificial exteriority, a sort of clothing (*vêtement*).<sup>600</sup> The history of philosophy has in this sense been a history *against* writing.<sup>601</sup> Its aim has been to eradicate factors linked with writing, such as the floating of meaning, separateness, the ambiguity of language, the lack of intentionality of the author, and the indeterminacy of contexts. For example, according to Derrida, in the *Phaedrus* Plato denounces writing on the one hand as the intrusion of an artful technique and on the other hand as a kind of archetypal violence, “the eruption of the *outside* within the *inside*, breaching into the interiority of the soul”.<sup>602</sup> In the Western tradition, writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered as the body and matter external to the spirit, speech and *logos*. According to Derrida, the dualism between

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid., 55-56.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>599</sup> Derrida claims: “With regard to this unity (*l’unité de phonè*), writing would always be derivative, accidental, particular, exterior, doubling the signifier: phonetic. ‘Sign of a sign,’ said Aristotle, Rousseau and Hegel.” (GRAM, 45/29).

<sup>600</sup> “Writing, sensible matter and artificial exteriority: a ‘clothing’.” (GRAM, 52/35)

<sup>601</sup> Heidegger states the opposite in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1959), claiming that “down to our own time, language has been interpreted grammatically”, because grammar represents language in Being (Heidegger 1959, 64). According to Heidegger, the Greeks thought that spoken language comes to a standstill in writing, while in speech language sweeps away into the impermanent. Therefore, the written signs and letters represent the language in its permanent form (ibid., 64). There is only a short step from this argument to Husserl’s claim, in “Die Frage Nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie” (1938), that writing is the condition of the possibility of ideal objects and therefore scientific objectivity. Writing offers the possibility of repetition as the precondition of ideality to survive during the absence of the sender or even after the death of the sender, as Derrida has argued.

<sup>602</sup> GRAM, 52/34.

soul and body would indeed seem to be derived from the problem of writing, from which it seems to borrow its metaphors.<sup>603</sup> Derrida strives to show that *writing*, as an “image”, external figuration and representation, is not just the innocent providence of an expression to a ready meaning. In the relationship of the outside to the inside it is not a matter of there being a simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa.<sup>604</sup> The outside gives the form to the inside, which would be featureless without an exterior expression; but at the same time, the outside differs from the inside and produces the difference between these.

There is still a third similarity between Derrida’s term *writing* and the concept of writing in everyday language. Just as when we normally write we write with an individual hand-writing, there is always something personal linked with the event of the formation of meaning, even though we indeed use a common language. In his later writings, Derrida does indeed often use the word *signature* to describe the nature of writing. While the signature is always the same and repeatable it is also every time different or idiomatic.<sup>605</sup> There is no fully identical signature. A signature expresses sameness within which variations occur, and always reproduces the idiom, a unique meaning within the same. Derrida talks about the signature, for instance in *Signéponge*, when describing the relationship of the French poet Francis Ponge to an object (*das Ding*). The question is about an individual and unique contact. The word does not have one true meaning, but the meaning is placed in an abyss (*mise en abime*), that is, it is groundless.<sup>606</sup> The word is the cover of this abyss or well. An expression does not refer to an image but to an endless abyss. The abyss of meaning

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Sec, 389/326.

<sup>606</sup> SP, 28/29. The term *mise en abime* (abyss) is a term used in literary theory, and refers to the internal narrative of the work which reflects, varies or repeats the overall theme of the story in miniature form. The term stems from heraldry, referring to the miniature pictures inside other pictures containing heraldic shields. Derrida uses the term *mise en abime* as a synonym for *différance* as well as the chain of signifiers. The meaning is an abyss which is postponed and withdrawing. The meaning can only be approached via new signifiers, which form a chain. The chain does, however, not have an end point (transcendental signified), which the signifiers could express as such, transparent and present.

comes about in the different temporal and local repetitions.<sup>607</sup> A signature is never always fully the same, even though the name would remain the same. In the same way, meaning is not fully the same, even though the word would be the same. Every event of understanding the meaning brings a new individual change in relation to the earlier meaning.

So what, then, is the relationship between writing and language? Is writing another name for language or does Derrida strive with the concept of *writing* to bring out something other than features directly related to language? The relationship between the quasi-concept of *writing* and language can be interpreted in many ways. It is possible to think that Derrida replaces the concept of language with *writing* because he wants to emphasise the characteristics of the former linked with the latter. He has indeed stated that "...language is first... writing".<sup>608</sup> Thus, Derrida uses the term *writing* in order to lessen the metaphysical assumptions linked with language. Regarding these assumptions, he criticises above all the view that language is only expression. Furthermore, he criticises the view that linguistic expressions are translatable into another language simply by changing the expression. With the term *writing* Derrida strives to transcend the dualism between the signified and signifier linked with language. The term *writing* describes the undecidability of the linguistic sign: the meaning emerges only through the signifier, and on the other hand the meaning can never be exhausted or reduced to the signifier, but rather it always differs and defers from the linguistic sign. Linguistic signs begin to work as such only as a unity between the signifier and signified. In the mind there is no idea, content or thought that would be independent of the linguistic expression.

According to Derrida, the development of certain systems of writing 3000 to 4000 years ago was a particularly remarkable step in the history of human life.<sup>609</sup> He considers it an extraordinary development because it entailed a prodigious expansion

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<sup>607</sup> Merleau-Ponty presents a similar view in *Le visible et l'invisible* (1964/1987, 151). There he describes the idea as a *dimension*. He describes how in perception we do not understand so much the contents but we open to the dimension. We understand things in their depth. According to him, in perception we don't perceive things so much as identity, but as a transcendence, something behind which is always a beyond, the other side, far away (ibid., 195). Correspondingly, language does not represent certain permanent meanings, but for Merleau-Ponty the same transcendence is linked with language. We do not speak only of what we already know, but also of what we do not know in order to know (ibid., 102).

<sup>608</sup> GRAM, 55/37.

of the power of *différance* which modifies life less and less as it spreads out more and more. *Writing* is special for life because it brings along *différance*, that is, the postponement of presence, which enables the forming of a reserve. Derrida talks about the everyday language meaning of writing, in other words, linguistic writing.

Furthermore, one can ask, what is the relationship between *writing* and the common language system (*le langage*) generally? How is Derrida's term *writing* situated in the semiotic-linguistic view? Does he abandon the term *le langage* because it connotes centrally Saussure's linguistics, the phonocentricity of which Derrida has criticised? Does the term *writing* refer to a system based on graphic differences, whereas Saussurean linguistics is based rather on phonetic differences? The term *writing* can be seen as a certain type of comment with respect to the phonocentricity linked with Saussure's linguistics. In *Cours de linguistique générale* Saussure emphasises the primary position of speech in relation to written language because the task of language is only to represent sounds.<sup>610</sup> Derrida questions the primariness of speech by claiming that speech in itself already requires a graphic alphabetical practice,<sup>611</sup> in other words, a kind of repeatable sign system and an agreement about the "correlation of phonic segments and concepts",<sup>612</sup> as well as an agreement about the smallest meaning unit.

One can argue that Derrida attempts to replace specifically Saussure's concept of the sound pattern (*l'image acoustique*) with the term *writing*. The sound pattern means a combination comprised of different sounds that produces a word. In Saussure the linguistic sign is formed above all by the connection between the sound pattern and the concept.<sup>613</sup> The written language is for Saussure only a disguise that obscures linguistic facts, because writing does not correspond with the sounds and, on the other hand, it alters the pronunciation of words.<sup>614</sup> According to Derrida, even the oral language already belongs to writing.<sup>615</sup> This means that the phonic level, too, is structured by writing as a kind of grammar of the use of sounds. Conceptualising always requires the event of becoming an other. The meaning does not appear in the

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<sup>609</sup> GRAM, 190-191/130-131.

<sup>610</sup> Saussure 1972, 56/33.

<sup>611</sup> POS, 36/25.

<sup>612</sup> Saussure 1972, 150/106.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., 98/66

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., 51-52/29.

<sup>615</sup> Cf. GRAM, 81/55.

interiority of the subject, but requires knowledge about the language system and the smallest possible meaningful differences. Also, the Saussurean acoustic image requires writing and grammar, through which sounds are formed. It requires knowledge about what sounds or phonemes have linguistic value. By linguistic value I here mean the smallest meaningful differentiating unit. It is in this context that Derrida talks about the *gram*. For instance, the differences between the words 'cat' and 'cap' is the difference of one letter, in other words a graphical difference. On the other hand, for Saussure the smallest linguistic value is defined in the smallest phonic differences; therefore, one can claim that his linguistics is not sensitive to the graphic difference. However, Bennington argues that the distinction between speech and writing is not pertinent at the level of *langue*. The *langue* as a system functions in the same way for events of speech as for events of writing.<sup>616</sup>

One could say that with the term *writing* Derrida strives to depict specifically the nature of the formation of meaning. The formation of meaning is essentially *writing*. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida states that *writing* is the condition of the possibility for ideal objects, scientific objectivity and knowledge in general.<sup>617</sup> Ideal meaning contents have no existence in themselves, but preserving them requires a repeatable empirical and material mark. They can be studied only with the help of language, enabling the movement of meaning to be set in motion. According to Silverman Derrida's quasi-concept of writing is an *indécidable*. Thus the writing is neither the act of producing a text nor that which is produced but rather that which happens at the hinge between the two. Derrida's term *writing* designates "the originary space in which a text is communicated, disseminated, displayed, incorporated, limited, contexted, and so forth."<sup>618</sup>

In this chapter I have mainly looked at the relationship of the term *writing* to the concept of writing in everyday language. But more essential from the point of view of understanding Derrida's term is indeed how it differs from the ordinary view of writing. The term does not so much mean empirical writing or language but something else. In *Positions* Derrida writes: "It is a question, rather, of producing a

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<sup>616</sup> Bennington 1999, 59.

<sup>617</sup> According to Derrida, "...writing is not only an auxiliary means in the service of science (...) but first (...) the condition of the possibility of ideal objects and therefore of scientific objectivity. Before being its object, writing is the condition of the *épistémè*." GRAM, 42-43/27

<sup>618</sup> Silverman 1994, 20-21.

new concept of writing. This concept can be called *gram* or *différance*.<sup>619</sup> Writing is one name for the process of *différance*, the non-substantial play of differences, grams and traces. Thus, the term *writing* differs from the concept of ordinary language in that language is not thought of as being formed by signs that would get their meaning as a reference relationship to the referent. Instead, the marks of spoken and written language receive their meaning in relation to the complete linguistic system and other linguistic differences, graphs and phonemes. Hence, Derrida's term refers to the play of differences.

### 4.3. From a transcendental signified to the play of differences

The term "the play of differences" (*le jeu des différences*) is linked with a similar problem as the term *writing*; that is, does the play of differences concern only linguistic, graphical and phonic differences, and the play between them, or can one also find a play of differences at the non-linguistic level? The term can be interpreted to mean only the formation of linguistic meaning, because Derrida explicitly agrees with Saussure that in the system of language there are only differences,<sup>620</sup> where the differences between signs, graphemes and phonemes produces meanings.<sup>621</sup> However, in *Positions* he talks of considering "every process of signification as a formal play of differences. That is, of traces."<sup>622</sup> Thus, I would claim, the play of differences occurs also on the prepredicative level. It is possible to say, however, that on the prepredicative level it is not a question of meaning, but rather of non-substantial play. On the prepredicative level, the play of differences is a more shapeless play of images and memory traces. Images have no clear shape; they are rather shapeless. On the level of language, however, the play of differences comes about from the differences of letters, sounds, words and sentences. The differences are not static substantial differences. The formation of meaning is the non-substantial movement of traces where each non-substantial trace receives its meaning in relation to other traces.

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<sup>619</sup> POS, 37/26.

<sup>620</sup> Dif, 12/11.

<sup>621</sup> POS, 38/26-27.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 37/26.

Derrida indeed calls the lack of a transcendental signified “play” (*jeu*).<sup>623</sup> “The play of differences” thus depicts the character of a meaning as a dynamic process where each trace receives its meaning in relation to other traces. There is no ready and complete meaning in the mind (transcendental signified) but rather the meaning is formed in a dynamic process as the “the play of differences”. In *Positions* Derrida describes “the play of differences” as follows:

“The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself. Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present.”<sup>624</sup>

That which is called “meaning” is always thoroughly constituted by the play of differences, by the traces of differences, by the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other.<sup>625</sup> Meaning is thus a trace which is created in the dynamic process born of difference, and it cannot be completely present in itself, but rather it receives its meaning in relation to other traces. Differences or grams are not complete, but manifest themselves only in relation to each other. One way of bringing greater clarity to Derrida’s terminology would be to describe the processes of the prepredicative level as ‘the game of traces and differences’, and the process of meaning of the language level as ‘the play of differences of phonemes, graphemes and signs’.

Derrida’s view on the play of differences has to a significant extent been influenced by Saussure’s view of language as a system of differences. Saussure put forth the idea that the content of any word is not defined only by what it refers to but also by the whole linguistic system influencing the meaning of the word. As a part of the system, the word has not only a meaning but also a value (*valeur*).<sup>626</sup> Value is a kind of additional meaning that the word receives as a part of the linguistic system. Saussure presents language as a holistic system, which changes when even one element changes. He compares a language system to the movement of planets. If even

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<sup>623</sup> “This play, thought as absence of the transcendental signified...” (GRAM, 73/50).

<sup>624</sup> POS, 37-38/26.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 38/27.

one planet becomes lighter and changes its dimensions the whole system changes.<sup>627</sup> A similar holistic view of language can be seen in Derrida's thoughts about language as "the play of differences". Saussure, however, according to Derrida, "accedes to the classical exigency of what I have proposed to call a 'transcendental signified', which in and of itself, in its essence, would refer to no signifier, would exceed the chain of signs, and would no longer itself function as a signifier."<sup>628</sup> In other words, he claims that according to Saussure the meaning of any word can nevertheless change endlessly because it is kept 'in place' by the transcendental signified. For Derrida, however, the play of differences is unlimited, in which case it is not kept in place by any transcendental signified.

The play of differences can also be examined with the aid of Gestalt Psychology. The basic principle of Gestalt Psychology is that in perception the object of perception is perceived as "something", as a figure, form or being in relation to its ground. The object of the perception has no identity as such, but receives it in relation to its background. In the same way, *différance* produces identities and the presence of meaning in relation to its ground. With language this means that the linguistic sign receives its content, identity, figure and presence in relation to the whole linguistic system. The linguistic meaning makes a difference in relation to all other linguistic signs, graphemes and phonemes. The meaning of the linguistic presence, identity and interiority is born in the separation occurring at the border of the sign. The model of Gestalt Psychology, however, is too simple when outlining the linguistic system of differences as well as *différance* because the linguistic system of differences is formed not only from present substantial differences between the sign and its ground but also by dynamic non-substantial differences. From this follows that no meaning is present self-identically, but rather the presence of meaning in consciousness is essentially diffused to its borders and characterised by absence. Emphasising dynamism (processuality), absence and the unconscious separates Derrida's view of language from the semiotic language theory in which differences are present.

In *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) Toril Moi presents a particularly clear interpretation of the play of differences presented by Derrida. According to her, the play of differences can be understood with the help of Saussure's term *phoneme*.

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<sup>626</sup> Saussure 1972, 160/113.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., 121/84.

<sup>628</sup> POS, 30/19.

According to Saussure, the phoneme is the smallest meaning sound unit of language, but which in itself does not mean anything. The phoneme does not entail a true binary oppositeness either, but only one in relation to other phonemes, from which it differs. For instance, the English language words, *bat*, *cat* and *hat* only differ by one phoneme.<sup>629</sup> Derrida, however, would emphasise, unlike Saussure, that the difference between these words is based specifically on the graphemic difference, that is, the written difference. The deconstructive view of the play of differences differs from the Structuralist view also in that Derrida links 'historicity' to the Saussurean play of differences. The term *différance* expresses the temporal aspect linked with the play of differences. One can indeed say that *différance* is another name for the play of differences. Derrida has characterised the play of differences with the help of the term *différance* as follows:

“Retaining at least the framework, if not the content, of this requirement formulated by Saussure, we will designate as *différance* the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of referral in general, is constituted “historically” as a weave of differences.”<sup>630</sup>

In other words, Derrida links a temporal dimension to the network of structural differences, in which case the meaning is formed in the network of differences in relation to other differences, which in turn are historical, that is, transformed in time. He does indeed characterise the term *différance* on the one hand as a difference concerning space and spatialization (*éspacement*) and on the other hand as a temporal difference and temporisation (*temporisation*). Spatialization and temporisation are, according to Derrida, not separate from one another, but in *différance* the question is about the placement of time into space and about space becoming temporal.<sup>631</sup> Thus, the present becomes present in relation to the differences which are both spatial and temporal, in other words, in relation to the network of differences, which is essentially historical. Historicity manifests itself, according to Derrida, such that the present preserves within itself the mark (*marque*) of the element of the past, which then

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<sup>629</sup> Moi 1985, 105-106.

<sup>630</sup> Dif, 12-13/12.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 14.

weakens the project because characteristic of it is its relation to the element of the future.<sup>632</sup>

One could argue that Derrida radicalises Saussure's thought about the differential nature of the sign by linking to it the thought – mainly stemming from Derrida's critique of Husserl, and his development of Husserl's temporal analyses – of the basic temporality and historicity of the meaning of thought.<sup>633</sup> However, the double meaning of *différance* (difference and defERENCE) could simply be returned to the impulses adapted from, on the one hand, Husserl, and, on the other hand, Saussure. This double meaning can be seen as an attempt to think together the differential character of the sign and the temporising synthesis producing the identity.<sup>634</sup> Derrida considers the meaning in confrontation between synchronic linguistics,<sup>635</sup> which considers the formation of signification as a part of language, and phenomenological epistemology, which considers the forming of meaning through experience. Likewise, Silverman has pointed out, in *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (1994), that deconstruction is one theoretical practice among others, which offers a way of reading texts in such a zero degree of phenomenological meaning and semiological signification, that the respective differing functions overlap and cooperate. Deconstruction, as one theoretical practice

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>633</sup> For example, Ismo Nikander has considered this issue in his article "Merkkien Loputon Leikki" ["The Infinite Play of Differences"], Nikander 1997.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>635</sup> According to Saussure, "*Synchronic linguistics* will be concerned with logical and psychological connections between coexisting items constituting a system, as perceived by the same collective consciousness" (Saussure 1972 140/98). Diachronic linguistics on the other hand "studies the relations which hold not between the coexisting terms of the linguistic state, but between successive terms substituted one for another over a period of time" (ibid., 193/139). According to Thomas A. Sebeok, the synchronic approach to the study of signs refers to structural and functional study, while the diachronic perspective implies a developmental, ontogenetic and evolutionary approach (Sebeok 1991, 65). Synchronic linguistics studies the differential nature of signs, the function of linguistic value, syntagmatic and associative relations of words, phrases and sentences. Diachronic linguistics concerns the historical change of sound, phonetic evolution and its grammatical effects. According to Terence Hawkes, "The *Cours de linguistique général* presents the argument that language should be studied, not only in terms of its individual parts, and not only diachronically, but also in terms of the relationship *between* those parts, and *synchronically*: that is, in terms of *current* adequacy. (...) Saussure's insistence on the importance of the *synchronic* as distinct from the *diachronic* study of language

of hermeneutic semiology, “would operate at the intersection of the vertical interpretative, constitutive, meaning-forming experience and the horizontal dispersive, differential system-articulating signifying chain.”<sup>636</sup> This is a chiasmatic and undecidable position, because even though the phenomenologist's meaning (*Sinn*) and the structuralist's signification (*signification*) can be located in the same place epistemologically, their difference at the ontological level must be identified.<sup>637</sup> However, deconstruction would work at the hinge or borderline between the two.

Derrida's view about the play of differences overturns the notion of the ideality of concepts. The ideality of concepts means in this context that concepts are thought to have an ideal form of existence and essence (for instance, as the content of consciousness) irrespective of language. The view of the formation of meaning as part of the play of differences brings forth the fact that concepts and meanings change in relation to the whole linguistic field, as well as the tensions produced by the system of differences. Derrida indeed talks about the living energy of meaning<sup>638</sup> (*l'énergie vivante du sens*),<sup>639</sup> as well as about an energetics and economics of forces (*énergétique et économique des forces*).<sup>640</sup> Despite the fact that he describes the meaning as an energetic phenomenon, and as a result of the economy of forces, the play of differences is a systematic production of meaning. For instance, in *Positions*, Derrida states that “*Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other.”<sup>641</sup> Presumably with the term *systematics of the play of differences* he refers to the organised character of the linguistic system. On the other hand, the meaning of words and, more widely, sentences, is formed in relation to the size and differences contained in language. The formation of this meaning is limited by grammars, the vocabulary of a language, as well as by the rules of how language is used.

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was momentous because it involved recognition of language's current 'structural' properties as well as its 'historical' dimensions" (Hawkes 1977, 19-20).

<sup>636</sup> Silverman 1994, 20.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>638</sup> Derrida speaks here about meaning in the sense of *sense (sens)*, that is, signification.

<sup>639</sup> É&D, 13/5.

<sup>640</sup> Dif, 19/18.

<sup>641</sup> POS, 38/27.

#### 4.4. From a determined context to an unlimited textuality

The play of differences is essentially linked with the notion of unlimited textuality. Derrida does not use the terms text (*texte*) or textuality (*textualité*) only in connection with written texts, but he also speaks of psychical textuality. For instance, in the article “Freud et la scène de l’écriture” he uses the expressions *conscious text* (*le texte conscient*) and the *unconscious text* (*le texte inconscient*).<sup>642</sup> ‘Text’ and ‘textuality’ are in a way other names for ‘writing’ and ‘the play of differences’. The term *textuality* brings out more clearly the character of meaning as a linguistic whole, in relation to which it receives its meaning.

The term *text* refers to the notion that has come about in French philosophy about questioning the borders of the work and the book with the notion of text. Roland Barthes proposes in his article “From Work to Text” (1977) the separation between text and work. He draws a parallel between a *work* and a *book*. The latter is a limited object that you can hold in your hand. The *text* on the other hand is indeterminate and appears only in the movement of the discourses.<sup>643</sup> The *work* is enclosed in the signified, whereas the text is typified by the endless postponement of the signified. The *text* is multifarious, which does not only mean that it has several meanings, but that it produces an irreducible manifold meaning.<sup>644</sup> Thus the *book*, or *work*, is thought to be a limited object, which has a beginning and an end, and what is left between these produces its meaning. The *text* on the other hand is unlimited, it transcends the beginning and end of the book and refers to other texts: it is endlessly intertextual.<sup>645</sup> According to Barthes, “A text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of cultures.”<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> F&scé, 313-314.

<sup>643</sup> Barthes, 1977b, 157.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., 158-159.

<sup>645</sup> According to Barthes, within a text, on different levels, are other texts belonging to an earlier surrounding culture, the form of which are more or less recognisable (Barthes, 1993, 181). According to him, the concept of ‘text’ must indeed not be limited to only the written text, but also music and the arts can be understood from textuality. Ibid. 181.

<sup>646</sup> Barthes 1977a, 146.

Derrida has a chapter in *De la grammatologie* titled “The end of the book and the beginning of writing” (*La fin du livre at le commencement de l’écriture*). The title of the chapter already refers to the aim of getting rid of the notion that the book is a limited unit, a kind of totality with a beginning and end. Instead, Derrida brings out his view about writing as the endless play of differences. For Derrida the notion of textuality is linked with the endless play of meanings of the language. The text has no borders but it can be given endlessly many different meanings and interpretations. Derrida defines *text* as follows:

“... text that is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far.”<sup>647</sup>

One could say that *text* is another name given by Derrida for writing and the play of differences. *Text* does not only mean the written whole, but an endless play of differences and intertextuality. The different parts of a text refer to other texts and receive their meaning in relation to them.

Derrida’s view of text can further be clarified with the help of the term *rhizome*, as presented by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. They see a text as a rhizome, comparable to the rhizome of a living organism. They present the notion of rhizome in opposition to that of *text*, as a sort of root-book (*livre-racine*). The metaphor of the root-book refers to the view that a book can be seen to have certain definable starting points, which are symbolised by the roots of a tree, a certain linear idea or whole, which is symbolised by the trunk of the tree, and with certain consequences and conclusions which are symbolised by the branches and the top of the tree.<sup>648</sup> Trees lead independent and separate lives of their own. The rhizome on the other hand does not form any clearly independent whole, but is essentially without a centre and continually transforming. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is characterised by the principles of unity (heterogeneity) and manifoldness, as well as

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<sup>647</sup> Liv, 96.

<sup>648</sup> Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 11.

meaningless interruption.<sup>649</sup> According to the principle of unity, every point in the rhizome can be connected to any other one.<sup>650</sup> According to the principle of manifoldness, the rhizome is comprised of heterogeneous manifoldness. Thus, the text, as a rhizome, can combine different heterogeneous semiotic chains, power organisations, art events, science and social battles.<sup>651</sup> According to the principle of meaningless interruption, the rhizome is essentially formless, it can be cut off from any point, and it begins to grow again from the same point or from somewhere else.<sup>652</sup>

Derrida's view of language can be seen as just such a textuality, akin to an organic rhizome. Seeing the text as an organic network brings out the continuous change of the text, which on the one hand is linked with the possibility of interruption, absence and death, and on the other hand, as the possibility of continuous growth and movement. Derrida's view can be illustrated also with the idea of an electrical network. The meaning is formed from voltages, which are in continuous movement, and there is no permanent point of meaning, but rather the meaning is formed in the interaction of voltage fields and continuous movement. As a metaphor, however, the electrical network is too static for describing the play of differences because in the electrical network the connections are already built in, while the play of differences does not occur between ready lines.

Hugh J. Silverman elaborates, in *Textualities* (1994), the deconstructive notions of text and textuality. According to him the text is neither a work nor a series of words, neither a book nor the content of its pages, but rather it is the domain in which the interpretations occur. This domain is the space of both writing and reading: the reading of writing and the writing of reading.<sup>653</sup> Silverman claims, furthermore, that the text is "exorbitant".<sup>654</sup> It proceeds beyond itself. This going out beyond itself, and referring to something more than what is there demonstrates the text's supplementarity. The visible and present text is a supplement, an addition and in the "place of" something absent. What is there in the text sets limits to interpretations of the text and establishes the boundaries, margins, borderlines, frontiers and

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<sup>649</sup> If the tree is the classical model of growth, Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of bulbs and tubers as well as rats in their pack-form behaviour as examples of rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari 1980, 14).

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>652</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>653</sup> Silverman 1994, 20.

circumscriptions of the text. Yet, at the same time, the text overflows those boundaries, margins, and circumscriptions.<sup>655</sup> Silverman argues, furthermore, that “the text is a performance, a kind of a speech act. As a performance, the text renders itself present, but what is rendered present is strictly absent.”<sup>656</sup> However, there are always aspects of the text that remain hidden and invisible. This is due to the chiasmatic feature of the text: the text consists of the differential opposite attributes. Text has its inside and outside, visible and invisible, present and absent elements. Thus, according to Silverman “[t]he text is offcenter, located where the intratextual meets the extratextual and dedefines its borders.”<sup>657</sup> Hence, in the text the intratextual features such as the meaning-structures of the text are combined with the extratextual, contextual and referential features of the text. The relation between the extratextual and intratextual is one of mutual dependence. The outside (pre-texts, con-texts, inter-texts) of the text implies its inside.<sup>658</sup>

According to Silverman what is invisible or hidden in the text comes into view in terms of its textuality.<sup>659</sup> Silverman defines the difference between text and textuality as following:

“The text is *what* is read, but its textuality or textualities is *how* it is read. An interpretation of the text arises in that the textualities are understood as the meaning-structure(s) of the text. The interpretation of the text brings the textuality or textualities *in* so as to take them outside the text, so as to specify and determine the text in a particular fashion. The text is apart from its readings and interpretations. Its textuality or textualities are constituted in a reading of the text and identified through an interpretation of it.”<sup>660</sup>

Thus, textuality is the particular way in which the text appears and reveals itself. One text can have many textualities, ways of appearing and ways of disclosing its meaning-structures. However, in this disclosure of the text and bringing forth the invisible of the text in terms of its textuality, there is always something left out,

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<sup>654</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 81.

something that escapes visible determination.<sup>661</sup> According to Silverman, “[t]extuality occurs where the text off-centers itself. The text is off-center (ex-centric); its textuality is its decentering in specific ways.”<sup>662</sup> The text opens up itself in different ways through textuality. Thus, the text makes itself mean and makes itself come about in a particular way. At the same time, the text becomes other than what it is, in a particular way or ways. Hence, according to Silverman, “through its textuality and textualities, the text relinquishes its status as identity and affirms its condition as pure difference. The text “dedefines” itself, inscribes itself in a texture or network of meaning which is not limited to the text itself.”<sup>663</sup> Thus, through textuality, the text attains new meanings, which have seeds in the text, but which disseminate over the text. Textualities bring forth particular aspects of the text, leaving other ways of conceiving the text hidden. Thus, the text is an indecidable and its textuality is its indecidability.<sup>664</sup>

Another important concept that is closely linked with the notions of text and textuality is that of context.<sup>665</sup> According to Derrida, context is not confined within a clearly defined area and background, in relation to which the word or phenomenon can be interpreted or given an ambiguous meaning. Instead, the word can be interpreted endlessly in many different ways because the contexts are in relation to other contexts. Derrida’s view of context is criticised by Jeff Coulter in his article “Is contextualising necessarily interpretative” (1994). As Coulter sees it, an indeterminate context is completely ludicrous in practice because the function of the concept of a context is that the meaning of concepts and terms in a certain context can be determined.<sup>666</sup> Coulter’s critique is pertinent in the sense that it shows the problem of

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>665</sup> By 'context' is meant here the background against which some phenomenon or word is interpreted.

<sup>666</sup> According to Coulter: "However, contrary to the implications Derrida derives from this issue, the formal uncodifiability of contextual particulars in advance of actual cases of purposeful specification does *not* entail the *logical* impossibility of an 'exhaustive' determination of locally relevant particulars on some given occasion of formulating a context for some purpose (...) To complain that contextual specifications are essentially incomplete, indeterminate or uncertain on *these* grounds is to fail to grasp the point that actions-and-their-contexts are *inter-articulated*" (Coulter 1994, 693) A debate about Derrida’s views on context occurred in the *Journal of Pragmatism* in 1994-1996. Jeff Coulter began it by claiming that

undefined contextuality. When a contextual study makes it possible to give some meaning to terms and in that way find a common starting point for understanding the terms, the undefined contextuality takes the foundation from the practical demarcation of the meaning of terms. Coulter also criticises the idea of undefined contextuality from an anthropological point of view. In anthropological research the notion of contextuality has led to a more ethical viewpoint, with different cultures being studied within their own contexts. From the notion of undefined contextuality it follows that the phenomenon of different cultures can be studied in whatever contexts, because all contexts are linked to one another. At its most extreme, the notion of unlimited contextuality leads back to the notion that the researcher can study phenomena of other cultures freely in his own context without even trying to understand foreign contexts.<sup>667</sup>

A similar critique against the notion of endless contextuality can be presented also in the interpretation of texts.<sup>668</sup> Derrida's notion of unlimited textuality has often led to an image of interpretation which does not have as its starting point the aim to understand the concepts or thoughts occurring in a text from their historical contexts, but rather that they can be studied arbitrarily in any modern or historical context. Derrida has also carried out this kind of reading in his own writings; for instance, in *La dissémination* (1972) he interprets Plato's views on mimesis in relation to Mallarmé's literary views.

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"Derrida's reservations about contextuality are engendered by a tacit misconception of contextuality's range of praxiological functions and constraints." (Coulter 1994, 694). Claire Colebrook and Alec McHoul responded in defence of Derrida's view with "Interpreting, understanding, context". They try to show that Derrida does not contest the definition of context but that he denies the absolute defining of context. According to them, Derrida's position on the indeterminacy and undecidability of context is linked with ethics. They claim that for Derrida there is an ethical imperative for recalling the formal limitlessness of any context, because to accept any specific or particular purposive context as exhaustive is to exclude *other* possibilities of understanding. This exclusion can only take place via an interest or ethical decision. (Colebrook & McHoul 1996, 438). Coulter replied to their article, stating that he in the end cannot find those tools or insights that others claim they find in Derrida's texts (Coulter 1995, 445).

<sup>667</sup> Coulter 1994, 690.

<sup>668</sup> Among others, Umberto Eco, in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992), has criticised the poststructuralist idea of endless textuality. Eco 1992, 39-40.

Claire Colebrook and Alec McHoul have challenged Coulter's critique, stating that Derrida is by no means a contextual relativist.<sup>669</sup> Derrida does not contest the definition of contexts, but denies the absolute defining of context.<sup>670</sup> They base their claims on a comment by him in *Limited Inc. a,b,c.*:

“But are the conditions (*les réquisits*) of a context ever absolutely determinable? This is, fundamentally, the most general question that I shall endeavour to elaborate. Is there a rigorous and scientific concept of content? Or does the notion of context not conceal, behind a certain confusion, philosophical presuppositions of a very determinate nature? Stating it in the most summary manner possible, I shall try to demonstrate why a context is never absolutely determinable, or rather, why its determination can never be entirely certain or saturated”<sup>671</sup>

According to Colebrook and McHoul, Derrida represents the view that a context can be determined but it is not absolutely determinable.<sup>672</sup> According to them, Derrida's claims of contextuality are based on the notion that the presuppositions for understanding an expression are ethical. Thus the presuppositions must always be opened also in relation to other interests, relationships and goals, and they cannot be limited *a priori*.<sup>673</sup> In other words, one cannot in advance demarcate the context in which each expression must be comprehended. This entails at the same time the openness of the text in relation to the future. According to Colebrook and McHoul, denying the absolute determination of Derrida's contexts aims for an undecidability linked with the definition of contexts, which requires ethical solutions.<sup>674</sup> This means that expression has no clearly defined context in advance, and that every reader has to make solutions in relation to what is a suitable context for it. If the context would be

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<sup>669</sup> Colebrook and McHoul 1996, 433.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

<sup>671</sup> LI, 2-3.

<sup>672</sup> Colebrook and McHoul 1996, 435. They base their claims on Derrida's statement that “one cannot do anything, least of all speak, without determining (in a manner that is not only theoretical, but practical and performative) a context” (LI, 136).

<sup>673</sup> Colebrook and McHoul 1996, 436.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, 437. Derrida has stated that “There can be no moral or political responsibility without this trial and this passage by way of the undecidable.” (LI, 116). Furthermore, according to him, there exists an ethical imperative, which requires the limitlessness and undecidability of formal contexts (*ibid.*, 152).

defined in advance, the reader would not have to make any decisions but would always necessarily interpret it in a certain way.

From such undecidability it follows that the reader is forced to make decisions which inevitably have ethical consequences. In *Limited Inc.* Derrida emphasises that he has never spoken about the *indeterminacy* of meaning but about the *undecidability* of meaning, which means shuttling between certain possibilities. These possibilities are pragmatically defined.<sup>675</sup> In other words, Derrida supports the view that meaning is always understood in a certain context, but a certain undecidability between different contexts is linked with the choice. Colebrook's and McHoul's interpretation of Derrida's views about contexts brings forth in a very interesting way the ethical dimension linked with Derrida's critique of determined contexts. The fact that a context is not presupposed makes the interpreter responsible for the interpretational solutions. Interpretation is thus making ethical solutions between different context options.

#### 4.5. The deconstruction of referentiality

The deconstruction of referentiality is fundamentally linked with the play of differences and the critique of the transcendental signified. The term *referent* means the object that is spoken of or written about. The referent can be the content of the mind or an external object. On the other hand, the difference between an internal and external referent is not clear, because an external object is always already within the contents of the mind, that is, an object observed by the subject. Generally it is thought the referent precedes linguistic expression so that it is something present, intended to be spoken about, and to which in the end one can return to. Derrida questions the presence and originality of this type of referent. As he sees it, the referent does not precede linguistic expression as a present being, but it is always produced again in the process of the formation of meaning (i.e. in *différance*). In the formation of meaning through *différance*, the interiority of the meaning and its relation to the referent is produced simultaneously in relation to the exteriority of the meaning, in other words, into the system of linguistic differences.

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<sup>675</sup> LI, 148.

In a simplified manner one can say that the referent precedes linguistic expression in the form of a trace or thing (*la chose*) – but in fact does not, for it is fundamentally obscure. Only the linguistic mark enables the identification of the referent. The linguistic mark, however, carries the meaning separately and independently from the original referent. Derrida does indeed in this context speak about the absence or death of the referent. After the signification process, the relationship to the referent occurs only through language, and even to such an extent that the linguistic expression can define a new referent. From the absence of the referent also follows the limitlessness of the play of differences and an undecidability, because there is no permanent and necessary referent which the words refer to. In *Positions* Derrida argues that one must refuse the will to say or mean (*vouloir-dire*).<sup>676</sup>

“To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, and first to enter into the play of *différance* which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarise and to govern from the theological presence of a centre the movement and textual spacing of differences.”<sup>677</sup>

Derrida’s quote can easily be interpreted to mean that he is in the process of directing a discussion which has been emptied of meaning and contents, into the play of arbitrary signifiers, which produces empty meanings, so-called *empty speech*.<sup>678</sup> However, with this thought he is not trying to get to the thought that we should let language speak through us and not attempt to say anything, but rather he criticises the attempt to control the process of the formation of meaning. Refusing *the will to say* means, rather, giving oneself to the process of the play of differences.

Similarities can be found between Derrida’s view of having to refuse *the will to say*, in other words will-powered intentionality, and Heidegger’s view about *Gelassenheit* (releasement). In *Gelassenheit* the question is about the attempt to give up representational thinking. According to Heidegger, representational thinking covers the disclosure of Being, because it already has a presupposition about it.

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<sup>676</sup> F&S, POS, 23/14.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid.

<sup>678</sup> ‘Empty speech’ is a psychoanalytical concept used by, for instance, Jacques Lacan, as opposed to ‘full speech’, in which the meaning content is present.

*Gelassenheit* means the disclosure of Being without preexpectations about how it should be disclosed.<sup>679</sup> In Derrida's thought about refusing *the will to say* something, one can see the same kind of *Gelassenheit* and giving oneself up to the *event of meaning (Ereignis)*<sup>680</sup> without any presuppositions about the meaning, end result or origin. For Derrida the play of differences is an unexpected *Ereignis*, which discloses meaning. Meanings are continuously recreated, they move and transfer in the system of linguistic differences, and thus they cannot be held in place by will-powered intentionality.

The deconstruction of referentiality is also linked fundamentally with the deconstruction of the concept of representation. By *representation* is meant that from something which previously has been present, something is made present again. For instance, with the help of a linguistic expression a past experience or the contents of consciousness are again made present. It is thought that the linguistic expression and mark return as present that which is no longer present. Also, the memory trace can be considered a representation which returns again the experience of the past which has never been present. In his analysis of Rousseau in *De la grammatologie*, Derrida presents the thought that representation is not a secondary event occurring retrospectively, but rather everything begins from reproducing, from representation. Representation is not preceded by simple presence, but presence is always already representation, in other words, making something present again retrospectively (*Nachträglichkeit*). Consciousness, meanings, presence and the contents of experience

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<sup>679</sup> Heidegger puts forth his view on releasement (*Gelassenheit*) in his memorial address to Conrad Creutzer 30.10.1955 (the speech titled "Gelassenheit" was published in 1959). In it he presents *Gelassenheit* as a meditative thinking different from technical and calculating thinking. Before this he had thought about the nature of *Gelassenheit* in a dialogue titled "Zur Erörterung der *Gelassenheit*" (written in 1944/45 and published in the work "Gelassenheit" in 1959). In it he characterises releasement as an abandoning of representational and calculating thinking. According to Heidegger, "thinking, understood in the traditional way as re-presenting is a kind of willing (...) To think is to will, and to will is to think" (Heidegger 1987, 58-59). Instead, in releasement "You want a non-willing in the sense of a renouncing of willing, so that through this we may release, or at least prepare to release, ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not a willing" (ibid., 59-60). The question is rather of waiting, which "lets re-presenting entirely alone. It really has no object", but "waiting releases itself into openness" (ibid., 68).

<sup>680</sup> More recently, in the English translation of Heidegger's *Beiträge Zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [*Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*] (2001), Heidegger's term *Ereignis* is translated as *enowning*. In Derrida's text the term *événement* has been translated in English as *event*.

do not precede representation in the form of simple or substantial presence but are produced retrospectively via representation. Thus, they are retrospectively produced substitutes and traces. They are only disclosed in the reference relationship retrospectively, where the separation and moving towards presence occurs.

In his Rousseau analysis Derrida presents the notion of the abyss of representation,<sup>681</sup> where there is no longer a return to that which representation constitutes. This is a matter of the unreachability of origin. The linguistic mark does not indeed refer to some identifiable origin but to an endless abyss. When tracing the origin of meaning, one can only reach *traces* that refer to other traces. In the *trace* it is possible to see from what it is constituted, or to what it refers, but only through its absence. That from which it is born is erased in the trace, and this absence appears as an abyss in the trace and the continuous postponement of the presence of meaning.

The deconstruction of *mimesis* is also fundamentally linked with the deconstruction of representation. Representation has been traditionally understood as a kind of mimesis because it is thought to imitate nature. In *La dissémination* Derrida proposes the deconstruction of mimesis. He compares Plato's view of mimesis and Mallarmé's text *Mimique*. According to the Platonist view, in mimesis the question is about the imitation and copying of reality. According to Plato, art imitates something which already exists in reality. Through the example of Mallarmé, Derrida questions the idea of mimesis as imitation. He claims instead that mimesis gives birth to what it imitates. In his text *Mimique*, Mallarmé analysed Paul Margueritte's play *Pierrot, Assassin of his Wife*. In Margueritte's play Pierrot murders his wife by tickling her to death. According to Derrida, there is no model for such an event in reality, nor does it represent an idea, but rather the question is about a performance which creates effects of reality.<sup>682</sup> Derrida claims that:

“One can here foresee an objection: since the mime imitates nothing, reproduces nothing, opens up in its origin the very thing he is tracing out, presenting, or producing, he must be the very moment of truth. Not, of course, truth in the form of adequation between the representation and the present of the thing itself, or between the imitator and the imitated, but truth

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<sup>681</sup> “Representation in the abyss of presence is not an accident of presence; the desire of presence is, on the contrary, born from abyss (the indefinite multiplication) of representation, from the representation of representation, etc.” (GRAM, 233/163).

<sup>682</sup> DIS, 234/ 205-206.

as the present unveiling of the present: monstration, manifestation, production, *aletheia*. The mime produces, that is to say makes appear *in praesentia*, manifests the very meaning of what he is presently writing: of what he *performs*.<sup>683</sup>

There has never been an original event which this one imitates; but the performance, the representation, produces its referent, in other words, the depiction of that which it originally attempted to be.<sup>684</sup> The Mallarmé example can be generalised so that in the deconstruction of referentiality it is again a question of expression not being just a neutral giving of an expression to a ready-made content or referent, but rather the expression, in other words representation, fundamentally produces the referent. Such a view of the nature of representation has usually been linked to the metaphorical use of language, as opposed to the literal use of language. Thus, in the following section I will look at Derrida's view about the metaphoricity of language.

#### 4.6. The metaphoricity of language

According to Derrida, all use of language is by its very nature metaphorical; in other words, linguistic expression creates a new content and referent. He discusses the metaphorical nature of language<sup>685</sup> in his article "La mythologie blanche – la

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<sup>683</sup> DIS, 233-234/ 205-206.

<sup>684</sup> In *La Dissémination* Derrida thinks above all about the nature of truth. He outlines a concept of truth which is neither Platonic nor anti-Platonic. According to the Platonic concept of truth, a statement is true if it corresponds to reality. The anti-Platonic view corresponds in the text with the Heideggerian view about the disclosure of truth (*aletheia*). Thus it is thought that there is no truth outside the statement, to which it could be compared, but the truth is disclosed in the statement in the original sense. Being is disclosed historically through language. Derrida on the other hand presents a concept of truth which lies between these. Representation creates its referent, but at the same time it refers to something outside itself. Representation is born in a paradoxical situation, which attempts to describe something that can occur in the original way only preceding the representation.

<sup>685</sup> The word 'metaphor' comes from the Greek words *meta*, meaning 'among, 'with, beside' and 'after', and *pherein*, meaning 'to carry'. In the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (534-535) it states that current dictionaries are usually uneasy about defining metaphor. For instance: "The transfer of the name of one object to another object through a relation of analogy" – but then replies, "but what is a relation of

métaphore dans la texte philosophique” (1972). Metaphor has for a long time been viewed as a phenomenon of the syntactic dimension of language,<sup>686</sup> where it has been seen as a relation between words. A metaphor is seen as a word combination to which a property of another word is linked, and which this word does not possess. For instance, according to Aristotle, “Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to species, or on the grounds of analogy”.<sup>687</sup> Derrida says that he himself is more interested in the semantic<sup>688</sup> dimension of the metaphor than in the metaphor as different word connections.<sup>689</sup> He is interested in the influence of the metaphor in the meaning-forming event.<sup>690</sup>

According to Derrida, the metaphor is the tool of knowing,<sup>691</sup> which is based on recognising an analogy.<sup>692</sup> Knowing occurs through recognising the analogy, so that what is not yet known is attempted to be understood through what is already known. The unknown is approached via an analogy, that is, a metaphor. Knowing does not ‘know’ the object as such but only approaches the object through analogies. This can be seen particularly clearly in the case of understanding abstract concepts; we understand abstract entities through practical analogies. Derrida indeed states that the movement of metaphorisation is nothing but the movement of idealisation, in other words, transferring from perceivable meanings to spiritual (*spirituel*) meanings occurs through the detour of figures.<sup>693</sup>

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analogy in itself if not a metaphorical relation? – and “The substitution of an appropriate term with one that is figurative”.

<sup>686</sup> By ‘syntax’ is meant words and morphemes can be connected to wider units, for instance sentences. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, 1061.

<sup>687</sup> Aristotle 1924, 1457b 6-9.

<sup>688</sup> By ‘semantic’ is usually meant the study of meaning, in other words how the formation of meaning, the physical object or event is transformed into a mark. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, 856.

<sup>689</sup> Mb, 255-256.

<sup>690</sup> Several philosophers, for instance Vico, have considered metaphorical activity as the very foundation of human language. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, 534.

<sup>691</sup> Mb, 283.

<sup>692</sup> Also Aristotle has stated that metaphor requires observing the intuitive similarities in those things that are different. According to Aristotle, "To produce a good metaphor is to see a likeness." (Aristotle 1924, 1459a, 7-8).

<sup>693</sup> Mb, 269.

According to Derrida, in all formations of meaning, in *mimesis* and the revealing of truth (*aletheia*), it is a question of a metaphorical process.<sup>694</sup> This can be interpreted to mean that in *mimesis* a similar analogical depiction of reality is produced. In truth as *aletheia*, on the other hand, the similarity between knowledge and its object is identified.<sup>695</sup> According to Derrida, *mimesis* produces pleasure through the very fact that it lets us see the action that cannot be seen in action, but it can be understood only through a copy resembling it, *mimemata*.<sup>696</sup> That which is imitated does not actually exist before the analogy is produced. The metaphor produces that which the analogical description strives to be. Likewise, the object of knowledge does not precede its description, but rather the description makes possible the identification of the analogical relationship, that is, the truth. All this sounds implausible if one does not follow Derrida's view on *mimesis* and *aletheia*<sup>697</sup> in

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<sup>694</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>695</sup> In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* Heidegger claims that the original essence of truth is *aletheia*, which means emerging-into-unconcealment (Heidegger 1987, 190). *Aletheia* is the essence of the emerging power (ibid., 185). However, Heidegger points out that the unconcealment of being is not simply given, but it occurs only when it is achieved by work, such as the work of the word in poetry or the work of stone in a temple or statue or the work of a word in thought etc. (ibid., 191). Therefore, this struggle for unconcealment is a continuous combat against concealment, disguise and false appearance (ibid., 192). Heidegger argues that after the great Greek period there was a certain decline, when the truth of *physis*, *aletheia* as unconcealment, becomes *homoiōsis* and *mimesis*, assimilation and accommodation. The truth of *physis* becomes a correctness of vision and correctness of apprehension as representation (ibid., 185). Therefore, in Heidegger's notion of *aletheia*, the question is not about comparing the knowledge (statement or representation) to the object of knowledge, because we cannot compare the object, the object of knowledge and our own knowledge about it. The object of knowledge emerges in unconcealment. The issue of truth as *aletheia* is also important to Heidegger in discussing art objects, in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (1950). According to him, "The work's becoming a work is a way in which truth becomes and happens" (Heidegger 1975, 60), and that "Art is a setting-into-work of truth" (ibid., 77). Taking a lead from Greek language, 'truth' here means *aletheia*, that is, "the unconcealedness of Being". In other words, the Being of the work of art as a work of art (entity) is revealed as truth by the disclosedness of the work within *Dasein* or the world which itself opened up for it.

<sup>696</sup> Mb, 285.

<sup>697</sup> Presenting Derrida's own view, however, is problematic, because in this part of "La mythologie blanche" he analyses specifically Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which Aristotle presents his understanding of *mimesis* and *aletheia*. According to Aristotle, "Poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths, while history gives particular facts." (Aristotle 1973, 1451b 3-4) By "general truth" Aristotle means "the sort of thing that a certain type of man will do or say either probably or necessarily." (ibid.).

relation to the concept of language, according to which language recreates its object and thus also its relationship to its object. Language and *mimesis*, that is, metaphorical processes, add something which the 'original' did not contain. In other words, the metaphor is fundamentally a supplement, which on the one hand replaces and on the other hand replenishes something in relationship to the 'original'.

Derrida questions the idea of literal meaning (*propre sens*). According to him, the separation between metaphorical and literal meaning sustains the thought that metaphor is a non-cognitive and misleading embellishment, whereas the literal meaning is cognitive.<sup>698</sup> According to him, what is called the 'literal meaning' is a dead metaphor. It is just not recognised as a metaphor because it is so worn out and transformed into a general concept or truth. Derrida calls dead and non-functioning metaphors 'metaphors under erasure' (*métaphores effacées*).<sup>699</sup> Their metaphorical process, in other words the striving to seek an expression for the unnamed, has been 'under erasure'. Likewise, the metaphor is no longer recognised in the basic concepts of philosophy.<sup>700</sup> Thus, he suggests that a science should be founded that would study how different metaphors are built up and which analogical principles they are built upon. According to Derrida, the metaphor characterising the basic concepts of philosophy (*theoria*, *aletheia*, *physis*, *logos*, *mimesis*, etc.) could be called heliotropes,<sup>701</sup> because the basic concepts of philosophy have to a great extent been based on the analogy of light.<sup>702</sup>

In the 'Eight Study' in *La métaphore vive* (1975) Paul Ricoeur criticises the views on metaphor presented in Derrida's article "La mythologie blanche". Ricoeur criticises Derrida's view that every use of language is metaphorical, and that even philosophical discourse is a metaphorical discourse. Ricoeur's argument is that philosophical discourse differs from metaphorical and poetical discourse. He challenges in particular Derrida's claim that philosophical concepts are dead metaphors. For Ricoeur, the aim of philosophical discourses lies in forming a system and breaking free from the play of double meaning and semantic dynamism

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<sup>698</sup> Mb, 265.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>701</sup> A heliotrope is a sundial as well as a surveyor's mirror apparatus for triangulation with the help of which sunlight can be directed in the desired direction. In Derrida's notion of *heliotrope*, the essential aspect is the sun (*helios*), which can be directed and the shadow of which can be observed.

characteristic of the metaphorical order.<sup>703</sup> His argument against Derrida is a similar deduction used in the critique of relativism; that is, when somebody claims that “there is no permanent truth, everything is in a state of change”, then that statement itself implicitly contains the aim to retain universal truth.

According to Ricoeur, Derrida, akin to Heidegger in his assertion that “the metaphorical exists only inside the metaphysical”, establishes philosophical presuppositions (metaphysics) at the very source of the distinctions that make a discourse on metaphor possible,<sup>704</sup> but that discourse on metaphor is itself infected by the universal metaphoricity of philosophical language. Hence Ricoeur claims:

“The paradox is this: there is no discourse on metaphor that is not stated within a metaphorically engendered conceptual network. There is no non-metaphorical standpoint from which to perceive the order and the demarcation of the metaphorical field. Metaphor is metaphorically stated.”<sup>705</sup>

Furthermore, Ricoeur argues that Derrida's criticism of the notions of literal and proper meaning is due to a misconception of the notion of “proper”. Ricoeur mentions Aristotle's definitions of “proper” in *Topics*, and claims that the *proper* is something which is not essential, but coextensive:

“A 'property' is a predicate which does not indicate the essence of a thing, but yet belongs to that thing alone, and is predicated controvertibly of it. (...) Thus, the proper is somewhat less than the definition, but much more than an accident which may or may not belong to one and the same subject.”<sup>706</sup>

For Ricoeur, the *literal* does not mean 'proper' in the sense of 'originary', but simply 'current' and 'usual'. The literal sense is the one that is lexicalized and the metaphorical sense refers to the creative use of language.<sup>707</sup> For Ricoeur, a live metaphor exists only if there belongs an awareness of a deviation of sense in an

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid., 272-273.

<sup>703</sup> Ricoeur, 1978, 302.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid., 258-9.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid., 327, footnote 24.

interpretation, while in philosophical (speculative) discourse meaning is brought into the concept. In metaphorical discourse the meaning is not brought into a concept, but rather “it remains caught in the conflict of 'same' and 'different’”.<sup>708</sup>

Derrida responded to Ricoeur’s critique in his article “Le retrait de la métaphore” (1978) (later included in the anthology *Psyché: Invention de l’autre*, 1987). According to Derrida, Ricoeur does not notice that the object of his (Derrida’s) critique is specifically the metaphysical interpretation of usage (*usuré*),<sup>709</sup> that is, that semantic ambiguity has erased the literal meaning due to the influence of wear and use. Derrida claims that his main argument in the article “La mythologie blanche” concerns specifically the law of supplement; metaphor is a matter of a supplement that adds something to the original that did not previously exist within it. Thus the metaphor also opens up semantic spreading and migration.<sup>710</sup> According to Derrida, this possibility of semantic spreading applies to all words and linguistic expressions of the language.

In *Imagination and Chance* (1992) Leonard Lawlor has analysed the difference between Derrida’s and Ricoeur’s views on metaphor. According to him, Ricoeur does not mention in his critique Derrida’s notion of *différance* which forms the basis of his metaphor analysis.<sup>711</sup> The metaphorical way of knowing means recognising the similarity in what is different at the same time as it produces this connection and difference. Derrida prioritises the metaphorical mediation. Furthermore, according to Lawlor, Derrida’s view on metaphor leads to the view that meaning cannot be anticipated because the metaphorical mediation precedes the relation to the meaning or referent.<sup>712</sup>

Derrida’s analysis of metaphor is typically deconstructive: he expands the boundaries of the metaphor concept so that it is not only understood as a kind of figure of language, but as a phenomenon describing the whole mental and linguistic process. At the same time, he deconstructs the opposition of literary versus metaphorical. One can ask, however, whether the meaning of metaphor is lost in this process, when traditionally the metaphor has been seen to receive a particular

<sup>707</sup> Ibid., 290-291.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>709</sup> Rm 13.

<sup>710</sup> Mb, 241/287.

<sup>711</sup> Lawlor 1992, 47.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 122.

meaning in relation to the literal meaning. Ricoeur, for instance, proposed in *La métaphore vive* a definition of the metaphor which is based specifically on separating the metaphor from the literal meaning. However, he does not define the literal meaning as the literally correct meaning, but rather he means by this the present or customary meaning.<sup>713</sup> On the other hand, metaphor takes us, according to Ricoeur, to the unknown referential area of language.<sup>714</sup> Thus the metaphor is seen as a special form of the creative use of language, which adds understanding and steps outside the already known to form something new. When a metaphor becomes ordinary it loses its metaphoric nature and becomes a dead metaphor. For instance, the word ‘understand’ is a dead metaphor which has lost its metaphorical nature and has become a literal meaning. Ricoeur does not require any absolute, pure, authentic and ahistorical literal meaning but, in his view, the difference between the literal and metaphorical meaning is based on newness and erosion. Even though he does not see any absolute difference between the literal and metaphorical meaning, he nevertheless keeps both concepts.

From the point of view of Ricoeur’s theory, one can say that Derrida’s view of the metaphoricity of language is particularly problematic in that according to the latter one cannot make a separation between the creative and the conventional use of language. Literature can thus not be seen separated from scientific texts in that they both disclose new objects and new knowledge. On the other hand, the merit of Derrida’s view lies perhaps in that it states that there are no static truths, but rather that all knowing is a metaphorical process which always produces a new different meaning. One can never return to the same: understanding always leads to something new, to another dimension of the same. One can indeed say that Derrida does not so much present a new theory of metaphor but rather strives to describe the nature of language through the concept of metaphor.<sup>715</sup> Emphasising the metaphoricity of

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<sup>713</sup> Ricoeur 1975, 290. Interestingly, Ricoeur says: “We did admit of course that the metaphorical use of a word could always be opposed to its literal use; but literal does not mean proper in the sense of originary, but simply current, ‘usual’. The literal sense is the one that is lexicalized. There is thus no need for a metaphysics of the proper to justify the difference between literal and figurative. It is use in discourse that specifies the difference between literal and figurative.” (ibid.).

<sup>714</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>715</sup> Derrida’s view on metaphor has many links with the views of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. According to them, the core of the metaphor is that it refers to the understanding and experiencing of things through something else. “The essence of

language is one theme through which Derrida brings forth the view about the lack of any transcendental signified, as well as the creative influence language has on meaning. Using language is not just a matter of expression but a continuous new production of meaning.

#### 4.7. The deconstructive notion of truth

In following the deconstructive concept of meaning and language, it follows that the concept of truth must be understood in a new way. Derrida indeed says that: “[N]o transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field.”<sup>716</sup> In other words, due to the nature of writing (*différance* as a kind of play of differences) the validity of the claims cannot be estimated from within any static and present truth. What kind of truth concept is it then about?

Traditionally there are three different kinds of truth concepts: correspondence, coherence and pragmatic concepts of truth. According to the classical correspondence theory of truth, a belief or proposition is true only if it corresponds to facts.<sup>717</sup> Truth propositions concern the relationship between claims and the facts existing in this

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metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” (Lakoff and Johnson 1984, 5). They base their views of metaphor also on the conceptual view of truth; that is, truth is dependent upon a conceptual system, and human conceptual systems are to a large extent metaphorical in character. Therefore, there is no completely objective, unconditional or absolute truth (ibid., 185). According to them, metaphors create realities for us, in particular social realities. Thus metaphors are fundamentally the tools of understanding (ibid., 159). Instead of objectivism and subjectivism, they propose an experiential synthesis. This means an understanding of truth happening via the metaphor, where reason and imagination are united. The metaphor is, according to them, one of the most important tools with which one tries to particularly understand what cannot be understood completely; feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral activity and spiritual consciousness (ibid., 192-3). Thus, according to them, objects should be understood rather in relationship to our interaction with them. Thus, the properties we attach to objects are borne out of the interaction rather than hereditary (ibid., 210).

<sup>716</sup> Dif, 7/7.

<sup>717</sup> In *Tietoteoria* [Epistemology] (1993), Markus Lammenranta states that “(I)t would rather seem that facts are only the mythical equivalents of factual propositions. There is a correspondence between beliefs and facts, but because we ourselves project into reality sentence-like objects, but which in reality are our own projections, we can no longer talk about the correspondence between factual beliefs to the reality independent of them.” (cited in Lammenranta 1993, 82)

world. A proposition is seen to be true if it corresponds to the fact existing in reality; for instance, the claim that “it is snowing outside” is true only if it is snowing outside. The truth means in this case estimating whether some claim holds true in relation to reality. The truth, preferably from an empirical and objective world, is thus seen as the criteria of the truth of the claims. There are, however, many problems with the correspondence theory of truth, such as: What is meant by ‘correspondence’ or ‘fact’? How strong should the equivalence be between the sentence and the fact? For instance, the view of the relationship between a sentence and a fact that goes under the name of Wittgenstein’s *picture theory* can be seen to require a logical equivalence between the sentence and the fact. According to Wittgenstein, “a proposition describes reality by its internal properties”.<sup>718</sup> The elementary proposition is true if the structure formed by the parts of its language corresponds with the configuration of its reference objects in the world.<sup>719</sup> However, there is a problem linked with the correspondence theory regarding whether there can be facts outside the propositional knowledge or whether also the facts are coloured by propositional concepts.<sup>720</sup> Thus understanding the truth as a correspondence between a proposition and a fact is indeed by its nature a case of comparing a proposition with another proposition and belief.

According to the coherence theory of truth, a judgement is true if and only if it is coherent with other beliefs. Thus truth is seen as the compatibility between beliefs.<sup>721</sup> The concept of truth emphasising coherence is linked particularly with a view according to which truth is understood via theories and different cultural-historical and social views. The reality outside conceptual and theoretical views is unknown. Thus, we see something as true if it is not in conflict with other similar views. A large part of scientific knowledge of which we cannot have any personal experience (e.g. the material reality formed of quantum particles, or how genes continuously direct events in the body) is based on a view of truth in accordance with the coherence theory of truth.

We see statements as being true if they are not in conflict with earlier concepts. Compatibility between propositions and non-contradiction is necessarily not

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<sup>718</sup> Wittgenstein 1966, 40, § 4.023.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-16/15-17, § 2.11-2.201, and Hintikka 1982, 162.

<sup>720</sup> Lammenranta 1993, 82.

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

enough as criteria for truth. Thus, the requirement for the coherency of statements is often linked only with the justification of truth. Such views can be called an *epistemic truth theory*.<sup>722</sup> Some statement can be seen as justified or founded if it is not in conflict with earlier views. However, it is debatable whether justifying is sufficient reason to talk of truth. As a counter argument, it has often been argued that the justification of a statement can be lost with new evidence, yet the truth belief cannot be seen to turn into an untruth. Because of this, truth cannot be the same as justification. There is also a much more extensive problem with the coherence theory in regard to the possibility of the disappearance of truth. It is possible to think of a group of statements that are not in conflict with one another, but which do not say anything about any known reality. For instance, it is possible to present a coherent view of creatures and their society living on an asteroid called Mneme. However, we evaluate the truth of the view not only on the basis of its coherence but also in relation to some external experience, which comes close to the correspondence theory. One can indeed think that coherence theory of truth way of thinking expands the possibility of understanding truth outside one's own empirical experience.

The pragmatic concept of truth, on the other hand, emphasises that we see something as the truth if it works in practice. True beliefs cause activity that has the desired consequences. In turn, pragmatism (as represented, for instance, by Richard Rorty) emphasises constructivism, according to which reality is understood via conceptual constructions. According to Culler, the pragmatic concept of truth emphasises that such propositions are held as true which can be justified according to truth-justifying forms accepted at a particular time. There is no certain basis for evaluating truth; the propositions we hold as true are dependent on the institutional conventions and views of each time, and these can change. A truth is held to be that which we can justify as such with the justifying methods that we have accepted.<sup>723</sup> How, then, does the deconstructive view regard these classical theories of truth?

One can claim that none of these traditional concepts of truth fully fit with the deconstructive view. The correspondence theory of truth does not fit with deconstruction because the latter questions the very objective referentiality which lies outside the subject and the critique. The critique and the representation produce the referent: in other words, the referent is always reformed via linguistic and conceptual

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<sup>722</sup> Ibid., 83.

views. It would therefore seem that the coherence theory of truth might correspond to the deconstructive view of truth. This is not the case, however, because Derrida emphasises in his writings specifically the incompatible conflicts and undecidable aporias linked with conceptual and linguistic systems. Likewise, he questions the idea of enclosed and consistent contexts. The nature of contexts means, according to Derrida, that in order to become consistent they attempt to close off outside conflicting elements, which, however, remain in the form of a trace inside the totality, and thus deconstructing it. Is the deconstructive view of truth, then, pragmatic?

According to Culler, the pragmatic view of truth would on the surface seem the most suitable when attempting to outline the deconstructive view of truth, because pragmatism emphasises that all understanding of meaning is contextual. Furthermore, it criticises the notion of philosophical transparency. However, according to Culler, deconstruction does not fit into pragmatist theories for two reasons. Firstly, deconstruction cannot be satisfied with pragmatism's concept of truth because the latter supports conventional truth: deconstruction is interested in the marginal, that is, what is closed off on the outside.<sup>724</sup> Secondly, deconstruction differs from pragmatism in the way it understands self-reflection. The most extreme pragmatism denies the possibility of self-reflection, whereas Derrida is specifically interested in the nature of self-reflection.<sup>725</sup> The pragmatist view of truth does not fit into the deconstructive description also because it emphasises a kind of common sense attitude that strives for unproblematisation in relation to truth.<sup>726</sup> Indeed, the basis for truth does not need to be understood because it is not even possible. It is sufficient that something is seen as being true if it works. Does deconstruction, then, completely discard the question of truth and the standpoint it requires regarding the relationship between statement and reality?

Derrida himself has said that he *is* interested in the truth and that as a philosopher he is driven onwards by an interest in reason and truth.<sup>727</sup> But how should

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<sup>723</sup> Culler 1983, 153

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>726</sup> The common-sense attitude here refers to the epistemological viewpoint, according to which the empirical objects are as they show themselves to us. Typical for this viewpoint is that the existence or way of existence of the outside world is not questioned but is seen to be as it appears to us. (cf. *The Companion to Epistemology* 1996, 71).

<sup>727</sup> FPG, 72.

the deconstruction of truth then be understood? Derrida defines truth in relation to preservation,<sup>728</sup> even to the extent that, according to him, “truth is what is preserved” and therefore it is both preserving and preserved.<sup>729</sup> Such statements are seen as true which are preserved amidst historical and conceptual change. Traditionally, it is thought that such claims preserve because they are seen as the permanent and universal description of the world, state of things, or experience. In other words, the permanence of the object and, on the other hand, its appropriateness make the claims permanently true.

How should the permanence of the object be understood in the case of conceptual entities? And when conceptual knowledge is aimed instead at the dimension of the invisible reality, the meanings and the conceptual relationships, what guarantees their permanence? Derrida sees language as the starting point of the ideality of the object of conceptual knowledge, which preserves its object through repetition. Thus, Derrida transfers the classical view of the nature of conceptual knowledge inherited from Plato to a phenomenon made possible due to the nature of language. According to Plato, the central characteristic of knowledge (*episteme*), that is, its permanence, is based on the fact that its objects are eternal ideas, as opposed to changing sensory knowledge (*doxa*),<sup>730</sup> while for Derrida, the ideal permanence of knowledge is not so much based on the permanence of the object of ideal knowledge (meaning, transcendental signified or referent) but on the preservation of repeatable linguistic marks.

The question of truth refers above all to the demand that the basis and reasoning for statements must be found outside the statements themselves. The central question is, what is the basis and reasoning for ideal and conceptual statements from which one can evaluate their validity? In other words, when speaking about the truth, statements must be assumed to have some sort of correspondence to something outside the language. In the case of scientific and general knowledge, it should be something objective or intersubjective. In the philosophical tradition, on the other hand, people have often ended up with a Platonist view, that is, that the basis of the validity of statements are intuitively understood ideas or general concepts (e.g.

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<sup>728</sup> Derrida refers in his article “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of the Student” to the etymological connection between the words *Wahrheit* (truth) and *veritas* (truth), and *Wahren* (preservation) (Pp, 237).

<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

Descartes, Husserl). The danger of this viewpoint is subjectivism, according to which the validity of knowledge is justified from within subjective evidence. On the other hand, strong opinions have been presented for the fact that statements must be based on empirical experience of the world (e.g. the view of the Vienna Circle). The problem with this view is that a large part of the fundamental questions of philosophy appear as irrelevant.

In his writings Derrida presents the idea that conceptual knowledge cannot be anchored to a certain origin (e.g. intention, transcendental signified or referent), but rather the “origin” appears as *différance*, differing and deferring itself. Thus ideal concepts and statements have no necessary and original foundation that would justify their validity. Instead they can be justified from different starting points; for instance, from empirical, experiential, intuitive or historical starting points. Expressed in a Deleuze-and-Guattarian way, the conceptual idealities are textual rhizoidal networks which grow from different soils and are thus not reducible to one origin. We understand the truth of the statements in a textual network, or in a totality, the origin of which is rather manifold. Thus the truth of abstract and conceptual knowledge cannot be evaluated only in relation to truth or intuitive ideas. It also requires a contextual relationship to textual practices, in other words, how words are used, beings named and particularly how the world as a whole is interpreted. Thus truth does not have just one single fixed point or foundation in relation to which it is evaluated, but rather truth is held to be something which is on the one hand in a coherent relationship to earlier views, and on the other hand corresponds to the textually-transmitted experience of the world.

According to the deconstructive viewpoint, there is no pure experience of the world outside textuality. Instead it is structured by social, historical and cultural textual practices. Due to their historical nature, they are not coherent, conflictless and water-tight totalities, but incommensurable and discontinuous. Despite this, different contexts affect each other in the network of contextuality. Scientific truths are formed in a continuous process, where different contexts and ways of perceiving reality are combined and separated. Due to this network of textuality, it is not possible to make clear-cut separations between different contexts, but the words and sentences we use can be understood in different contexts, which in turn give birth to an endless amount

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<sup>730</sup> E.g., Plato's *Theaetetus*, 184d.

of new meanings. Thus, for instance, the basic philosophical concept of consciousness can be understood in either dualistic or materialistic contexts. In dualistic metaphysics consciousness can be interpreted as a spiritual substance separated from matter. In the materialist view consciousness can be seen as the emergent property of matter. On the other hand, the interpreter is not necessarily aware of or able to determine in which context s/he understands the concept. Derrida does indeed speak in connection with this issue about the undecidability of contexts. Culler, on the other hand, has claimed that deconstruction is the practice of reading and writing, which is particularly receptive towards aporias, borne out of the attempt to tell the truth.<sup>731</sup>

In Derrida's view, he himself does not represent naïve relativistic empiricism or scepticism in relation to truth. One can, however, say that he does not fully reject the correspondence view of truth, but sees that truth is based on a metaphorical process. Thus the truth is seen as recognising an analogy, that is, a similarity between objects of two different orders; i.e. representation and the object of representation. Representation, however, produces that which it describes. Thus, there is no objective fixed point of truth against which the truth of statements could be evaluated. This, however, does not remove the fact that the meaning of statements and their truth value are situated in relation to something outside language. The deconstructive viewpoint only questions the objectivity outside language, the grounds of truth, and the view that human conceptual knowledge can completely present the meaning of an object.

In the light of Derrida's writings, particularly for instance his analysis of justice in the article "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Law", one could assume that he would argue that in the requirement of truth the question essentially is about the experience of the impossible. We can never say that we have the truth, nor can we verify whether some sentence is true. The truth is a kind of normative ideal that guides the use of our language, but which we can never fully have, own or even understand as present, but, like *différance*, it withdraws and separates from every linguistic articulation; and simultaneously, every linguistic act works as a performative act which produces truth, the referring of the sentence to a referent that withdraws and separates from it. The experience of truth is thus the experience of the impossible; it cannot be present here and now but only in the way of *différance*, as the referring of the present to something else, to the absent.

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<sup>731</sup> Culler 1983, 155.

#### 4.8. A critique of Derrida's views of language

Derrida's views about language and the play of differences have been criticised by several philosophers, including Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, John R. Searle and Richard Shusterman, as well as the semiotician Umberto Eco. In this chapter I will look at the critiques by Eco, Searle and Gadamer, as well as by Finns including, among others, linguist Esa Itkonen.

Eco has criticised in several places Derrida's views on interpretation; for instance, in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992). According to Eco, the question in Derrida's thinking is about a kind of modern hermetic tradition,<sup>732</sup> typical for which are its Gnostic characteristics.<sup>733</sup> According to Eco, typical for the old hermetic tradition as well as its modern form is:

1. A text is an open-ended universe where the interpreter can discover infinite interconnections.
2. Language is unable to grasp a unique and pre-existing meaning...
3. Language mirrors the inadequacy of thought: our being-in-the-world is nothing else than being incapable of finding any transcendental meaning.
4. Any text pretending to assert something univocal is a miscarried universe, that is, the work of a muddle-headed Demiurge (who tried to say "that's that" and on the contrary elicited an uninterrupted chain of infinite deferrals where "that" is not "that").
5. The reader can become the *Übermensch* who really realises the truth, namely, that the author did not know what he or she was really saying, because language spoke in her place.

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<sup>732</sup> According to Eco, thinkers belonging to this hermetic tradition include Spengler, Dilthey, Scheler, Nietzsche, Husserl, Kerényi, Plandi, Pauli, Oppenheimer, Einstein, Bachelard, Sorokin, Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Barthes, Todorov, Chomsky, Greimas and Deleuze (Eco 1992, 39-40).

<sup>733</sup> Also Habermas has stated in his article "Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne" (1985) that Derrida comes under the influence of the Cabbalistic tradition. According to Habermas, Derrida's way of talking about 'the word' is reminiscent of the mystic Jewish way of describing the word of God.

6. The reader must suspect that every line of the text conceals another secret meaning; words, instead of saying, hide the untold.

7. The Real Reader is the one who understands that the secret of a text is its emptiness.<sup>734</sup>

Eco gives a rather provocative caricature of what he calls the modern hermetic tradition. His caricature is nevertheless interesting, in that it brings forth the problems contained in Derrida's views, such as the endlessness of interpretation, which is due to the fact that meaning continuously escapes according to the principles of *différance*. In our interpretations do we experience texts or the speech of another person that meaning continuously escapes? Derrida would probably answer that the whole question is meaningless because *différance* is not a concept of experience but rather describes the principle that constitutes experience.<sup>735</sup> On the other hand, the escaping and withdrawing of meaning can be understood also experientially when listening to other people or when trying to write or talk.

Eco does not present any systematic critique of Derrida's writings. His caricature is rather an intentional and exaggerated misunderstanding; for instance, point number 4 above is hardly a view that can be derived directly from Derrida's texts. The grammatological way of outlining the formation of meaning leads specifically to the notion that nobody has the possibility to control the truth. The interpreter is in no better position than the writer to obtain the final understanding of the text. Eco's way of presenting the characteristics of the "modern hermetic tradition" in a negative light would seem at first sight to be an expression of the logocentric fear of the uncontrollability and vastness of reality, but his criticism also has a deeper meaning. The meaning which is completely undefined and continuously escaping offers no foundations for understanding or communication. Nobody would understand anything anybody else ever said or wrote. Eco's caricature represents the

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<sup>734</sup> Eco 1992, 39-40. The above list is partly a paraphrasing of Eco's text.

<sup>735</sup> Heidegger's description about the revealing of truth (*aletheia*) corresponds better to the empirical experience about understanding meaning than Derrida's notion of *différance*. In the revealing of truth it is a question about the 'full experience', understanding things, whereas *différance* describes a lack linked with the knowledge event. In the revealing of truth it is, however, not a question of understanding the absolute and correct truth but about a historical and experiential understanding of the

postmodern view of language taken to the extreme. According to him, there exist criteria for limiting interpretation.<sup>736</sup> He claims, for instance, that we can use the Popperian method of falsification, through which it is possible to ascertain which interpretations are ‘best’, because there is a rule that can certify which interpretations are ‘bad’.<sup>737</sup> This falsification can be carried out when a text is looked at in relation to the cultural and social context in which it has been presented.<sup>738</sup> In other words, Eco sees the knowledge of hermeneutic contexts and tradition as important in finding a ‘better’ interpretation of the work.

Eco’s critique of Derrida’s view of language is in that sense, however, problematic, in that in his own texts Derrida does not say that from the absence of the transcendental signifier and unbound textuality it follows that there are no criteria for interpretation. Rather, he claims that the validity of the interpretation cannot be justified on the basis of any intentionality of the transcendental signified or actor, because the reader no longer has the possibility to attain the meanings in the writer’s mind or the referent as such, but can only approach them via language, which produces the meaning again. In the deconstructive view of language, the question is rather about respecting the otherness of the other, as well as the unattainability of the final meaning, which gives the possibility for change and new interpretations.

Gadamer has presented a very systematic critique of some of Derrida’s writings in his article “Text und Interpretation” (1984). The original intention of Gadamer’s article was to act as an opening in a dialogue between him and Derrida, in which it would be possible to look at the differences and similarities between hermeneutics and deconstruction. According to Gadamer, the connection between hermeneutics and Derrida’s view is that translation is seen in both as an interpretation. Likewise, for him, extending the concept of text into spoken language is very

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reality, where despite a relative starting point man understands ‘fully’ and non-relatively.

<sup>736</sup> Eco 1992, 40.

<sup>737</sup> Eco presents an example of the use of such a falsification method. He mentions how in his book *Criticism in the Wilderness* (1980) Geoffrey Hartman had made a subtle analysis of Wordsworth’s poem “I wander lonely as a cloud”. In conversation with Hartman, Eco stated that Hartman “was only a ‘moderate deconstructive’ because he had refrained from reading the line ‘A poet could not but be gay’ as a contemporary reader would do if the line were found in *Playboy*.” But Eco argues that “a responsible reader has the duty to take into account the state of the lexical system at the time of Wordsworth” (Eco 1992, 68-69).

<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

justified. On the other hand, Gadamer cannot accept the unattainability (*différance*) of the meaning of the original speaker or writer. According to him, in hermeneutics the interest lies in the original authenticity, in other words what the writer and speaker originally said,<sup>739</sup> as well as the original communicative situation.<sup>740</sup> Interpretation does not only mean understanding the meaning of words, but moreover that the interpreter strives to understand what the speaker *really* wanted to say.<sup>741</sup> According to Gadamer, Derrida generalises features characteristic of literature, putting them into the ordinary communicative situation.

Derrida's initial reply to Gadamer's well-substantiated claims, published as "Bonnes Volontés de Puissance (Une Réponse à Hans-Georg Gadamer)" (1984), is rather short (only three pages).<sup>742</sup> He does not attempt to substantiate his own view of language by argumentation, probably because Gadamer is familiar with his arguments. Instead, Derrida asks Gadamer three questions. The first question concerns the status of good will. Derrida claims that Gadamer describes good will as the absolute commitment to the desire for consensus in understanding: "Doesn't this unconditional axiom nevertheless presuppose that the *will* is the form of that unconditionality (...)"<sup>743</sup> The second question concerns the possibility for a transparency in readers' or writers' motives, knowledge or unconscious errors and jokes which psychoanalysis has revealed: "(W)hat would good will mean in psychoanalysis?" The third question concerns the matter of whether understanding is about a broken or interrupted relationship rather than a continuous one: "What is the axiomatic precondition of the interpretative discourse which Professor Gadamer calls *Verstehen*, 'understanding the other' and 'understanding one another'?"<sup>744</sup> The reply reflects Derrida's views on Gadamer's hermeneutics, that is, that Gadamer's view of

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<sup>739</sup> Gadamer 1989a, 35.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>742</sup> Derrida later wrote a more extensive reply to Gadamer, "Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions", which has been published together with Gadamer's "Text and Interpretation" [Text und Interpretation], Derrida's "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer" [Bonnes Volontés de Puissance. Une Réponse à Hans-Georg Gadamer] and Gadamer's "Reply to Jacques Derrida" [Und dennoch: Macht des Guten Willens], in *Dialogue and Deconstruction – The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (1989).

<sup>743</sup> Tq, 52.

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*.

understanding requires good will, which is not innocent, and has to do with the will to power (*volontés de puissance*).

In his next article, “Und dennoch: Macht des Guten Willens”, Gadamer expresses his disappointment and irritation about the fact that Derrida refuses to defend his own claims and thus also refuses to discuss with him.<sup>745</sup> Derrida’s reluctance to defend his statements can be seen as awareness that there are too great differences between his and Gadamer’s starting points and basic ontological suppositions for any kind of constructive debate to take place. Gadamer ends up defending and presenting his own views and Derrida his own. The question is about the difference between a radical set of values and a way of conceiving reading. Gadamer does not see any problem in understanding, adopting and making one’s own, while Derrida sees the danger of totalisation inherent in the act of understanding. Derrida’s seemingly dismissive reaction to Gadamer is due to the fact that for Derrida a good will for the respectful understanding of the other is a deceit because understanding as such includes the impossibility of reaching the otherness and individuality of the other.<sup>746</sup> Derrida values otherness and difference, whereas for Gadamer otherness can be overcome, and it would be possible to find common ground in dialogue. Gadamer trusts that through language it is possible to transmit intentional meanings, and the receiver can through language understand what the speaker really wanted to say.

The point of Derrida’s critique of Gadamer is that one must question beyond the processes of understanding and assimilation, instead of taking them as

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<sup>745</sup> Gadamer’s opening in the ‘discussion’ suggests that, according to him, a discussion between deconstruction and hermeneutics would be possible because there would be some common experience and foundation upon which one can evaluate different views. On the other hand, in Gadamer’s first article, he strives to show the faults in Derrida’s starting points, and his indignation is to be seen in the disappointment that there is no convergence of horizons between Derrida’s and his thinking. A feature characteristic for deconstruction can be seen in Derrida’s refusal to answer, one which allows and supports many different, incompatible and conflicting views. On the other hand, Derrida can be criticised for not wanting to place himself in a critical dialogical situation where he would be forced to change some of his views.

<sup>746</sup> See Nikander 1995, 30. Nikander has analysed the dialogue between Gadamer and Derrida in his article “Dialogin mahdollisuus ja mahdottomuus – ‘epätodennäköinen debatti’ Derridan ja Gadamerin välillä” [The possibility and impossibility of dialogue – the ‘unlikely debate’ between Derrida and Gadamer] (1995).

given – not to mention that the whole text interpretation would be reduced to them.<sup>747</sup> In other words, Derrida questions the authority of understanding. According to him, the process of understanding and assimilation cannot reach the otherness of the others. On this point the basic arguments of hermeneutics and Derrida are not so diametrical as they seem to be in the Derrida-Gadamer encounter because the basic starting points of hermeneutics, in other words the historicity of understanding, is linked with the very idea of otherness and the notion that understanding is historically limited. The historicity of interpretation does not prevent the full assimilation of anything. The aim of hermeneutics has been to create methods that transcend the historical otherness, and to find a way into the original meaning.

In accordance with the hermeneutic project, Gadamer emphasises in his own opening contribution the aim to understand the original meaning, which in turn is the object of the central critique of the whole of Derrida's production. One can indeed say that despite the starting point emphasising historicity and contextuality, according to Gadamer the aim of hermeneutics is to approach the original historical context of the text or speech, whereas Derrida emphasises the unattainability and historical difference of the original intention. According to Gadamer, "the discourse of interpreter is (...) not itself a text; rather it *serves* the text. This does not mean, however, that the contribution of the interpreter to the manner in which the text is heard is completely swallowed up".<sup>748</sup> The task of interpretation is then to be an intermediary between the familiar and strange (otherness). Also Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons does not necessarily mean the fusion of the other into oneself, but rather the striving out from oneself into another horizon.<sup>749</sup> Gadamer himself describes the fusion of horizons as a process of entering into the communication in such a way that the tension between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is dissolved.<sup>750</sup> Gadamer's aspirations can be justifiably interpreted in this way, so that the difference between Derrida and Gadamer is not absolute; the observation methods of both are guided by an attempt to break totalizing and self-enclosing thinking and to open up to the otherness of the other. However, Gadamer relies on the

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>748</sup> Gadamer 1989a, 41.

<sup>749</sup> For example, Erna Oesch in her study *Tulkinnasta* [On Interpretation] states that it is important to emphasise that every fusion of horizons contains at its truest the aspiration to break totalizing thinking (Oesch 1994, 60).

<sup>750</sup> Gadamer 1989a, 41.

conviction that “the interpreter can overcome the barrier of a foreign language”<sup>751</sup> and that in “the process of understanding a text tends to captivate and take the reader up into that which the text says, and in this fusion the text too drops away”<sup>752</sup> and the interpreter “overcomes what is alienating in the text”.<sup>753</sup> All these statements show that Gadamer does not even question the prime position of the interpreter; that is, that interpretation can truly overcome what is alienating.

John R. Searle criticises Derrida’s views on language in his article “Re-iterating the Differences – A Reply to Derrida” (1975). He criticises in detail Derrida’s article “Signature, événement, contexte” (1971),<sup>754</sup> for instance, Derrida’s way of combining oral speech and writing, which, according to Searle, is due to mixing permanence with repetition. According to Searle, preservation of the text is not the same as repetition, that is, where many people can read a text long after the death of the writer. Instead, preservation of the text is based on the fact that the text is permanent. Likewise, permanence makes possible the differentiation between the written text and speech. However, it is not repetition that enables the differentiation between speech and writing, because both representations must be repeatable.<sup>755</sup> The problem with Searle’s critique is that he understands Derrida’s term *writing* as it is understood in everyday language, in both everyday writing and speech. Consequently, Searle argues that Derrida is attempting to present criteria for differentiating between speech and writing, even though Derrida specifically attempts to show that speech requires writing or that also speech is writing,<sup>756</sup> in other words, the event of the forming of linguistic meaning.

According to Searle, there is no way of getting rid of intentionality because a meaningful sentence corresponds with an intentional speech act.<sup>757</sup> Likewise, the text is the expression of the intentions of the writer to the extent that the writer says what he or she means. Even in this context, one can talk about a fine difference in viewpoints. Derrida does not deny that there is intentionality involved in the event of

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<sup>751</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> “Signature, événement, contexte” published in *La Communication* II and later in *Marges de la philosophie* (1972) (first published in English as “Signature Event Context” in *Glyph*, Vol. I, 1977).

<sup>755</sup> Searle 1975, 25.

<sup>756</sup> LI, 50.

<sup>757</sup> Searle 1975, 25.

the formation of meaning, that is, a striving to say something, but the point is that after the formation of meaning we can no longer return or reconstruct the original intention as such; that requires interpretation. According to Derrida, a sentence can have a meaning independent of the intentions of the writer. He expands this characteristic usually linked with the written text to also concern speech and other communication. Understanding speech and communication are possible without the intention of the speaker as such. Language is a tool which carries meanings and gives birth to new meanings in new contexts, and communication and interpretation situations. However, Searle's critique is accurate in that it sees that Derrida often goes to extremes when denying the intentionality of the actor. A prerequisite for meaningful speech and writing is the attempt of the speaker and writer to say something, to describe something meaningful. Derrida does not fully deny intentionality, but questions the idea that the intention of the speaker or writer is to be attained objectively in the text. However, one can somehow attempt to understand the intentions written and contained in a text as a textual phenomena. Textuality both produces and covers the intentions of the actor.

Esa Itkonen strives to show in his article "Derridaa vastaan" [Against Derrida] that the view of language presented by Derrida is wrong, and thus that the basis for poststructuralism falls apart.<sup>758</sup> According to Itkonen, Derrida follows Saussure in seeing language change merely as a string of arbitrary unsystematic occurrences.<sup>759</sup> Likewise, according to Itkonen, in *différance* it is a question about "units [of meaning] chang[ing] suddenly and arbitrarily; because meanings are permanently in this kind of state of change they cannot be experienced 'fully' or 'finally', but such an

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<sup>758</sup> Itkonen 1987, 295. Itkonen's critique of Derrida's view of language contains so many problematic claims that I cannot go into them all here; but, for instance, his interpretation of Derrida's critique of logocentrism is problematic because, like Searle, he has understood Derrida's notion of writing in the everyday language meaning. He thus states that "compared to speech writing is primary" (Ibid. 295). Furthermore, he adds: "It is hard to find any basis for the view that the tradition of Western thought in its entirety rests upon speech and not upon writing. Thinkers as different as McLuhan and Cavell have represented the opposite view. They have regretted that in our philosophical tradition teaching and debate do not occur 'face to face' in an interactive situation, but are divided into a lonely writing event and a lonely reading event" (Ibid. 295, translated from the Finnish by G.G.).

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., 296.

experience is always postponed: language itself is an eternal movement towards this unreachable goal of ‘perfect experience’<sup>760</sup>

As already mentioned, according to Derrida, *différance* is a systematic play of differences. But to claim, as Itkonen does, that for Derrida language would be a movement towards the goal of perfect experience seems odd, because Derrida continuously criticises in his writings the idea of a perfect experience, that is, the experience of presence. This aside, Itkonen nevertheless presents an interesting critique against the idea of an endless semiosis:

“But in the everyday language use the endless semiosis ‘ticks over’. Let us look at such a sentence as ‘John is asleep in the back seat of the car’. All interpretations of the interpretations (etc.) of this sentence give exactly the same result.”<sup>761</sup>

Itkonen does not develop his thought further, even though this very issue would have created perhaps the basis for a more extensive critique of Derrida’s philosophy. From a Derridian point of view, one can claim that even this simple sentence can be understood in numerous ways. Some people would get the image of a blonde 5-year-old boy asleep on the back seat of the car. On the other hand, if the sentence is directed at someone who knows this very person called John and knows he is a brown-haired seven-year-old boy the meaning of the words is different. Likewise, the meaning is influenced by whose car this particular back seat where John sleeps belongs to, the father’s or the neighbour’s. One can, however, say that from the point of view of understanding the sentence it is not the images linked with the sentence that are essential, but rather the words have a more abstract meaning which work irrespective of what are its actual different meanings. The word ‘car’ is understood through the abstract image of ‘car’. This abstract meaning or image contains those fundamentally recognisable features which are necessary in order to recognise it as a thing. In other words, all arbitrary and individual characteristics (such as colour, exact size etc.) have been removed (abstracted) from it and a kind of an idea of car has been created. In this abstracted idea the essential characteristics essential for recognising the identity of the phenomenon have been contained in a space as small as possible.

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<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., 297.

Derrida's view of language can from this angle be criticised for the very fact that it emphasises too much the arbitrary, image-like, associative and contextual features of meaning. The meaning of the word can also be understood as economically as possible, in other words, the meaning carries those essential features of reality which form the ideality of some concept.

The critiques of Derrida's writings attempt to highlight the problems linked with them, but several of these problems arise from Derrida's way of argumentation, which easily leads to extreme interpretations (e.g. that meaning is not fully definable and is continuously withdrawing). Yet looking at Derrida's statements in relation to his other texts reveals an often carefully thought out and justified viewpoint. On the other hand, the common consensus which Gadamer was aiming for in his attempted dialogue with Derrida can probably rarely be found, because it is a question of different ways of perceiving the world. One believes in the finiteness of interpretations and the other in the infiniteness of interpretations. Both claims are hard to prove right or wrong, because it is not possible to analyse all possible interpretative situations, nor perceive a single person living a limited life. The question is rather about a metaphysical choice made according to those values that are seen as important. Those that defend the finiteness of interpretations want meaning to stay the same in the communication situation, and that meaning would be conveyable and understandable such as it is meant to be. Those, on the other hand, who defend the infiniteness of interpretations value the possibility of uniqueness, change and movement.<sup>762</sup>

The general problem in evaluating the critiques of Derrida's philosophy is that the world, language, meaning and subject can be perceived in many different ways. Evaluating both Derrida's writings and the critiques of them would require some sort of commensurable criteria that could be applied to the evaluation. The seemingly simplest method of comparison, that Derrida's writings could be compared to empirical experience about things, is problematic for the very reason that in his writings he brings out different ways of experiencing and understanding the world, language and subject. One of the central aims of Derrida's texts is to deal with the

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<sup>762</sup> Derrida's views on language and *différance* have been linked with Heraclitean changeability and the philosophical tradition of movement. In *Radical Hermeneutics* John D. Caputo states that Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida represent

questions of naive empiricism and immediate self-reflection. Both ways of looking require language. Empirical experience, so-called immediate experience and self-reflection are then seen transmitted as linguistic ideas. Even though Derrida denies the value of immediate empirical experience, the thoughts presented in his texts can continuously be tested against one's own intuitions about the empirical nature of the subject, meanings and empirical language, albeit that intuition is transmitted through the history of language. Derrida's view offers a practicable interpretation of the relationship between meaning and language. Here I want to emphasise an alternative method of perceiving reality, just as reality can be understood dualistically or monistically. In a way, the only way in which different views can be evaluated is to ask what the links between them are. What values and basic metaphysical assumptions have been made? These background assumptions also influence which ontological or metaphysical claims one accepts as true. Similarly, also the social and cultural-historical background contains a lot of implicit and non-rational reasons and justifications which influence how reality is perceived.

The essence and nature of meaning can be perceived in quite as many ways as has been presented in the history of philosophy, because the question is about a phenomenon which has a continuous influence in our cultural existence yet does not show itself. One can suggest several different theories about the character of this invisible phenomenon.<sup>763</sup> Is it an idea or something more obscure? According to Derrida, the meaning preceding linguistic expression is something more obscure than an idea; it is rather a trace. He has claimed that "the signified is originarily and essentially (...) trace"<sup>764</sup> He has emphasised the phenomenon that each person can also observe in themselves, that the meaning does not emerge before language (speaking,

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the Heraclitean philosophical tradition, the central realisation of which is that everything floats.

<sup>763</sup> However, this does not mean that one can make completely different arbitrary interpretations, and that there would be no criteria for differentiating which ones would be better than others. I support such a relativism where different linguistic interpretations can be presented about meaning or other ideal objects, but that we continuously test their validity in our life practises and in the relationship of how we experience these concepts. I do not believe, however, that there is any pure original experience about any ideal and conceptual objects, but rather that our linguistic ideas influence how they are understood and how they are experienced. Thus, understanding ideal objects is to a great extent dependent upon the extensive and intertwined relationships of the conceptual and the experiential.

<sup>764</sup> GRAM, 108/73.

writing or inner speech) but only after the linguistic expression; in other words, in a paradoxical way, language produces the meaning. Derrida has claimed that “[m]eaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning”<sup>765</sup> Also, an internal monologue and thinking require language. On the other hand, one can justifiably propose that language is preceded by the image or idea received from experience, for which a suitable expression is sort for from language, in which case language simply expresses the idea that already precedes it. From a deconstructive point of view, any view in which an idea is presumed to precede language and writing claims and assumes too much. From the viewpoint of the theory of the ideational meaning, the deconstructive view cannot explain what directs language. If language formulates the meaning, then how can the subject at all control his or her language use? It is commonly thought that when we use language intentions and psychic images direct the language use, because they offer criteria to judge when we are using the language incorrectly or when we express the internal image or intention wrongly. Derrida's point is to show how the subject of writing cannot control what he or she is saying. But in *Limited Inc., a,b,c*, Derrida admits and even stresses that “the category of intention will not disappear, it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance.”<sup>766</sup> Derrida calls into question the presence of a fulfilled and actualised intentionality, adequate to itself and to its contents.<sup>767</sup>

The critical evaluations of Derrida's writings have to a great extent involved the use of provocative metaphors and even name-calling.<sup>768</sup> For instance, according to Eco, any deconstructive interpretation is ‘paranoid reading’, while according to

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<sup>765</sup> F&s, 11/22.

<sup>766</sup> LI, 59.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>768</sup> The other trend in criticism argues that Derrida is not saying anything new or interesting. For example, John R. Searle claims that "In a subsequent polemical response to some objections of mine, he [Derrida] takes it all back: he says that all he meant by the apparently spectacular declaration that there is nothing outside the text is the banality that everything exists in some context or other" (Searle 1995, 159). Searle misses the point that Derrida makes in *De la grammatologie*, that this all-encompassing contextuality makes the stability and identical repetition of the meaning impossible. Also, there are no natural and necessary contexts, but rather in decontextualizing the meaning is always being grafted to new contexts that alter and change the meaning.

Itkonen, the poststructuralists' view of language resembles schizophrenic language: "Unlike the speakers of normal language, for schizophrenics sentence formation is not directed by meaning, but by form, that is, word associations based on vocal structure."<sup>769</sup> Critical studies of Derrida's views have often led to creating caricatures, with the help of which a negative view of deconstruction is purposely put forward. On the other hand, one can say that Derrida's rather provocative style of writing easily offers the possibility for creating caricatures. When his views are studied as a whole, many of his most central claims, such as "there is nothing outside the text",<sup>770</sup> are not necessarily in contradiction with more traditional hermeneutics or phenomenology. Derrida has in a way brought out more strongly the changing aspects of meaning, whereas hermeneutics and phenomenology have tried to study what in meaning is preserved amidst historical change. According to Derrida, the preservation of meaning is only guaranteed by a repeatable linguistic mark, a signifier, but the signifier in turn can receive an infinite number of different meanings. In phenomenology the permanence of meaning is based on a common human view of the world, in other words, the habit of the transcendental subject of forming ideal objects.

Derrida's critique of philosophy is mainly linked with the problems between determinacy and indeterminacy. Can meaning be indeterminate?<sup>771</sup> According to

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<sup>769</sup> Itkonen 1987, 298.

<sup>770</sup> GRAM, 227.

<sup>771</sup> For example, Searle (1995) suggests that Derrida is a conceptual relativist and pluralist, which is philosophically uninteresting. Also Ricoeur suggests that Derrida's notion of philosophy is relativistic. Ricoeur claims that philosophy differs from literary practices; in philosophical discourse the meaning is brought to a concept and it aims to break free from the play of double meaning (Ricoeur 1978, 297, 302). Both Searle and Ricoeur are interesting critics, because neither of them considers that there is a secure or determinate ground for concepts, but rather they believe that in philosophy the central task is to define its concepts and as such lay the grounds for a philosophical social practice. Searle states: "That there is no mechanical decision procedure for identifying an author's intentions, or for determining whether or not a work is a work of fiction or whether an expression is used metaphorically, in no way undermines the concepts of intention, fiction, and metaphor. Our use of these concepts and our distinctions between the intentional and the unintentional, the literal and the metaphorical, and between fictional and non-fictional discourse is grounded in a complex network of linguistic and social practices. In general these practices neither require nor admit of rigorous internal boundary lines and simple mechanical methods of ascertaining the presence or absence of the phenomenon. Again, the crude positivism of these assumptions I am criticising is of a piece with Derrida's assumption that without foundations we are left with nothing but the free play of signifiers" (Searle 1983, 79).

certain critics, this idea pulls the rug away from communication, because we would never know what anyone else was talking about, and for this reason such critics argue that the changes in meaning occur within certain boundaries. From the deconstructive point of view, in the communication situation it is always already a question of encountering otherness: the intentions of the speaker or writer are transmitted as such, but the listener and reader understand the claims of the speaker and writer within their own contexts. From a Derridian point of view, the change of meaning is not seen as something negative. We have a common language which makes relative communication possible. Derrida's view about the process of infinite meaning creates for some critics the image that in this case there are no criteria for what words mean. Somebody might understand, for instance, the word 'cat' to mean a dog or the word 'horse' to mean a house. Derrida's view about the infinite play of differences is, however, surely not about this. However, he has not dealt with the question of what basis, for instance, the word 'cat' is understood as something else than dog. This lack probably partly explains the critique aimed at Derrida's philosophy.

Even though the core of the debate about Derrida's writings would seem to culminate in the question of whether meaning is finite or infinite, one can also claim that there is not such a radical difference between the views of Derrida, Gadamer and Eco as it appears in the debate, but it is really simply a question of differences in emphasis. Derrida emphasises the change and movement of meaning, and Gadamer and Eco the relative permanence of meaning. Already the basic starting premise of hermeneutics includes the idea of the historical change of meaning. In a way the fundamental problem of hermeneutics has been to resolve how the permanence of meaning is possible amidst historical change and what the preservation of meaning is based on. This basic problem also defines the way in which hermeneutics typically describes meaning. In the same way, Eco starts from the fact that meaning is historically transformable. Eco's and Gadamer's own views are linked to the idea that the written text can receive several meanings. But Derrida radicalises the idea of change, so that meaning seems to be in a continuous state of change and an absolute meaning completely unobtainable. He has not extensively thought about what upholds meaning and what makes possible communication and understanding. He has ascertained from the supposed permanence of meaning only that the very repeatability of a linguistic mark enables the permanence of meaning and communication. His intention is not to show that communication is impossible because all meaning is

arbitrary. The question is about a world view where the starting point is the difference between people, experiences and meaning as well as incommensurability. This need not lead to nihilism, but rather to admitting differences and diversity. Above all, Derrida's writings emphasise what in the history of philosophy has been seen as secondary and arbitrary; in other words, for him change and diversity are rather seen as constitutive starting points.

#### 4.9. An evaluation of grammatology

What is interesting in Derrida's view of language is that he has dealt provocatively with one of the central institutions characterising the 20th century, according to which language is not just a neutral expression but influences fundamentally how we understand the world. Language enables conceptual thinking and the formation of meaning in such a way that would not be possible without language. Language is a strange supplement that produces a new level of conceptual thinking that would not be possible before language. Thinking without language is not perceived as dealing with concepts but as a vague movement of images. Only language enables the reconstruction of conceptual idealities, creating a relative permanence.<sup>772</sup>

Derrida has in a very convincing way also shown that the communication situation, whether it occurs via discussion or writing, does not in a simple manner convey the intentions of a speaker or writer, but rather it is the breaks in meaning which are fundamentally linked with the communication situation. The intentions of the speaker and actor are not transmittable as such. In the communication situation the question is about a genuine meeting of othernesses, where the speaker and listener understand things in their own context. According to Derrida, neither the speaker nor

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<sup>772</sup> In *Kieli ja maailma* [Language and the World] (1988) Martin Kusch differentiates between language as a universal medium and language as a calculus language, an idea he has adopted from Jaakko Hintikka. The following features are characteristic of views that see language as a universal medium: 1. The semantic relationships of language are no longer expressible, 2. Consequently, we cannot even imagine other kinds of meaning relationships, 3. Linguistic relativism is acceptable, and everyone is a prisoner of their own language, 4. We cannot attain reality without the disturbing influence of language, and 5. Constructing a meta-language is impossible (Kusch and Hintikka 1988, 17). Correspondingly, the view of language as a calculus refers to a

the listener holds a primary position with regard to the meaning. Immediately after the expression the speaker is in the same position as the listener; in other words, also s/he has to interpret her/his own earlier statements. Likewise, there is the idea that no contextual closure (saturation) is interesting because it enables many interpretations: meaning does not close up into a totality. This has very widespread consequences for issues of knowledge control and power. If meaning is seen as being continuously postponed and transformed it is not possible for anybody to take such a position in which they could control knowledge, but rather each participates from their own viewpoint in this continuous process of the formation of meaning.

Generally speaking, the grammatology proposed by Derrida can be criticised for its un insightful terms; for instance, the term *writing* (*écriture*) is very problematic as a philosophical term because it already has an established meaning in everyday language use. This problem remains, despite the fact that it is possible to see that he uses the term in a different meaning than its common meaning. This becomes evident in some of the critiques of Derrida's work. Having said that, it is still very difficult to say what Derrida's ultimate view on language is.

In evaluating Derrida's concept of language, it must also be emphasised that he has not put forth an altogether unique view of the character of language and thinking: several 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers have influenced his thinking, such as Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Husserl. For instance, Wittgenstein's thoughts about the relationship between language and thinking can be seen as a central underlying influence in poststructuralist thinking, and also behind Derrida's views on language.<sup>773</sup> Wittgenstein proposed already in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) that "*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.*"<sup>774</sup> In other words, thinking occurs within the boundaries of language. Also the thoughts Wittgenstein puts forth in his later philosophy (e.g. in *Philosophical Investigations*) about language games can be seen as a central background influence

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view of language where the previous thesis is denied. Derrida's view is characterised by the very views about language as a universal medium.

<sup>773</sup> Henry Staten has analysed similarities between Wittgenstein's and Derrida's views on language in *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (1985). According to State, two central similarities between Derrida's and Wittgenstein's thinking are the critique of the possibility of generalisation and the emphasis on private meaning. In Derrida this shows as the emphasis on the idiomatic nature of meaning and the critique of common nouns (cf. Staten 1985, 24).

<sup>774</sup> Wittgenstein 1966, 114/115, § 5.6.

for the birth of poststructuralist views of language. According to Jaakko Hintikka's interpretation, the principle behind Wittgenstein's notion of language games is that the relationship between language and reality is not a natural one, and that language games create the representational relationships between language and reality.<sup>775</sup> According to the language game view, the meaning of an expression is its use in language, meaning those linguistic and non-linguistic functions which influence the meaning of an expression.<sup>776</sup> Influences from Wittgenstein's notion of language games can also be discerned in Derrida's notion of the *play of differences*.<sup>777</sup> Language is thus not understood as a static system of marks that refer to a particular referent, but the language use situation always recreates the representational relationship between language and reality. Likewise, according to Derrida, the meaning of an expression is not complete but is formed in the language use situation, influenced by linguistic and non-linguistic operations.

There are also similarities between Derrida's view of language and Heidegger's thinking as presented in *Sein und Zeit* and particularly in *Gelassenheit*, according to which, being is revealed and reveals itself through language and specifically through speech. Being and speaking are, according to Heidegger one and the same. Likewise, according to Derrida, meaning is revealed and receives its identity only through language, because the linguistic mark is repeatable. The central difference between Derrida and Heidegger is, however, that, according to Derrida, meaning is not revealed fully when we use language, but it is essentially hidden, in which case it is transferred temporarily and locally in time and space. In other words, where Heidegger speaks of the understanding of being, Derrida talks of *différance*.

Derrida's view of language has been most influenced by Saussure's view on the issue, and the former's view is to a great extent similar to that of the latter. Both of them argue that the signified cannot be separated from the signifier, that they are two

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<sup>775</sup> Hintikka 1982, 168.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., 172-173.

<sup>777</sup> The French word *jouer* means 'to play', 'stake', 'back', 'act', 'feign', 'gamble', 'work', 'be loose', and 'to make fun of' (Larousse 1992). The term 'game of differences' would bring out the connection with Wittgenstein's notion of language games, as well as emphasising that it is a question of producing differences based on a set of rules and not an arbitrary event.

different sides of the same production process.<sup>778</sup> In other words, meaning is produced together with the linguistic expression. Derrida also agrees with Saussure that meaning receives its identity in relation to the whole language system and the differences made within it. According to Saussure, the meaning of a word is not defined only according to what it contains but also what is outside it. Thus a word does not only have a meaning but also a value, because it is part of the language system.<sup>779</sup> Derrida radicalises Saussure's view on the value linked with meaning, so that all meaning comes about as a part of the play of differences, which is not held in place by any transcendental signified.<sup>780</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> “[A] semiology of the Saussurean type (...) has marked, (...) against the tradition, that the signified is inseparable from the signifier, that the signified and signifier are the two sides of one and the same production.” POS, 28/18.

<sup>779</sup> Saussure 1972, 160

<sup>780</sup> Links can also be seen between Derrida's idea of grammatology and different developments in logical theory, particularly Frege's conceptual notation (*Begriffsschrift*). Frege's aim was the visual presentation of thought forms (*eine anschauliche Darstellung der Denkformen*) (Frege 1964, 113-114). According to Leila Haaparanta, Frege's way of constructing the conceptual notation ought to be understood from Adolf Trendelenburg's challenge. According to Trendelenburg, Leibnizian and Kantian ideas is united if a Leibnizian universal language, *lingua characterica* were built (Haaparanta 1985, 27). Based on this, Frege set out to develop a logic understood as a language. Its aim is, however, to describe the structures of thinking. Frege nevertheless supports such a universal language view, according to which, one cannot step outside the language in order to look at the relationship between the language and the world (*ibid.*, 41). Thus, semantic theory cannot, according to Frege, be constructed (*ibid.* 47). Also, the grammatology project can be seen as a sort of presentation of forms of thought. The play of differences, the process of grams and *différance* can be seen as a Kantian description of the structures of thinking. Derrida has indeed stated that grammatology, which wants to rid itself from phonocentric and logocentric presuppositions, must in fact free the mathematization and formalisation of language. According to Derrida, ethnocentrism has controlled “the concept of science or scientificity of science – what has always been determined as logic – a concept that has always been a philosophical concept, even if the practise of science has constantly challenged its imperialism of the logos, by invoking, for example, from the beginning and ever increasingly, nonphonetic writing” (GRAM, 3/12, POS, 47-48/34-35). Frege's and Derrida's projects differ, however, in that Frege's universal language does not contain semantics, while Derrida's characterisation of *différance* and the *play of differences* are essentially semantic. Derrida also sees the dangers of formalism and mathematization, that they strengthen the logocentric way of thinking (POS, 47/35), in other words, formalism sustains the thought of a general and universal logic that strives to be described by the signs of logic. But the *play of difference* described by Derrida cannot be systematised: it dismantles the principle typical for the Western tradition of logic, namely, the law of excluded conflict.

## 5. The deconstruction of the subject

René Descartes' arguments about the existence and mode of being of the subject have to a great extent defined the metaphysics of presence. This tradition is characterised by the view that the subject is a kind of self-present and autonomous consciousness, whose existence can be studied in self-reflection.<sup>781</sup> In *Discours de la méthode* (1637), Descartes makes the following description of the subject:

“I do not now admit anything which is not necessarily true: to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks, that is to say a mind or a soul, or an understanding, or a reason, which are terms whose significance was formerly unknown to me. I am, however, a real thing and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks.”<sup>782</sup>

Descartes' description of the subject corresponds to a great extent to the Western philosophical view of the subject studied through self-reflection.<sup>783</sup> Hugh J. Silverman speaks of the modernist conception of the subject that takes “the subject as the center, foundation, source, point of departure, last court appeal, and determinate authority for all conscious life.” This kind of notion of subject is presented, for example, in the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, the Hegelian consciousness, the

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<sup>781</sup> However, the linear and uniform tradition of interpreting the subject as a spiritual substance is quite problematic, because it overlooks the differences of conception of subjectivity within the philosophical tradition. Both Jacques Derrida and Simon Critchley have strongly criticised speaking of a homogenous concept of subjectivity (Ew, 102, Critchley 1996, 22). Critchley asks sceptically: "Has there ever existed a unified conscious subject, a watertight Cartesian ego? Or is the subject some phantasy or abstraction that is retrospectively attributed to a past that one wants either to exceed, betray or ignore? That is to say, is not the subject a fiction that Kant finds in Descartes without it being in Descartes, that Heidegger finds in Kant without it being in Kant, or that Derrida finds in Husserl without it being in Husserl?" (Critchley 1996, 22). Critchley is calling for a more nuanced account of the history of the subject.

<sup>782</sup> Descartes 1967, 152.

<sup>783</sup> One can also mention other intuitive views of the nature of the subject, such as the dualistic view of the subject (e.g. a holistic view about the unity of body and mind) as well as the materialistic view of the subject. The dualistic view of the subject seems very understandable and natural when looking at the subject through self-reflection.

Husserlian transcendental ego, the Jamesian pure ego and the Freudian Ego.<sup>784</sup> Derrida sets out in several of his writings, especially *La voix et le phénomène*, *De la grammatologie*, *Psyché: inventions de l'autre*, “Deconstruction and the Other” and “Eating Well: or the Calculation of the Subject”, to deconstruct the view of the subject as an atomistic, autonomous and “actually present” spiritual entity, specifically through self-reflective observation. He has said, for instance, in his article “La différance”:

“Thus one comes to posit presence – and specifically consciousness, the being beside itself of consciousness – no longer as the absolute central form of Being but as a ‘determination’ and as an ‘effect’. A determination or an effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but of *différance*...”<sup>785</sup>

Derrida’s claim raises the following questions: What, according to Derrida, is more fundamental than the existence or presence of the subject? How is the subject to be understood as only “an effect” and “determination”? In Kearney’s interview, Derrida has further said that “The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language.”<sup>786</sup> With such statements, Derrida seems to deny the existence of an experiential subject that lies outside language, which Descartes in his time saw as the basis for philosophy and which could not be doubted. This kind of view of the subject has led to poststructuralist formulations about the death of the subject.<sup>787</sup> The subject is not seen as directing its speech and use of language, but rather language directs speech and writing, in which case the subject has become redundant. “The subject is dead”, as

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<sup>784</sup> Silverman 1994, 32, Silverman 1987, 46.

<sup>785</sup> Dif, 17/16.

<sup>786</sup> D&o, 125.

<sup>787</sup> In an interview with Jean-Luc Nancy titled “‘Eating Well’, or the Calculation of the Subject”, Derrida analyses the wide philosophical movement that has led to a sort of false belief (*doxa*) in the liquidation of the subject. To this movement belong, he argues, thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Lacan, Nancy, Foucault, Marx and Althusser. Derrida argues that in the different discourses of the above thinkers the subject is not liquidated, but rather it is re-interpreted, displaced, decentered and reinscribed (Ew, 98). They have only criticised the classical notion of subjectivity as a substance or *substratum*, with its qualities of stability, permanent presence, a sustained relation to the self and autonomy (ibid., 99).

Jean-François Lyotard states in *L'inhumaine*. However, in the Kearney interview Derrida also states:

“I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed. To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, 'operations' or 'effects' [*effets*] of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it *says* it is.”<sup>788</sup>

Thus Derrida does not deny the existence of the subject.<sup>789</sup> He emphasises, rather, that the subject is not only what has been said of it or what the subject imagines it to be. Derrida states: “My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject, it simply tries to resituate it.”<sup>790</sup> My own intention in the present study has indeed been to examine how Derrida redefines the subject.

Derrida’s deconstruction of the subject occurs from at least five different angles. 1. Questioning the meta-linguistic view of the subject, that is, the view that the subject is something outside of language; 2. Questioning the presence of the subject, that is, the view that subjectivity manifests itself essentially in the experience of presence; 3. Questioning the view of the subject as a substance and identity; 4. Presenting a critique of the conscious subject; 5. Questioning the interiority of the subject.

Derrida himself usually speaks about a singular deconstruction of the subject containing several critical angles. My intention in the present chapter is to examine these different deconstructions of the subject, as well as the background assumptions and problems linked with them. This way of looking at the issue could create the illusion that Derrida has presented a very systematic theory about the deconstruction of the subject: in fact, he presents his views are found as rather short comments in connection with analyses of different philosophical texts and in interviews. Thus, the

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<sup>788</sup> D&o, 125.

<sup>789</sup> Simon Critchley has emphasised that "The subject continues in its deconstruction, and is perhaps first truly glimpsed *as* its deconstruction." (Critchley 1996, 10). He also claims that there is an existential, ethical and political need to maintain discourses on the subject (ibid. 10).

<sup>790</sup> D&o, 125.

views presented in this chapter are based on statements by Derrida made in different contexts.

### 5.1. The deconstruction of the metalinguistic subject

By the deconstruction of the metalinguistic subject I mean Derrida's critique of the view of the subject, according to which the subject is a spiritual substance which has an identity irrespective of language. According to Derrida, that which we understand as the subject is based upon a linguistic description,<sup>791</sup> in other words, the question of subjectivity is formulated and produced via language. For instance, the claim that the subject is a spiritual substance is a kind of linguistic description through which we perceive subjectivity. This linguistic description creates the image of a non-material, invisible spiritual substance and entity. We can also see the subject not as an entity closing itself off as a solipsistic substance, but rather continuously opening itself up and directing itself outside itself, as put forward, for instance, by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Lacan. The subject can also be understood as a fully biological and physical entity that uses different linguistic and visual marks to describe the world and to communicate. Derrida even claims: "There has never been The Subject for anyone, that's what I wanted to begin by saying."<sup>792</sup> The subject is a fable, [...] but to concentrate on the elements of speech and *conventional* fiction that such a fable presupposes is not to stop taking it seriously (it is the serious itself)...<sup>793</sup>

The view that the self-understanding of the subject is based on linguistic descriptions has very far-reaching consequences for how the individual understands him- or herself. In this case, there is no essential self,<sup>794</sup> but rather we create different

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<sup>791</sup> Ibid.

<sup>792</sup> Here he criticises the view that there has been some simple and homogenous notion of the subject in the history of philosophy (for example, in Descartes' writings).

<sup>793</sup> Ew, 102.

<sup>794</sup> The fundamental premise of existentialism was that "essence precedes being" (cf. Jean-Paul Sartre 1965, 12). In other words, the subject exists in a world before it defines itself, before it creates its essence. Poststructuralism emphasised that the definition of the essence happens to a large extent via language. In other words, we create stories about our own essence.

narratives and fictions<sup>795</sup> about who we are as individuals. These narratives organise our own existence and through them we project oneself into the future. They also influence what we notice within ourselves and what we see as having meaning. For instance, the Kantian theory of transcendental subjectivity is a narrative that structures how subjectivity has been conceived philosophically.<sup>796</sup> Derrida himself has questioned in a few places (e.g. in *L'Animal autobiographique* and “Eating Well: or the Calculation of the Subject”) the common Western philosophical narrative, which defines humans as being different from animals. This narrative, starting from the book of Genesis in the Bible and then repeated over again with the same logic in philosophical texts (for example in Heidegger's and Levinas' writings), aims at defining what is proper to human beings in contrast to animals, and by the same token claiming humans' superiority over what is called animal life.<sup>797</sup> This narrative has legitimated genetic experimentation and the industrialization of meat production for the well-being of man.<sup>798</sup> However, Derrida does not argue for a homogenous continuity between that which calls *itself* man and that which *he* calls the animal:

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<sup>795</sup> ‘Fiction’ can in this context be understood as a possible and hypothetical claim or story. Fictions and stories follow the truth, but they are not objectively or absolutely true; they are interpretations of reality. The word ‘fiction’ is derived from the Latin word *factio* meaning ‘formation’, ‘fashioning’ or ‘feigning’ (*Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1983). Using the word fiction in this context is even more widely linked with questioning absolute and necessary truth. There is no possibility of telling the absolute truth about the essence of man, the structure or prerequisites of consciousness, the task or meaning of man, but we can propose different interpretations and fictions about these. These stories can be very functional, suitable and realistic, but the truth cannot be evaluated in any absolute sense. Emphasising fictions and interpretations does not, however, aim to say that anything goes (the Feyerabend way of thinking that “anything goes”), but the question is about reunderstanding the position of our interpretations.

<sup>796</sup> This kind of view of the narrativity of the subject has in recent times also cropped up within different lines of psychotherapy; for instance, in connection with neurolinguistic programming as well as the more popular so-called Positive Thinking. In both these attention is paid to how the subject pays attention to him or herself. The task of the therapy is to alter those negative perceptions formed about oneself which prevent people from acting as they would want to. In connection with these views, however, the fact has repeatedly materialised that it is impossible to create completely arbitrary stories about oneself. It is not simply a case of changes in linguistic description promoting different interpretations, but rather the latter requires changes in non-cognitive, bodily and subconscious processes. In other words, some ‘other’ within oneself completely resists any arbitrary linguistic attempts at manipulation.

<sup>797</sup> Ani, 389.

<sup>798</sup> Ibid., 394.

instead he attempts to think the limit between, which no longer can be traced, objectified or counted as a single indivisible line, but rather as internally divided.<sup>799</sup>

Such constructed narratives, however, raise the question of whether one can make completely arbitrary narratives. What is the relationship of these narratives to the reality? Can the subject be reduced to language, that is, be seen only as a construction or idea created by language? In this context we have yet again the question of how far language can build up reality and what the relationship is of these structures to reality. One can talk here about extreme conceptual constructivism.<sup>800</sup> According to the extreme conceptual constructivist view, the whole relationship to reality is completely irrelevant because no such reality exists; there are just different conceptual perceptions about what reality could be. Ideas about reality are created through concepts and language. If the aim of science and philosophy has been to create a description of the world and the subject which is as realistic as possible, does this mean that the view emphasising fictionality completely throws one into the arbitrariness of the imagination? Can one any longer talk about truth or the truth as the ultimate referent of statements? The fictional view contains the whole scale from probable fictions to completely imaginary stories. Philosophical accounts aim for probability, but according to the Derridian view they can never describe reality as such because as one moves to the level of description interpretation already always occurs and the description itself is made by using a description and symbol system, such as language, which is external to the interiority of the phenomenon.

Derrida's view of the relationship between the description and the object being described follows Kant's separation of beings-as-such and our observations about the beings (phenomena). While the structure of the transcendental subject in Kant formulates what is observed, with Derrida it is language that formulates its object, so that there is no return to that from which it has been formed. The epistemological starting point in deconstruction is that we can understand only via language. The conceptual is always interpreted through language. One can indeed say that in

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<sup>799</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>800</sup> The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1996) defines the term 'constructive' as a concept used mainly in relation to mathematical theories, as well as more generally as follows: "Constructivism will be suspicious of indirect existence proofs, because showing that a contradiction follows from denying that some object exists need not itself show us how to identify the object. Constructivism frequently involves

Derrida's philosophy there is a transcendental philosophical shift to language.<sup>801</sup> What is outside language is transcendent, and knowledge in turn needs language in order to take the shape of meanings and contents.<sup>802</sup>

Derrida's position varies between extreme and moderate conceptual constructivism. By *Moderate conceptual constructivism* I refer to the view that there is some 'other' outside language which directs our views and concepts. Derrida's critical statements about the metalinguistic subject can be interpreted as representing extreme conceptual constructivism. However, the deconstruction of the substantial subject and the presence of the subject proposed by Derrida would seem to refer to a more moderate view; that is to say, his view of the subject does not only aim to be a linguistic construction but also describe the process of becoming a subject that occurs beyond language. Derrida would surely admit that there is a referential relation to something other than language, which structures our views on the metalinguistic subject and gives the limits to our interpretations. He claims that "The narrative is nothing other than the coming of what it cites, recites, points out, or describes."<sup>803</sup> But in the case of the term 'subject', the reference is quite vague, and different interpretations can equally prevail.<sup>804</sup> For example, in *"Psyché: Invention de l'autre"*,

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suspicion of the idea of a completed infinite set, thought of as a self-standing object of investigation, as a finite set would be" (Ibid., 79).

<sup>801</sup> Richard Rorty criticises the view that in Derrida's philosophy the question would be about a Kantian transcendental philosophical view, where instead of studying forms of pure thinking one has moved to studying language as an expresser of the forms of thinking. According to Rorty, language philosophy is the last refuge of Kantian transcendental philosophy. Derrida's philosophy is, according to Rorty, not a language philosophy in this sense, because it breaks the traditional philosophical way of looking at things (Rorty 1982, 93).

<sup>802</sup> According to Hugh J. Silverman, postmodernism abandons the whole separation between truth and fiction. According to him, the statement that the subject has become a fiction is essentially typical for Modernism, because in Modernism a separation is made between truth and fiction. The postmodern subject, on the other hand, is beyond the separation of fiction and truth, because there is no original and pure subjectivity to which the narratives could be compared. (These statements are based on Hugh J. Silverman's lecture "Postmodern Textuality", given at Helsinki University in spring 1997). This would explain why contrary descriptions and theories of the subject can be acceptable and useful. Very different theories (e.g. Kantian and Freudian theories of subjectivity) and even fictions can be applied in order to understand the subject without needing to decide which one is the correct one.

<sup>803</sup> Psy, 33.

<sup>804</sup> Derrida even claims that "I wouldn't agree to enter into a discussion where it was imagined that one knew what the subject is [...]." Ew, 98.

Derrida claims that the psyche is an invention, a mirage or mirror effect.<sup>805</sup> This does not mean that one can invent whatever narratives one wants to. Rather, Derrida emphasises that inventing is “to answer the 'come' of the other”,<sup>806</sup> and to give a linguistic (or symbolic) expression to the appearance of the other than language. Thus invention is not to be calculated or programmed by the subject, but rather it is an aleatory event.<sup>807</sup> This kind of event is at the same time a discovery of what was already there and a productive invention of a technical apparatus that was not already there as such.<sup>808</sup> There can be different inventions, narratives and fables of subjectivity, but these narratives cannot be made outside a social and discursive context because they would not have any meaning. Hence Derrida emphasises that invention would presuppose that invention is repeatable and its common availability, generality and publicity is introduced in the structure of invention.<sup>809</sup>

Thus the different representations of the subject are not only ideas created by linguistic systems but also they attempt to describe something else, something beyond language, so that what is outside language also partly directs our view of it. In this case truth is a matter of the relation between the linguistic conceptual constructions and the otherness beyond language. The otherness guides the choice of concepts, and the concepts guide the perception of the otherness, and at the same time concepts are continuously being tested in relation to otherness and different practices. According to a more moderate view, the notions about the subject and perceptions are defined by the continuous moving back and forth (the referential relationship) between conceptual perceptions and the non-linguistic experience: the non-linguistic experience directs the conceptual perceptions and the conceptual perceptions direct the non-linguistic experience.<sup>810</sup> However, Derrida's deconstruction of the

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<sup>805</sup> Psy, 40.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>810</sup> Umberto Eco argues in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992) that he accepts "a sort of Popperian principle, according to which if there are no rules that help to ascertain which interpretations are the 'best' ones, there is at least a rule for ascertaining which ones are 'bad'" (Eco 1992, 52). Thus, on the basis of this, an interpretation of a text cannot be completely arbitrary. Likewise, one can deny extreme concept constructivism on the basis of the fact that there are theories that can be at least proven to have problematic pragmatic effects, or which are not applicable or useful in practice. Language constructivism would probably respond to this by

metalinguistic subject concerns the process of becoming a subject *beyond* language, and does not merely criticise the delusion that linguistic descriptions are seen as real descriptions about the subject. Derrida criticises the view of the subject as a substantial identity.

## 5.2. The questioning of the substantial subject and identity

Derrida's deconstruction of the substantial subject and identity aims to question the view that the subject is a spiritual substance with a particular identity, autonomy and essence. In the history of modern philosophy, for instance in the writings of Descartes, the subject has been characterised as some kind of spiritual substance which can study itself in self-reflection,<sup>811</sup> and in doing so the subject would always encounter himself. Traditional reflective philosophy has been based on the assumption that in self-reflection one redirects back to consciousness. It is thought that the consciousness of the subject already exists before self-reflection. Self-reflection is thus a kind of mirroring of oneself.

According to Derrida, "Auto-affection is not a modality of experience that characterises a being that would already be itself (*autos*). It produces sameness as self-relation within self-difference..."<sup>812</sup> Derrida uses the expression auto-affection (*l'auto-affection*) instead of self-reflection.<sup>813</sup> In auto-affection the self (*auto*) literally

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arguing that only those views that differ radically from the social cultural contexts would seem unpragmatic or nonuseful. The social-cultural interpretation is based on a continuous testing of the truth in relation to different scientific and non-scientific practices. This does not override the fact that there are still cases, as Silverman has argued in the context of postmodern textuality, where one cannot decide which theory of subjectivity is true, because the reference can be interpreted in several and even contradictory ways without leading to any problems in practice.

<sup>811</sup> I use the word 'self-reflection' because I want to emphasise that it is about a thinking directed towards oneself. The word 'reflection' comes from the Latin *reflectere* meaning bending backwards or turning. Reflection means considering, pondering, studying oneself and also mirroring.

<sup>812</sup> V&P, 92/82.

<sup>813</sup> Derrida uses the term 'auto-affection' to describe certain phenomenon that Husserl has described in his texts. According to Derrida "The operation of 'hearing oneself speak' is an auto-affection of a unique kind" (V&P, 88/78). Also Derrida points out that in *Ideen I* in §7 Husserl describes reflection and in *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* §42 re-presentation in such away that the presence of the

affects (*affectere*) the self. But what exactly happens in auto-affection if the subject does not separate from itself because no subject has existed before it? According to Derrida, "Auto-affection produces sameness as self-relation within self-difference; it produces sameness as the non-identical."<sup>814</sup> In other words, identity and non-identity are born in turns such that identity does not precede non-identity but they are born simultaneously, producing each other. Identity (the area of sameness) is produced such that auto-affection produces the state where the same separates from itself and produces separation and non-identity. Subjectivity is born in relation to the crack created by auto-affection, a minimal exterior inside interiority. Interiority manifests itself as an interior only in relation to the separating other inside the self.

Auto-affection is thus a question specifically of *différance*, due to which the same separates from itself to become an other. According to Derrida, "The living present springs forth out of its non-identity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace."<sup>815</sup> This 'other' copy enables the recognition of the identity of consciousness. At the same time consciousness is postponed and transferred due to the principle of separation. Thus in auto-affection the question is not about the immediate proximity of the self, that is, the manifestation immediately in consciousness, but rather of spatialization (*espacement*), a minimal separation, a crack and exterior within the self, in which case this exterior makes the interiority possible.

According to Derrida, the subject created in auto-affection is essentially a trace (*trace*),<sup>816</sup> that is, the subject created in auto-affection refers to the past (a past 'subject'),<sup>817</sup> which can never be present for self-reflection. One can say that the subject preceding auto-affection is neither present nor absent otherness. The otherness in this context means above all that the subject preceding auto-affection (*différance*) is

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present is thought as arising from the bending back of a return which Derrida calls auto-affection (V&P, 76/68).

<sup>814</sup> V&P, 92/82.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., 95/85. In *La voix et le phénomène* Derrida describes auto-affection as a movement of temporalization: "The process by which the living now, produced by spontaneous generation, must, in order to be a now and to be retained in another now, affect itself without recourse to anything empirical but with a new primordial actuality in which it would become a non-now, past now – this process is indeed a pure auto-affection in which the same is the same only in being affected by the other, only by becoming the other of the same." (ibid.)

<sup>816</sup> "The self of the living present is primordially a trace." (V&P, 95/85).

outside consciousness and knowledge: one cannot specifically say what it 'is'. This corresponds to the pre-reflective and prepredicative experience of living, where a reflective separation between the subject and the world has not been carried out. It is a matter of some sort of intermediate form in which one does not experience that 'I' see 'some object' or 'I' hear 'some voice', but rather the world is more than the individual objects, and the observer is not located in 'me', in the body, in consciousness or in the brain.<sup>818</sup> Thus, according to Derrida: "[W]hat we call 'subject' is not the absolute origin, pure will, identity to self, or presence to self but precisely this noncoincidence with self."<sup>819</sup>

It is possible to see several similarities between Derrida's view of the subject and those of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Derrida continues their critique of the classical Cartesian view of the subject. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty criticised the view of the subject as a separate substance or entity, the essence of which entails that the subject can immediately reflect upon in its own self-awareness. Merleau-Ponty calls the tradition of philosophy which began specifically with Descartes 'reflection philosophy', the intention of which is to study the structure of the consciousness of the subject through self-reflection.<sup>820</sup> The aims of particularly Kant's and Husserl's philosophy had been to create a foundation for epistemology by studying the structure of the subject's consciousness. In *Sein und Zeit* (1927) Heidegger questioned the overall project linked with Husserl's phenomenology, according to which the apodictic and objective foundation could be found through the

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<sup>817</sup> I place the word 'subject' within inverted commas because, according to the Derridian viewpoint, it is not possible to actually speak of the subject in this way: it is something that could be the object of knowledge or consciousness.

<sup>818</sup> Levinas uses the expression 'vivre de...': living off something precedes the intentional reflective level. Within it there is no separation between the subject and object; rather, they are experienced together and undifferentiated. Levinas (1988, 83) presents as an example, eating or breathing. Levinas's view has a connection with Heidegger's view about care (*Sorgen*). Care, or rather *caring for*, refers in Heidegger to the care and being with things in the world preceding relative observation. Levinas's view of *living off* something differs, however, from Heidegger's view in that *living off* something is a *concrete* living off some exterior, from some Otherness. The subject is not only a living presence which would live from within itself, a kind of stream of life which directs itself outside itself into the world, but man *lives* only in relation to the outside, oxygen, nourishment, dwelling, other people, etc. The relationship to the outside, where the outside gives life, is primary and the intentional relation to the world is a secondary relationship.

<sup>819</sup> Ew, 103.

<sup>820</sup> Merleau-Ponty 1987, 170.

analysis of pure awareness, in other words, a transcendental reduction. According to Heidegger, being, the subject and the world, are understood essentially historically. Being historical and in the world, man cannot understand the universal essence of his being.<sup>821</sup>

Also Merleau-Ponty criticised so-called reflection philosophy from within the logic of reflection. According to him, consciousness cannot reach itself as such, but in self-reflection consciousness is always postponed.<sup>822</sup> Due to the temporal nature of reflection, Merleau-Ponty claims that:

”The movement of recovery, of recuperation, of return to self, the progression toward internal adequation, the very effort to coincide with a *naturans* which is already ourselves and which is supposed to unfold the things and world before itself – precisely inasmuch as they are a return or a reconquest, these operations of reconstitution or of re-establishment which come second cannot by principle be the mirror image of its internal constitution and its establishment, [...] the reflection recuperates everything except itself as an effort of recuperation, it clarifies everything except its own role.”<sup>823</sup>

Merleau-Ponty analysed this phenomenon, especially in *Le visible et l'invisible*, proposing two simple examples of how self-reflection as the coincidence of the self and reflection fails. He calls this phenomenon the *chiasm* or intertwining.<sup>824</sup> As a first example he presents the situation where one’s left hand touches the right hand. In this touching of the self a gap is created between ‘being touched’ and ‘touching’. The hand cannot simultaneously touch and be touched, but touching requires exteriority.<sup>825</sup> For Merleau-Ponty one of two things always occurs: “[E]ither my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it

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<sup>821</sup> Heidegger 1979, 52-62/ 78-90, Heidegger 1987, 84, 140.

<sup>822</sup> Merleau-Ponty 1987, 170-171.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>824</sup> Ibid., 130, 139.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., 142. It should be noted that the question is particularly about a reflective experience, when there cannot be simultaneously a reflective experience about being touched (in other words, feeling from the inside) and being touched from the outside (when one feels what the hand feels like being touched from the outside).

retains its hold on the world, but then I really do not touch *it*.”<sup>826</sup> Our body is divided into two sides, the body as sensible and the body as sentient. This division is experienced as the abyss that separates the In Itself from the For Itself.<sup>827</sup> The other example concerns inner speech. In inner speech the subject is divided in two, simultaneously a speaking and listening subject; the subject is not present to itself as whole and self-identical, but as dualistic, unidentical and separated from itself.<sup>828</sup> One can see similarities between Merleau-Ponty’s view about the *chiasmatic* division of the subject and Derrida’s view that the subject is born in auto-affection.<sup>829</sup> The main similarity lies in reflection, where the return never coincides with the earlier self, but instead reconstitutes the self in difference to an earlier self, which can be known as something differing from the present constitution. The subject and identity supposes reflection (difference, exteriority and return) in order for the inside to appear as an inside. Thus the subject appears only as divided: the present being present only in relation to the past-trace of the subject.

Rudolf Bernet claims that “Derrida has continually and courageously resisted the temptation to draw premature conclusions from this original dividedness [...]. He has never viewed the phenomenon of an original opposition, of an irreplaceable loss, or of an unreachable goal as the possible end of the task of philosophy.”<sup>830</sup> Instead, Bernet argues, Derrida has been interested in the interwovenness of disparate elements, the original supplement, postponement and delay. According to Bernet, “[T]he subject experiences itself as a piece in a game that it did not start, as the trace of a past in which it did not participate.”<sup>831</sup> Thus Derrida does not mainly describe what precedes subjectivity, but rather mainly the process of *différance* which

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<sup>826</sup> Ibid., 149. However, Merleau-Ponty emphasises that this kind of experiences is reversible: "I can feel myself touched as well and at the same time as touching, [...]" (Ibid., 143).

<sup>827</sup> Ibid., 137-138.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid., 145-146.

<sup>829</sup> Also Gasché has analysed the similarities between Derrida's and Merleau-Ponty's writings. Gasché emphasises the critique of philosophy of reflection. In particular he sees similarities between deconstruction and Merleau-Ponty's idea of *hyper-reflection*, both being means for studying the antinomies of reflection as well as the specific nature of this operation. (Gasché 1979, 183-184, 187-188).

<sup>830</sup> Bernet 1996, 176-177.

<sup>831</sup> Ibid., 177.

constitutes subject. However, we do not experience the *différance*, but only the identity that it has produced.<sup>832</sup>

*Différance* becomes a kind of borderline concept of consciousness, in other words, a transcendental philosophical concept. *Différance* describes the coming of the 'unknown' into being. This kind of view raises the question of how the prerequisites of subjectivity can be studied. Is not that the very thing which lies outside knowledge? For instance, Wittgenstein discusses in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* whether consciousness could study the conditions of its own existence:

“The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world. Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye. And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.”<sup>833</sup>

The critique is justified, but one could also say that for Derrida the border, however, lies within the sphere of ontology, when he places it in auto-affection. Auto-affection is still thinkable.

Derrida's deconstruction of the substantial subject raises the question of whether auto-affection really produces the subject, or whether even this kind of view requires the existence of a 'presubject' at some level. Can the subject and auto-affection be created from nothing? Is not auto-affection the very property of some 'pre-subject'? Derrida is possibly right in that self-reflection in a strange way produces the subject as an object and as present, but after this process one can also deduce something from the prereflective subject, for instance, that auto-affection is characteristic of it. One must thus presume that reflection occurs to some prereflective subject. The same deduction was made by Jean-Paul Sartre in *L'être et le néant* (1943): "...it is non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible; there is a pre-reflective *cogito* which is the condition of the Cartesian *cogito*.”<sup>834</sup> Furthermore, Sartre argued: "If we wish to avoid an infinite regress, there must be an

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<sup>832</sup> Cf. Silverman 1987, 47, 311.

<sup>833</sup> Wittgenstein 1966, 117, § 5.632.-5.633.

<sup>834</sup> Sartre 1966, 13.

immediate, non-cognitive relation of the self to itself.”<sup>835</sup> According to Derrida, however, the subject does not include an immediate self relation within the self, but rather the subject withdraws according to the principle of *différance* in every auto-affectation. Self-reflection does not reach the subject, but the subject manifests itself as an abyss.

### 5.3. The deconstruction of the presence of the subject

For Derrida the deconstruction of the subject concerns above all the deconstruction of the *presence* of the subject. This entails questioning the view that the subject is a fundamentally temporal spiritual substance. Subjectivity is thus thought to exist essentially in the 'now', “the present as punctuality of the instant”<sup>836</sup> as a living presence. The presence in the living present is a kind of basis for experience and knowledge. For instance, the basis for phenomenology is the view that the living subject in the presence of the present is the only foundation to which the world can manifest itself. The world exists only if it has an observer. This makes the present subject a foundation enabling the manifestation of knowledge and the world. Derrida questions this notion of the subject, and states that the presence of consciousness is not the foundation for subjectivity: rather, the presence of the subject is produced in the system of *différance*.<sup>837</sup> What, then, is this system of *différance* from within which the whole existence of consciousness must be understood differently?

One can start to look for the solution to this question in Derrida’s critique of *inner time* in *La voix et le phénomène*. There Derrida criticises the view of time as a concept of the ‘now’ (*un concept du ‘maintenant’*) which would be present at a certain and local now-like or spot-like moment. According to Derrida, the punctuality of the instant (*la ponctualité de l’instant*) is a myth, a spatial and mechanical metaphor.<sup>838</sup> Instead, he sets out in his writings to propose another way of looking at

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<sup>835</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>836</sup> V&P, 68/61.

<sup>837</sup> "Thus one comes to posit presence – and specifically consciousness, the being beside itself of consciousness – no longer as the absolutely central form of Being but as a 'determination' and as an 'effect'. A determination or an effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but of *différance*..." Dif, 17/16.

<sup>838</sup> V&P, 68/61.

time, which would not be based on presence. Instead of seeing time as comprised of static now-like moments, Derrida sees it as a dynamic process, one which is not formed of static singular segments of now-moments, nor as a continuous presence in relation to which the past and the future are constituted.

According to Derrida, time is formed in the process of auto-affection. The word ‘time’ is, according to him, a metaphor that simultaneously both indicates and dissimulates the movement of auto-affection.<sup>839</sup> Time is usually understood as a continuous process, where the present is transformed into the past and the future into the present. According to Derrida, the experience of the flow of time is created specifically through the backwards-directed auto-affective movement. The experience of time is auto-affection, such that time creates the presence of the present. The presence of the present is created so that the present separates from the non-present, that is, the past-present.<sup>840</sup> Temporalisation is thus also a question of spatialization as well as *différance*. Space exists in time so that the former is a pure separation of the latter from the self. Constituting the now-momentariness requires its separation from the self as non-identical from the self. At the same time, the auto-affection movement is erased and the presence of the present is no longer seen as a consequence or effect. One can indeed say that *différance* shows maybe most clearly in the flow and emergence of time.<sup>841</sup>

Likewise, the presence of the subject is formed, according to Derrida, in auto-affection, in the process of *différance*:

“[T]he subject, and first of all conscious and speaking subject, depends upon the system of differences and the movement of *différance*, that the subject is not present, nor above all present to itself before *différance*, that the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporising, in deferral [...].”<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>839</sup> Ibid., 95/85.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

<sup>841</sup> Time is born as a process that erases its own separation from itself. From this follows that it is impossible to identify the point where the separation of the past from the present has occurred. Only when the separation has occurred can the present manifest itself as an interiority in relation to the past.

<sup>842</sup> POS, 41/29.

In other words, the separation created by auto-affection produces the presence of the subject. Essential, however, in Derrida's philosophy is that the subject does not precede auto-affection in the form of presence, but rather auto-affection produces the subject.<sup>843</sup> According to Derrida, the sense in the statement 'I am' is that I am a mortal,<sup>844</sup> in other words, I am constituted in relation to my own absence. I am constituted in the present as present, specifically in the very relationship to the past which no longer is. 'I am alive' in so far as I die every moment in every auto-affection. 'I am alive' is born in auto-affection, where I reflect my absence and produce myself as a trace, which refers to a past which no longer exists.

Derrida's argument follows the lineage of Heidegger's view in *Sein und Zeit*, where the meaning of being is said to lie in temporality,<sup>845</sup> constituted in Being-towards-death. Thus both Derrida and Heidegger 'deconstruct' the idea of the subject as a substance or entity, which primarily exists in the present, now-moment. Heidegger describes *Dasein* as a transcendence, becoming, Being-towards-future (Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being), care (*Sorgen*), projection and anticipation. Derrida elaborates the notion of the subject through the quasi-concepts of trace and *différance*,<sup>846</sup> and thus his emphasis on the constitution of the subject emphasises a relation to an absolute past. The presence of the present is constituted in relation to non-presence, the absolute past, which has never appeared in the mode of presence (past present). Derrida's analysis of the temporality of the subject also includes the relation to the future (protention), which is a relation to the *other* of the present.<sup>847</sup> According to Derrida: "[T]he presence of the perceived present can appear

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<sup>843</sup> V&P, 92/ 82.

<sup>844</sup> Derrida also claims that "My death is structurally necessary to the pronouncing of the I. [...] The statement 'I am alive' is accompanied by my being dead, and its possibility requires the possibility that I be dead; and conversely." (V&P, 108-109/96-97).

<sup>845</sup> Heidegger 1979, 19/41. Jürgen Habermas claims in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) that Derrida's philosophy is an 'orthodox' Heideggerian project of "temporalized *Ursprungsphilosophie*". In temporalized *Ursprungsphilosophie*, Heidegger elaborates a historically dynamic concept of truth. Both Heidegger and Derrida deconstruct the atemporal and spatial foundational notion of the philosophy of the subject (Habermas 1987, 162).

<sup>846</sup> Also Hugh J. Silverman has pointed out that the Derrida's notion of self is decentered in the *différance* of arché-writing (Silverman 1987, 311).

<sup>847</sup> V&P, 72/ 64. Also Heidegger's idea of Being-towards-death can be considered as a trace-structure, because as a possibility it is as far as possible from anything actual (Heidegger 1979, 262/306-307). According to Heidegger: "Death, as possibility, gives

as such only inasmuch as it is *continuously compounded* with a nonpresence and nonperception, with primary memory and expectation (retention and protention)<sup>848</sup> Presence emerges in relation to absence in the process of auto-affection (*différance*). Thus, one could say that Derrida's philosophy is essentially akin to the Heideggerian philosophy of 'becoming' and a dynamic notion of temporality.

However, Derrida sees his own deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence essentially in opposition to Heidegger's philosophy: "I sometimes have the feeling that the Heideggerian problematic is the most 'profound' and 'powerful' defence of what I attempt to put into question under the rubric of the *thought of presence*".<sup>849</sup> Also in "Ousia et grammè" Derrida claims that: "The extraordinary trembling to which classical ontology is subjected in *Sein und Zeit* still remains within the grammar and lexicon of metaphysics"<sup>850</sup> and that

"The Heideggerian de-limitation consists sometimes in appealing to a less narrow determination of presence from a more narrow determination of it, thereby going back from the present toward a more original thought of Being as presence (*Anwesenheit*), and sometimes in questioning this original determination itself, and giving us to think it as a closure, as *the Greco-Western-philosophical closure*."<sup>851</sup>

From these kind of comments, one can draw the conclusion that in Derrida's view there is a radical difference between his and Heidegger's writings.

The difference between Derrida and Heidegger is perhaps not that radical, and Derrida's comments seem quite odd in relation to the persistent theme in *Sein und Zeit*

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*Dasein* nothing to be 'actualized"', because it is "*the possibility of impossibility of any existence at all*" (ibid, 262/307). Thus Heidegger's notion of Being-towards-death can be interpreted as a trace-structure, a relation to an absolute non-being and non-presence.

<sup>848</sup> V&P, 72/64.

<sup>849</sup> POS, 55/75.

<sup>850</sup> O&g, 73/63.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid., 75/65. Derrida does not give any references in "Ousia and grammè" to where in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger considers Being as presence (*Anwesenheit*), because in his analysis Derrida mainly deals with sections § 81-83 of *Sein und Zeit*, where Heidegger analyses Hegel's radical conception of time. (Heidegger 1979, 428/480).] Thus in Heidegger's conception, Hegel's notion of time would be a description of the inauthentic form of time as presence, which Heidegger aims to dismantle.

of dismantling the notion of Being as presence.<sup>852</sup> One can claim that Heidegger specifically seeks with the destruction [*Destruktion*] of Being another way of understanding than the substantial and static view of Being. He presents a dynamic view of Being, which has not been given any specific characterisation, and which in other words has not been tied to what Derrida calls presence. Heidegger describes Being as a continuous historical emergence and becoming.

Once again, one can say that the view Derrida describes – that the present subjectivity and inner time are produced in the process of *différance* – is one possible way of perceiving what constitutes the presence of the subject. The presence of subject can also be considered as coherent view, so that the being of the subject is essentially linked with the experience of significant presence, and that the experience of being is the foundation that cannot be prevented from existing, except presumably by dying. The self manifests itself as continuous present being. Thus, there is not necessarily a need to consider the subject as a continuous dynamic ‘coming’, but rather as continuous permanence. The meaning of the deconstruction of the presence of the subject as proposed by Derrida lies in the fact that he questions the presence of

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<sup>852</sup> Herman Rapaport considers the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida as 'chiasmatic': "When Derrida discloses affinities and identities to Heidegger it is in terms of a temporality that forecloses identification. And when he shows his differences with Heidegger he does so in terms of a temporality that forces identification to come about." (Rapaport 1989, 67). Rapaport elaborates that the main difference between Derrida and Heidegger is that Derrida is consistent with the originary project of deconstructing the source point of time as the presence of the present. Heidegger is not so consistent or radical with his original task of destroying the ontological notions of Being and time considered as a presence. According to Rapaport: "The question Derrida is asking in 'Ousia et grammè' concerns how we are to assess *Being and Time*, given that the 'application' of Hegel is precisely the context wherein a deconstruction of western ontology could be carried out by Heidegger, though it is most evidently being resisted, either because Heidegger does not clearly see his way to the deconstruction of ontology by means of the clue to the time Hegel offers, or because he sees it but suspects that it might be too disruptive in terms of the philosophical context already established in *Being and Time*." (ibid., 73). Hegel's notion of time would present time as a negative moment through which undifferentiated space *becomes* differentiated space. Thus Hegel considers time as spacing (ibid., 72). However, Heidegger introduces Hegel's notion of time as the ordinary understanding of time (Heidegger 1979, 428/480), which Heidegger himself considers unauthentic. The basic phenomenon of this ordinarily understood time is seen in the 'now', present (ibid., 427/479). Thus the Hegelian conception of time would also lead back to the metaphysics of presence or traditional ontology, even though it would also hold a temporal clue to the deconstruction of the classical notion of time as presence, as Derrida and Rapaport suggest.

consciousness. The subject of philosophy has to a great extent been the conscious subject, the *cogito*. In the following chapter I will look at how Derrida questions the conscious subject.

#### 5.4. The questioning of the conscious subject

One can say that with the deconstruction of presence Derrida attempts to question conscious consciousness. By conscious consciousness is here meant such consciousness which has some object factitiveness. The object of consciousness can thus also be consciousness itself. Already Descartes presented as one of the arguments for the existence of consciousness, that if thinking has some object then this also proves the existence of consciousness.<sup>853</sup> According to Derrida, consciousness is not a starting point; rather, the being of consciousness is produced in auto-affection. In other words, the subject is something other than primarily a conscious subject. Derrida does not speak about this other subjectivity; in his philosophy it remains an otherness that is not spoken of. It is otherwise than the presence of consciousness.

Derrida's view about the deconstruction of the conscious subject can again be understood on two levels: one level can be called the *egological* level and the other *pre-egological* level.<sup>854</sup> The egological subjectivity is constructed in auto-affection, while the pre-egological subject does not exist within the boundaries of our knowledge, but rather is otherness. A similar bi-levelness can be found, for instance, in the writings of Freud, Lacan and Levinas, as the difference between conscious and preconscious levels. One must note, however, that with these thinkers (and Derrida, too) the conscious and preconscious levels must be understood as dynamic. There are no clearly outlined conscious and preconscious levels, but rather the conscious is also reproduced in auto-affection. The preconscious is not a clearly delineated substance nor an entity but rather otherness, the presence of whose consciousness it sets out to replace. Derrida therefore emphasises the view that has been presented in psychoanalysis, that consciousness is always born retrospectively (*après-coup*,

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<sup>853</sup> Descartes: "For if I judge that the wax is or exists from the fact that I see it, it certainly follows much more clearly that I am or that I exist myself from the fact that I see it" (Descartes 1967, 156).

*Nachträglichkeit*). The presence of consciousness is a kind of *substitute* and *supplement*, in place of the continuous and coming emergence of being.

Heidegger began the critique of the primariness of this kind of consciousness in *Sein und Zeit*. There he presents the view of being-in-the-world, where the ‘subject’ (*Dasein*) is both constituted by the world and constituting the world. *Dasein*’s relation to the world is thus not simply cognitive; in other words, the world does not manifest itself only as objects (different senses) of the consciousness of the subject, but also as the ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) and equipmentality (*Zeug*). Levinas and Merleau-Ponty continue this project beyond the conscious and present consciousness. According to Levinas, the bodily relationship to another human being reveals another starting point for philosophy than the being of consciousness: the face of another human being appears to consciousness as the trace of something else than belonging to the sphere of ontology, and which can question consciousness as a foundation. Merleau-Ponty’s bodily being-in-the-world dismantles the juxtaposition between the subject and object created by the conscious consciousness; the bodily being is the foundation of his philosophy, on the basis of which the conscious level is constituted.

Derrida has not presented any claims about what would be *beyond* consciousness, because, according to him, if one would say something about it, it would be transformed into an object of consciousness. Derrida has, for instance, criticised Levinas in his article “Violence et métaphysique” for speaking about Otherness beyond consciousness. When Levinas says that Otherness exists he has already brought Otherness into the sphere of ontology, in other words within the sphere of language and objectifying knowledge.<sup>855</sup> Critchley has indeed claimed that Derrida preserves more consistently the otherness beyond the ontological as Otherness.<sup>856</sup> Derrida does not go further than the border of ontology with his quasi-concept of *différance*. *Différance* produces the ontological, that is, the area of

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<sup>854</sup> Derrida uses these two notions in the article "Eating Well" to describe different levels of subjectivity.

<sup>855</sup> Levinas' *L'Autrefois que de l'être* has been considered as an answer to this kind of critique. Levinas explains there in more detail how ethical speaking of Other is possible. It is possible in Saying (*Dire*), that is an ethical and momentary interruption of the logos. The interruption lies in discourse which is addressed to the Other.

<sup>856</sup> Simon Critchley claims that "At the limit of philosophical language, Derrida points towards a non-philosophical space which he has *decided not to decide* to explore. Consequently, his work is poised at the limit of logocentric language, looking across into the silence that exceeds metaphysical closure." (Critchley 1992, 95).

conscious consciousness and knowledge. But according to Derrida, it is not possible to talk about what constitutes being, because it is “otherwise than being”, and when we talk about it we draw it into existence, that is, we transfer it to the area of being, that is, ontology. One way of perceiving the subject beyond consciousness would be to claim that it is more than what can exist in the sphere of ontology. This is supported by Derrida’s claim that the task of *différance*, which creates the sphere of ontology, is to protect the psyche from too much presence, by constituting a reserve.<sup>857</sup>

One can also see similarities between Derrida’s views of the subject and Freud’s and Lacan’s views of the unconscious. Due to *différance*, that is, the indeterminateness of the play of differences, the subject is to a great extent unconscious. Only a small part of the subject lies within the sphere of consciousness, presence and controllability. The subject is to a large extent something else than present conscious consciousness. Derrida claims that the caricature of representational man would “readily endow him with hard eyes permanently open to a nature that he is to dominate”.<sup>858</sup> In opposition to this, one can picture a subject that sleeps half of the day and closes its eyes in between,<sup>859</sup> that is, the presence of consciousness is fragmentary. Presence is not the foundation but a fragment constituted in relation to absence.<sup>860</sup>

Derrida’s idea that the presence of consciousness is born from auto-affection can easily create the image of a fragmented and splintered subject, that is, a self born in auto-affection formed of separate identities. Such an idea is partly correct, and not necessarily so negative as it is often interpreted. The fragmentariness of consciousness does not necessarily mean a schizophrenic chaos or that the subject would not be able

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<sup>857</sup> Cf. Dif, 19/18.

<sup>858</sup> Pr, 10.

<sup>859</sup> The chapter “Le signe et le clin d’oeil” [Signs and the Blink of an Eye] in *La voix et phénomène* deals with the constitution of the present in auto-affection.

<sup>860</sup> Following Derrida’s line of argument Hugh J. Silverman claims that the self is a crypt, which occupies in the position of the undecidable. It opens the question whether the self is inside or outside. Silverman claims that: “The crypt requires de-encrypting, i.e. a decoding of the encoded codes” (Silverman 1987, 308). Thus the self needs to come outside in different ways (linguistic accounting or acts of self-reflection), differing from itself in order to be recognized as an inside. Thus, according to Silverman, “What is one’s own happens in the *différance* of arché-writing and therefore does not remain in my safe or crypt any more than in his [Derrida’s]. Whatever is in my safekeeping, or in Derrida’s, always has a remainder, a supplement, a surplus – something left over, postponed for another time and also different from itself.” (Silverman 1987, 312)

to form a complete image of his or her own life; it can also be seen as a positive phenomenon. Thus, the subject does not form an enclosed solipsistic identity but is internally discontinuous. This discontinuity enables several different interpretations of the self. It makes it impossible for the subject to reflect upon the nature of his/her self, see who he/she is and see what the essence of his/her self is. This view about the discontinuity of consciousness does not, however, lead to the other extreme, that is, the situation where the subject can see no unity or wholeness in his/her own life. The constitution of the subject in auto-affection only brings forth the fact that the continuity of identity is produced in relation to the absence of consciousness, and that the phenomenon experienced as the continuity of consciousness is essentially linked with absence and ruptures that prevent the subject from seeing him/herself as a whole. People continuously create narratives about themselves and the world, which create continuity and the unity of identity to cover the original non-identity and absence.

### **5.5. The deconstruction of the interiority of the subject**

For Derrida, the deconstruction of the subject is also linked with the idea of the deconstruction of the interiority of the subject. According to Derrida, the interiority of the subject is to a great extent constituted through the internal voice. The internal voice is then seen as the subject's deepest self, the voice and thinking of the self. Derrida calls this view phonocentrism (*le phonocentrisme*). Phonocentrism, as the word implies, means the centrality and privileging of the voice. In *De la grammatologie* Derrida defines phonocentrism as “absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning.”<sup>861</sup> It means the privileging of voice in idealisations, the production of concepts and the self-presence of the subject. In other words, the voice, and particularly the inner voice, is seen to be the manifestation of the meaning and the interiority of the subject. By the *voice*, Derrida does not, however, mean the physical voice, but rather the inner soundless voice.

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<sup>861</sup> GRAM, 23/12.

Derrida finds once again in the phenomenon of the inner voice the process of *différance*: in the process of the inner voice it is a question of the division of the subject, when the subject simultaneously both speaks and “hears-itself-speak” (*s’entendre-parler*).<sup>862</sup> The system of “hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak” means both understanding oneself and hearing oneself as an inner voice in consciousness. Essential for this phenomenon is that the subject understands the meanings immediately, without any linguistic mediator. The voice is thus seen as being closest to the signified.<sup>863</sup> In other words, the internal voice is seen as the immediate manifestation of the meaning of consciousness. According to Derrida, the system of “hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak” has led to dualistic separations between the worldly and the non-worldly, the outside and the inside, ideality and non-ideality, the universal and the non-universal, and the transcendental and empirical.<sup>864</sup> Thus the internal voice has been interpreted as the starting point of interiority.

When “hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak” it is thought that the consciousness of the subject is in an immediate connection to pure meaning. Thus it is thought that the self does not step outside itself, but touches itself in an immediate and absolute proximity of oneself,<sup>865</sup> where there is no difference between the self and touching oneself. The event of hearing and understanding the inner voice is interpreted as consciousness. The subject is thought then to be in such proximity with itself that there is no separating factor, space, exterior, world or body.<sup>866</sup> Inner speech is essentially a question of *différance* which is erased, thus producing the illusion, typical for phonocentrism, that inner speech is the immediate self-expression of the subject and the immediate manifestation of meaning to consciousness. Derrida has indeed said:

“Speech and the consciousness of speech – that is to say consciousness simply as self-presence – are the phenomenon of an auto-affection lived as suppression of *différance*. That *phenomenon*, that presumed suppression of *différance*, that

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<sup>862</sup> The French verb *entendre* means both ‘to hear’ and ‘to understand’, as well as ‘to mean’, ‘to intend’, ‘to agree’, and ‘to know’.

<sup>863</sup> GRAM, 22/11.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*, 17/8.

<sup>865</sup> V&P, 79/88-89.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*

lived reduction of the opacity of the signifier, are the origin of what is called presence.”<sup>867</sup>

In other words, according to Derrida, in hearing/understanding the inner voice it is a question of a division, that is, the subject produces itself, and on the other hand it observes itself. The erasing of the difference between these two acts produces an illusion about the subject’s immediate proximity to itself and interiority.

Phenomenology and also more general theories of meaning have, according to Derrida, been ruled by the view that language is not used in inner speech, but rather that inner speech would be a pure manifestation of the meaning in itself. In inner speech the signified and signifier seem to unite, so that in the confusion the signifier would seem to disappear or become transparent. Thus the signified would seem to appear as it is, referring to nothing other than its own presence.<sup>868</sup> According to the deconstructive viewpoint, this kind of presence and transparency of meaning is not possible; but meaning differs from itself and postpones itself even in internal speech. Therefore, in the “hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak” phenomenon it is a question not about the interiority of the subject but about the difference contained in the inside and about the outside; that is, language. In the article “La différence” Derrida indeed says:

“[C]ertainly in the subject becomes a *speaking* subject only in its commerce with the system of linguistic differences; or yet, the subject becomes a *signifying* (signifying in general, by means of speech or any other sign) subject only by inscribing itself in the system of differences. Certainly in this sense the speaking or signifying subject could not be present to itself, as speaking or signifying, without the play of linguistic or semiological *différance*.”<sup>869</sup>

Is the inner voice the most fundamental creator of interiority?<sup>870</sup> Or is the idea of the interiority of the subject due to a certain experience of identity, that experiences are

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<sup>867</sup> GRAM, 237/166.

<sup>868</sup> POS, 33/22.

<sup>869</sup> Dif, 16-17/16.

<sup>870</sup> For example, Heidegger considers that “The ‘I’ seems to ‘hold together’ the totality of structural whole” (Heidegger 1979, 317/365). Hence he claims that “The ‘I’ is rather

experienced by a certain self? One can also claim that the idea of personal interiority is born in relation to other people: the characteristic of personal interiority cannot be revealed before I have a relationship to another person whom I understand as having an interiority of his/her own which presents itself as an alterity.<sup>871</sup> In his later writings (for example, *Force de loi*, "Eating Well") Derrida elaborates the idea of the responsibility of the other preceding the subject. Derrida conceives responsibility in a Levinasian manner, as a responsibility of the Other before any calculation. Thus he claims:

"The singularity of the 'who' is not the individuality of a thing that would be identical to itself, it is not an atom. It is a singularity that dislocates or divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the Other, whose call somehow precedes its own identification with itself, for to this call I can *only* answer, have already answered, even if I think I am answering 'no'."<sup>872</sup>

Thus the subject is constituted as divided in the answer to the call of the Other. The responsibility of the Other has no limits, the responsibility is endless. There belongs a certain excessiveness to the responsibility of the pre-egological 'self' or 'being'. The egological subject is constituted in such an answer which is based on calculation and limiting the excessiveness of responsibility. Hence its aim is to master the excessiveness of the call of the Other represented in morality, politics and the legal system. In Derrida's analysis of the subject, both the egological and pre-egological levels prevail.

## 5.6. Evaluating the deconstruction of the subject

Derrida's idea of the deconstruction of the presence of the subject can only really be criticised if one makes the presence of the consciousness of the subject into metaphysical presupposition. One can also ask whether presupposing such a presence

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the subject of logical behaviour, of binding together: "I think' means 'I bind together'." (Ibid, 319/367).

<sup>871</sup> Cf., for instance, Buber 1925.

<sup>872</sup> Ew, 100-101.

is only a metaphysical choice, or whether it corresponds to the historically- and conceptually-coloured experience of consciousness. Derrida strives in his questioning of the presence of the subject only to move the philosophical foundation of the metaphysical presupposition. Thus the presence of the subject's consciousness is no longer seen as the foundation. Instead Derrida strives to understand the constitution of presence itself. The matter in question is the view that emerged already in Romanticism about the continuous coming of being from non-being. The presence of consciousness is continuously born from an unknown foundation, which is not actually a foundation.

Being can also be seen as static permanence, in which case the being of the subject can be seen as a similar permanent presence ending in death. This neutral permanence of being can be experienced as a universal foundation of life. This counter-argument to the deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence reveals very clearly the central intuition contained in Derrida's writings; that is, that we can perceive reality through language in many different ways. One can understand being as presence, or one can conceive of it as the mystery-like birth and becoming of being from non-being.<sup>873</sup> However, both Heidegger and Derrida emphasise that two

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<sup>873</sup> The question about the relationship between Being (*Sein*) and becoming (*werden*) is as old as the history of philosophy. For instance, according to Heraclitus, everything flows, in other words, being is in a continuous state of becoming. He was opposed by Parmenides and Zeno of Elea, according to whom change is seeming and the permanence of being is actual. Democritus, on the other hand saw that everything is formed out of permanent units, which only receive different forms when being combined in different ways. Plato solved the problem of the change in a similar way as Parmenides and Zeno, in other words, he saw change as seeming and the ideas behind it as permanent. In the same way, Aristotle saw that nature (*physis*) is in a state of continuous change, but amidst this change is something permanent and lawful, namely, pure forms. Far into the 18th century the aim of philosophy was still to understand permanent and eternal ideas in the midst of what is changing. The exception is perhaps the view of Leibniz; the basic idea of his monadology being that monads are part of a continuous becoming. Only with Romanticism did the interest in continuous change, the idea-of-becoming, take a new form of interest. In hermeneutics (e.g. Schleiermacher and Dilthey) understanding is seen as a continuous developing process, which no longer means a return to the same eternal idea, but rather understanding being is developed and transformed historically. Understanding is seen as continuing the creative work of the creative spirit. Hegel built an extensive metaphysical system on the idea of *becoming* and dialectic development. Likewise, also in the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche being is seen as a continuous *becoming* (*Werden*). In French philosophy, Bergson's views about continuous evolution and *élan vital* are concerned with the metaphysics of becoming. Also

conceptions of temporality prevail: temporality conceived from the presence of the present as the source-point of time, and temporality conceived as a dynamic process constituted in relation to an absence, where presence has no primacy over absence. Heidegger considers the first conception of time as *originary* understood temporality and the second one as a more profound, authentic notion of temporality. Also Derrida claims that “there are two texts, two hands, two visions, two ways of listening” at stake in the notion of time: the metaphysical notion of time as *presence* in general and the notion of temporality as a trace. The notion of temporality as a trace is unthinkable for metaphysics, but it is not simply absent in the closure of metaphysics. Thus Derrida claims that temporality as a trace is neither perceptible nor imperceptible, because “the trace of the difference is erased”.<sup>874</sup>

What is interesting in Derrida’s questioning of presence is that, according to him, presence is constituted in auto-affection. Derrida’s description of *différance* and auto-affection as conditions for the possibility of identity and subjectivity closely resembles analyses typical for transcendental philosophy. Derrida’s views differ, however, from traditional transcendental philosophy in his basic assumption that subjectivity is born in auto-affection. For Derrida, the subject does not have an identity before the auto-affective movement which also erases itself and cannot be thought under the category of presence. Likewise, Derrida’s views about the influence of language on the presence of ideal meaning contents differ from traditional transcendental philosophical starting points in that according to him, ideal meanings do not exist independent of language.

In his writings Derrida presents a radically different notion of subjectivity than that in traditional transcendental philosophy. Several Derrida researchers<sup>875</sup> point out the differences.<sup>876</sup> For instance, according to Gasché:

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Whitehead proposed a kind of metaphysics of becoming, part of his view on ‘organic interconnexion’.

<sup>874</sup> O&g, 75/65.

<sup>875</sup> For instance, according to Christopher Norris, Derrida’s philosophy is not a case of transcendental philosophy, but it proposes transcendental arguments that show the impossibility of the transcendental philosophical project (Norris lecture at Tampere University, 28.10.1999). Norris in a very interesting way separates transcendental philosophy from transcendental arguments, so that the latter concerns the necessary prerequisites for a certain discourse or experience. They are based on the inner observation of concepts and beliefs (cf. *Companion to Epistemology* 1993, 506-509). The transcendental arguments concern deduction, while transcendental philosophy in turn really claims something about the prerequisites of experience. By using

“Although deconstruction investigates the conditions of possibility of the *conceptual systems* of philosophy, it is neither to be mistaken for a quest of the transcendental conditions of possibility of knowledge (Kant), nor for a new version of Husserl's transcendental philosophy.”<sup>877</sup>

Hence Gasché considers that “deconstruction represents in the first place a critique of reflexivity and specularity.”<sup>878</sup> In other words, he claims that Derrida does not so much present a new view about the prerequisites for conceptual possibilities, but rather shows why the self-reflective approach fails. Derrida’s view on auto-affection or inner speech can be interpreted specifically as a depiction of the prerequisites for the construction of the subject as an identity, which at the same time undermines any specularity and reflexivity. There is no previous and originary self to which one returns in reflection. Rather, reflection (auto-affection) produces the subject as a divided identity (absence/presence). According to Bernet, Derrida's positive contribution to the analysis of self-experience “is above all the indication of the necessity of *self-representation* and its *differential* structure. There exists no interior self-consciousness without an exterior appearance of the subject in pronouncements, gestures, activities, and so on. The subject experiences its own self only by means of

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transcendental arguments it is possible to show that a certain deduction concerning transcendental prerequisites is not justifiable.

<sup>876</sup> For example, Richard Rorty claims: "To understand Derrida, one must see his work as the latest development in this non-Kantian, dialectical tradition [...]"(Rorty 1982, 93). According to Rorty, what is interesting and essential is how Derrida questions the traditional philosophical tradition. According to him, the core of Derrida’s philosophy is that “(h)e is not writing a philosophy. He is not giving account of anything, he is not offering a comprehensive view of anything. He is not protesting against the *errors* of philosophical school.” (Rorty 1982, 97) I agree with Rorty in that Derrida’s texts offer the possibility for a two-fold interpretation, (1) the traditional philosophical interpretation, and even a transcendental interpretation, and (2) an interpretation that dismantles philosophy’s basic starting points in a way which is often in conflict with traditional philosophical thinking. But my own view of Derrida’s writing differs from Rorty's view in that I consider in Derrida’s writings it is more essential what he says from a philosophical point of view in terms of content, and that would initially seem to be in conflict with traditional ways of philosophical thought. However, it is specifically the interpretation and understanding of conflicting claims, which often seem paradoxical, that reveal interesting viewpoints to traditional philosophical questions about the nature of the subject.

<sup>877</sup> Gasché 1979, 202.

<sup>878</sup> Ibid., 183.

these expressions.”<sup>879</sup> Derrida has convincingly elaborated in his writings the non-identity and difference within subjectivity, which makes impossible any mastery or transparency of subjectivity. The presence of subjectivity is marked by the other and constituted in relation to this otherness. Thus the subject is primarily a trace.

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<sup>879</sup> Bernet 1996, 178.

## 6. The question of the ‘method’ of deconstruction

The term ‘deconstruction’ is not unproblematic. Derrida originally presents the term as a translation and adaptation for his own purpose of Heidegger's notion of *Destruktion*.<sup>880</sup> He has used the term quite unsystematically, but already in *Positions* (1972) he describes the “*general strategy of deconstruction*”<sup>881</sup> which has led people to think that deconstruction is a kind of method.<sup>882</sup> Even Derrida himself claims in *De la grammatologie* that “one should be able to formalise its [deconstruction's] rules”<sup>883</sup> Later, however, he ends up emphasising that deconstruction is not a method nor a technical or machine-like model,<sup>884</sup> but rather an unanticipated event. The reader cannot simply decide to deconstruct texts and thought structures, but rather deconstruction occurs from within the text itself. It is contained within linguistic and textual systems and is not an event that can be consciously decided by a single subject. There have, however, been attempts, for instance by Rodolphe Gasché, Irene E. Harvey and Jonathan Culler, to abstract a deconstructive method from Derrida’s texts. Even Derrida himself was interested at first (e.g. in *Positions* and *De La grammatologie*) to describe deconstruction as a method.<sup>885</sup> Since then, however, Derrida has been very critical of the attempts to create a deconstructive method. My intention here is indeed to discuss to what this kind of change in viewpoint may be due. If deconstruction is not any particular method, then what *is* it? If, on the other hand, deconstruction is a particular analytical or reading method, then how does it differ from other ways of reading, such as, for instance, hermeneutics? Is there a

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<sup>880</sup> Laj, 388/270.

<sup>881</sup> POS, 56/41.

<sup>882</sup> For example, Culler 1983, 150-151.

<sup>883</sup> GRAM, 39/24. Derrida refers here to the post-Hegelian movements of deconstruction (in particular Nietzsche and Heidegger). Also David Wood claims that “we can distinguish the historical source of Derrida’s ideas from their analytical form.”(Wood 1990, 59).

<sup>884</sup> Laj, 389/271; Aft, 210/199.

<sup>885</sup> POS, 56-64/41-47; GRAM, 39/24.

deconstructive method that could be applied to studying texts? Or is deconstruction identical with Derrida's work?<sup>886</sup>

On the basis of Derrida's critical remarks, one can justifiably claim that there is no deconstructive method, but rather that it is a property contained within texts. In other words, deconstruction is not something to be decided upon by the researcher. It is not a method chosen by the researcher in order to be able to approach her/his goal, but rather is defined on the basis of the object itself. I would claim, however, that restructuring the text also requires a deconstructive viewpoint of the text chosen by the reader,<sup>887</sup> because deconstruction is linked with a view concerning the displacement and rebuilding of structures of thought. A fully uncritical and unmethodological way of reading does not lead to the changes of viewpoint that Derrida presents. Also Gasché claims that "deconstruction is not a nonmethod, an invitation to wild and private lucubrations."<sup>888</sup> The deconstructive viewpoint, however, cannot be reduced to a technical or mechanical model. The question is rather about a certain way of understanding thinking and language as textuality. Deconstruction should rather be understood as an all-encompassing way of perceiving the relationship between language and reality rather than as a mechanical method. This also influences how texts are read, what aspects of their contents are paid attention to, and what the attitude will be to the conflicts contained within them. My intention in this chapter is to look at what the deconstructive way of reading is about. One must nevertheless emphasise that when speaking of the deconstructive viewpoint or analysis it is not a question of defining a clearly demarcated method.

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<sup>886</sup> Cf., Silverman 1994, 58, 60-66. Silverman considers this problem in *Textualities* (1994) claiming that Derrida does not make deconstruction his own property. Rather it is an activity of appropriation, which is the "writing of a reading of another text." However, Silverman notes the difficulty of dissociating deconstruction from the work of Derrida. One reason for this is that Derrida does not always operate in deconstructive mode as he has explained his practice. (Silverman 1994, 60-62)

<sup>887</sup> Derrida himself, however, would claim that in deconstruction the question is about giving up the goal-oriented way of reading (cf. Laj, 391/274). In other words, one gives up the aim to intend, 'meaning-to-say-nothing' (*ne-rien-vouloir-dire*) and understand something from within the centre (POS, 23-24/14).

<sup>888</sup> Gasché 1986, 123.

### 6.1. The deconstruction of method

A deconstruction of the traditional view of method can be derived from Derrida's critical comments concerning the method of deconstruction. Also, according to Gasché, Derrida's critical comments refer specifically to the deconstruction of method. He claims that "deconstruction is also the deconstruction of the concept of method"<sup>889</sup> The word 'method' is derived from the Greek words *meta*, meaning 'from something' or 'after something', and *hodos*, meaning 'journey'. Thus etymologically, 'method' refers to a journey from somewhere to somewhere else: it is seen as a kind of way to knowledge.<sup>890</sup> Donald Polkinghorne defines 'method' in *Method for the Human Sciences* (1983) as a kind of activity, the intention of which is to produce research results, that is, going after something or a goal-directed aim, attempt or activity. In other words, it refers to a detailed and logically organised plan with the help of which one would attain knowledge.<sup>891</sup> Thus method means a certain delineated viewpoint and logical procedure, with the help of which systematic and delimited information can be obtained from the study object. Method is thus understood as a structural principle guiding the research, and which can be precisely defined or described. Research guided by method differs from an unsystematic or unscientific approach in the very fact that the method is a delineated viewpoint that can be explicated and the goals and principles of which can be expressed. By contrast, unsystematic research proceeds in an unanticipated way from the researcher's own interests and intuitions. Methodology in its turn means a doctrine in the use of methods; thus methodology concerns methods as well as the goals and aims of studying methods.

With deconstruction, however, the issue is essentially about questioning goal-orientedness and the systematicity of analysis. Derrida criticises implicitly, via the characterisations of deconstruction, the traditional methods which delineate the object of research as manifested in a certain way, while other features which are irrelevant and conflicting from the point of view of the goal remain unseen. One can indeed say that the aim of the deconstructive approach is to understand the object from its own

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<sup>889</sup> Ibid.

<sup>890</sup> Cf., Gasché 1986, 121.

<sup>891</sup> Polkinghorne 1983, 10.

position, and not so much on the basis of a particular presupposition that defines how the object of research should manifest itself. Also Gasché has claimed that the “method” of deconstruction is certainly not characterised by any exteriority to its object: “As a method, deconstruction is very much determined by the region and the regions of philosophy to which it applies”.<sup>892</sup> Derrida also questions the clear-cut separation between the research object and the researcher. This is partly because deconstruction concerns particularly texts, that is, linguistic and conceptual systems, the character of which includes the entwining of interiority and exteriority. Texts cannot be objects fully external to the subject that studies them; being the object of the analysis requires understanding by thinking within the consciousness of some subject, made one’s own and internalised.

Derrida is critical towards the developments proposing a deconstructive method because it then easily becomes a technical or mechanical way of looking at texts.<sup>893</sup> And such an operation then governs reading itself and not so much the text itself. Thus the deconstruction of the method means above all a way of reading where the text rather than the reader or the mechanical method dominates the interpretation. One can indeed say that the deconstructive analysis is specifically characterised by there being no aim to find a one particular meaning or central idea in the text, but rather one studies how the text creates different meanings that may be in conflict to each other. Thus in this sense the deconstructive analysis differs from a hermeneutic interpretation, the aim of which is to understand the meaning intended by the writer, that is, not to get stuck on the contradictions or loopholes of the text but rather to aim to complete the text based on what is seen as its central context. In deconstruction, on the other hand, the aim is not to complement, clarify or smooth over the contradictions in the text, because they offer the starting point for a new interpretation.

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<sup>892</sup> Gasché 1986,122.

<sup>893</sup> In this sense, Derrida is on the same lines as Heidegger and Gadamer. In *Gelassenheit* (1959) Heidegger criticises calculative, technological and representational thinking because in them a supposition is set for how the matter should be revealed. Then the true historical revealment (*Ereignis*) is covered over (Heidegger 1987, 55, 67). Likewise, in his essay “Wahrheit in den Geisteswissenschaft” (1953) Gadamer has proposed that the kind of methodological research striving for objectivity carried out in the natural sciences is not suitable for the humanities, the aim of which is the historical revealment in speech (*Rede*) (Gadamer 1986, 43).

Derrida himself and others have reconstructed a method of deconstruction, but only after Derrida's initial texts were written (*De la grammatologie*, *La voix et le phénomène* and *L'Écriture et la différence*). This fact reveals that deconstruction has not been presented as some ready method or model of analysis that can be applied to the interpretation of all texts, but, rather, each text to be analysed defines how deconstruction has occurred and what shape it has received. Thus, when Derrida has written about deconstruction as 'writing with two hands', as an event, inscription or textual grafting, it is a question of the history of deconstruction or historical deconstructions. However, deconstruction cannot be reduced to these historical analyses and interpretations of the deconstructive method, but rather receives different forms depending on the research object. However, Derrida's deconstructive analyses are not merely the result of a completely neutral, unsystematic and goalless reading. They also require an approach in which the text is not organised by some central idea, theme or transcendental signified. Furthermore, they require the valuing of differences, conflicts, meanings, dissemination and the limitlessness of contexts, as well as concentrating on describing how the textual play of differences dismantles the thought of the transcendental signified. I would therefore argue that two simultaneous aims can be seen in Derrida's writing under the title of 'deconstruction': 1. The aim to understand the text from its own starting point as it manifests itself, and 2) A simultaneously conscious aim to understand the text non-logocentrically. With the reading and understanding of a non-logocentric text I mean such a reading of the text which is not dominated by some transcendental signified, or central meaning or theme. Thus, one concentrates on analysing the play of differences and textuality occurring in the text.

There would indeed seem to be a paradox within deconstruction: Derrida emphasises that the text itself produces the deconstruction, but it is obvious that the reader is unable to recognise deconstruction without the deconstructive way of analysing the text. While the deconstructive view of the nature of textuality is revealed through individual text analysis, the reader must already know of it in order to find it in the text. Thus deconstruction is not able to free itself from the circularity involved with research, even though it aims to understand the texts such as they appear. This is supported, for instance, by the fact that also hermeneutics aims to understand a text from within itself. But Derrida's deconstructive analysis differs radically from hermeneutic research. From this one can draw no other conclusion than

that deconstructive analysis is aimed at features in the text other than those in hermeneutics. In deconstruction one is not so much interested in what the author wanted to say but in what s/he inadvertently said.<sup>894</sup> The hermeneutic interpretation is interested in understanding the intended meaning of the text. Both ways of interpretation are guided by their own conceptions of language; one values the transcendental signified that exists beyond language, the other questions its existence and concentrates on the level of the text. Derrida, then, is not a reader lacking presuppositions and self-interests, as he claims to be. His deconstructive reading methods are guided by a certain way of perceiving language and meanings.

In the present chapter my intention is indeed to discuss what kind of deconstructive analysis Derrida has carried out in his writings and what kinds of interpretation of deconstruction have been presented by Derrida and the scholars of deconstruction. These interpretations of deconstruction by Derrida are not so much methods that could be applied to any given text, but rather exposés of how texts can appear to dismantle themselves. One must also emphasise that these interpretations of deconstructive analysis are themselves part of the history of deconstruction. Deconstruction cannot be reduced to these; they require a more holistic way of understanding deconstruction. Accordingly, deconstruction is manifested in various ways.

## 6.2. Deconstruction as double writing

Derrida has described deconstruction in several different contexts as ‘double writing’ (*l'écriture double, l'écriture dédoublée*), ‘double gesture’ (*double geste*), and ‘double science’ (*double science*),<sup>895</sup> and these characterisations have often been used by others, too.<sup>896</sup> The model of double writing, however, is particularly suited to certain

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<sup>894</sup> In this respect, deconstruct has something in common with a psychoanalytical reading of the text. However, Derrida himself has claimed that there are differences (F&Scé, 196-198); for instance, the notion of repression is different. Classical Freudian psychoanalysis has a stronger belief that the analysis can reveal the hidden truth and that this process is cathartic, while deconstruction shows how the meaning of a text defers, appearing as abyssal, open to different interpretation and being endlessly intertextual. There is no origin or end of the text to be found.

<sup>895</sup> E.g. POS, 56-61/41-44, POS 48/35.

<sup>896</sup> E.g. Culler 1983, 150, Gasché 1979, 192-193, Silverman 1994, 65.

research objects, namely the deconstruction of hierarchic binary oppositions, that is, such opposite pairings where one is seen as more valuable and fundamental than the other. Thus deconstruction is seen as a double gesture: on the one hand, deconstruction traverses a phase of overturning the hierarchic binary opposition, and on the other hand it displaces the opposition and situates it differently by introducing a new 'concept', "a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime."<sup>897</sup> Derrida calls this concept analogously 'undecidables' (*indécidables*). Undecidables can no longer be included within a philosophical binary opposition, even though they inhabit, resist and disorganise philosophical opposition.<sup>898</sup> Gasché describes the two movements of deconstruction as: 1) a *reversal* of the traditional hierarchy between conceptual oppositions and 2) a *reinscription* of the newly privileged term. Due to the reinscription, the hierarchy is reversed in such a way that the newly privileged term is no longer identical with the initial dyad.<sup>899</sup>

According to Derrida, this kind of deconstruction is necessary because in classical philosophical juxtapositions (e.g. body/consciousness, nature/culture, signified/signifier, writing/speech) it is not a case of a peaceful coexistence of opposites but a violent hierarchy, where one of the terms dominates the other.<sup>900</sup> The stage of turning over the binary opposition is structurally necessary because it offers a new perspective in studying the relation between opposites. For instance, what would follow if culture would be seen as more primary than nature or linguistic expression more primary than content? But as Derrida emphasises, if we stay only at the stage where the binary opposites have been overturned, we would continue to act within the field of dualistic juxtapositions.<sup>901</sup>

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<sup>897</sup> POS, 57/42.

<sup>898</sup> POS, 58/43. According to Silverman, indecidables (*indécidables*) function where philosophical oppositions originate. They mark the difference between the oppositions by connecting different oppositions to each another. Thus they have a double character: they introduce the possibility of turning in either direction within a whole variety of philosophical oppositions, yet they do not adopt either side of such oppositions. For example, sign is an indecidable. It relates the signifier/ signified pair to one another without ever constituting a unity. (Silverman 1994, 66-67) Silverman describes indecidables also as "hinge elements that separate off and bring together at the same time." (Silverman 1989, 165).

<sup>899</sup> Gasché 1979, 192-193.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid., 56/41.

<sup>901</sup> Ibid. 57/42.

Deconstruction indeed produces displacements, in other words, a new ways to understand the opposite setting. Thus, the meaning of the hierarchic pair of opposites changes. One can say that in deconstruction one seeks what is beyond the foundation and original. What structures the foundation, the original or the definition of the *actual* as the original foundation? Similarly, what defines its opposite as the *non-actual*? What produces the hierarchical setting? What is the foundation or origin of the foundation? One can say that Derrida often finds a certain dynamic logic by which the opposites are defined in relation to one another. The original foundation is after all not a foundation, but rather it is a question of a conceptual process where the original is defined as original in relation to the non-original, which in turn is defined in relation to the original. It is Derrida's concept of *undecidables* which helps to define what has not been possible to contain within the earlier system based on binary oppositions; and as mentioned above, *undecidables* cannot be included within the binary juxtapositions, even though when dismantling and breaking down the latter they are attached to them.<sup>902</sup>

Derrida claims that he had attempted “to bring the critical operation to bear against the unceasing reappropriation of this work of simulacrum by a dialectics of the Hegelian type [...]”.<sup>903</sup> Hegel presents his views about the dialectics of being in, for instance, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1832). There he presents the development of becoming (*Werden*) through being (*Sein*) and non-being (*Nichts*). According to Hegel, the opposition between being and non-being is cancelled out and surpassed (*Entstehen*) in becoming.<sup>904</sup> Thus Hegel's dialectics is usually presented as a three stage process: 1, Thesis, 2. Antithesis, 3. Synthesis.<sup>905</sup> The end result of dialectics is the preservation and sublation (*Aufhebung*)<sup>906</sup> in synthesis. For Hegel dialectic is a movement of being. According to Marías “The thesis leads necessarily to the antithesis, and vice versa, and this *movement of being* leads inexorably to the

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<sup>902</sup> Ibid., 58/43.

<sup>903</sup> POS, 59/43.

<sup>904</sup> Hegel 1985, 95.

<sup>905</sup> E.g. Marx 1971, 49-50. For instance, Julián Marías points out that "Hegel's dialectic has a ternary structure, in *which* the *thesis* is opposed with *antithesis* and both are united in the *synthesis*" (Marías 1967, 321).

<sup>906</sup> Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung* is here translated as 'sublation' or left untranslated, which is a common practice. Derrida translates it as 'la relève', from the verb 'relever', meaning 'to lift up', but also 'to relay' or 'to relieve'. (See, Alan Bass' translator's note in "La différance", 20).

synthesis, in which the thesis and the antithesis are preserved and superseded – *aufgehoben* [...]”<sup>907</sup> This means also that every concept turns into its opposite and these opposites are then preserved and superseded in a concept belonging to a higher order.

According to Werner Marx’s detailed commentary on Hegel, dialectics can be seen as a three-part process. Marx emphasises both the connections and differences between the different levels. The first stage – *thesis* – is such an identity which implicitly contains within itself the non-identical, different and other, which together form what is called ‘negative’. This in turn enables the non-identical to be placed expressively as the second level – *antithesis*. Thus the second stage appears as ‘negative’ in relation to the first level, because it is essentially placed in a relationship (*Verhältnis*) where the negative is a “positive negative” or “the other of the other”.<sup>908</sup> The third level – *synthesis* – in turn means the surpassing and sublation (*Aufhebung*) of the opposites in its three different meanings: in the meaning of the maintaining of opposites (*tollere*), preserving (*conservare*) and elevating (*elevare*).<sup>909</sup> Being in the very highest fulfilment is an absolute self-knowing idea.<sup>910</sup> The abolition of the opposition between the concept and reality then occurs. This unity is, according to Hegel, the absolute truth.<sup>911</sup> According to Marx, the simultaneous abolition and crossing of the opposites means a return.<sup>912</sup> Thus he claims that in dialectics the Aristotelian *telos* transforms into a turning circle,<sup>913</sup> that is, a circular or cyclic development. Hegel defines being as self-sameness, and consequently he sees that the occurrence of anything new as an impossibility.<sup>914</sup>

Derrida has claimed that deconstruction is aimed specifically against Hegelian idealism, which is based on the sublation (what Derrida terms *relève*), that is, the preservation and negation in a spiritual ‘lifting up’ to a ‘higher level’ of the binary oppositions of classical idealism, a resolution of contradiction in a third term;

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<sup>907</sup> Marías 1967, 321.

<sup>908</sup> Marx 1971, 49. See Hegel 1948, 496, Hegel 1969, 835. Werner Marx places inverted comas around the word ‘negative’, referring presumably to the fact that the non-identical only appears negative in relation to *thesis*.

<sup>909</sup> Marx 1971, 50.

<sup>910</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid. 50.

<sup>912</sup> Ibid.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., 62

<sup>914</sup> Ibid.

that is, with synthesis comes sublation (*Aufhebung*).<sup>915</sup> According to Derrida, the problem with Hegelian dialectics is that with the resolution of contradiction into a third term difference is interned in a self-presence.<sup>916</sup> He indeed proposes that the term ‘undecidable’ (*indécidable*) should replace Hegel’s third term. *Undecidable* is not above the opposition in such a way that it would absolve and explain it. Instead, *undecidable* describes a continuous and undecidable oppositeness, where one term appears as the other of the other and as the exterior. Thus, it describes the chiasmatic logic linked with juxtapositions, that is, the parallel of the other and the same. The external other is indeed the reverse of the internal. When one meaning is visible the other is covered. When one is seen as the original foundation its opposite appears inevitably as secondary.

In the deconstructive dismantling of hierarchic settings one tries to understand how the logic of the object works and what the common denominator between the opposites is. What sort of limit produces a situation that gives a hierarchic pair of opposites? This kind of observation produces a *displacement*, so that the opposite is not seen to be as original as in the starting situation, but rather one sees how the original is defined as original through a specific chiasmatic logic. This demarcates the viewpoint where the opposites do not appear in the same context. The displacement occurs when one looks at that particular border where the opposites would appear as simultaneously defining each other, independent of each other and as the reverse sides of each other. According to Derrida, the binary oppositions are indeed formed so that the concept is only the different and deferred other of the other. Thus every seemingly severe and irreversible opposite is explained as a theoretical fiction.<sup>917</sup>

Derrida’s analysis of Rousseau’s texts in *De la grammatologie* is a good example of the deconstruction of hierarchic binary oppositions. Rousseau presents in his texts a set of values in which speech is seen as more real and original in relation to writing, just as nature is seen as primary in relation to culture. Derrida shows through Rousseau’s own texts how the latter’s values and the hierarchy of binary oppositions have been produced, as well as how the presence, actuality, and original experience have been produced through their supplement (*supplément*) and substitute (*suppléance*). Derrida also shows how Rousseau in order to describe the original

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<sup>915</sup> POS, 43.

<sup>916</sup> Ibid.

<sup>917</sup> Dif, 18/17.

experience inevitably has to describe it parasitically through the supplement, that is, its inauthentic opposite and exterior addition.<sup>918</sup> The deconstructive displacement occurs through the word *supplement*. The word ‘supplement’ is the undecidable revealed in the deconstruction of Rousseau’s texts. The continuous undecidable movement occurs in Rousseau’s texts between the supplement and the original, in which case the opposites do not settle into a simple hierarchical position, but rather the hierarchical order in the text is occasionally reversed. Likewise, the term *différance* is undecidable; it describes the nature of the unity and difference of the binariness between signifier and signified. The signifier is the signified’s other. The signifier is defined as the exterior in the process in which the signified separates from the signifier, being at the same time defined as interiority.

The dyadic nature of the undecidables produces the chiasmatic movement between the binary oppositions, in which case the oppositions cannot settle into any permanent hierarchical order.<sup>919</sup> One task of deconstruction is indeed to show the relation between original and secondary, foundation and non-foundation, authentic and artificial, nature and its supplement, as well as the continuous defining which takes place through each. The secondary is constitutive for the one that is thought to be primary or original. For instance, in *De la grammatologie* Derrida describes the relation between nature and its supplement (for example, writing, representation or image) as follows:

“Reason is incapable of thinking this double infringement upon Nature: that there is *lack* in Nature and that *because of that very fact* something is *added* to it. Yet one should not say that Reason is *powerless to think this*; it is constituted by that lack of power. It is the principle of identity. It is the thought of the self-identity of the natural being. It cannot even determine the supplement as its other, as the irrational and the non-natural, for the supplement comes *naturally* to put itself in Nature’s place. The supplement is the image and the representation of Nature. The image is neither in nor out of nature.”<sup>920</sup>

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<sup>918</sup> GRAM, 226/157.

<sup>919</sup> Cf. Silverman 1993, 120.

<sup>920</sup> GRAM, 214/149.

Thus the intention of deconstruction in revealing the undecidables, such as the supplement, is not so much to nullify opposites but to preserve them. In such a deconstruction it is a question of finding a kind of bridge back to the movement from which the opposites receive their energy and movement. Hugh J. Silverman has analysed this feature of deconstruction, claiming that deconstruction establishes the place(s) of difference inscribed in the text. Also according to Silverman, deconstruction seeks to restore what is left out of the text, but what is left out of the text is already inscribed in the text. Thus, deconstruction seeks the place of indésidables, chiasm between visible and invisible in any given text.<sup>921</sup>

French feminism has taken into use specifically a model of deconstruction as a double writing when dismantling the hierarchical opposition between man and woman. In fact, even already before Derrida, Simone de Beauvoir presented in *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) a similar hierarchical logic and its dismantling. According to her, woman has been defined as the man's Other. Man has thus been seen as the essential active subject and woman as the inessential object of action.<sup>922</sup> In other words, the relationship between man and woman has historically been defined as a hierarchical binary opposition, where woman is seen as lower-ranking and man as more valuable.<sup>923</sup> De Beauvoir's central question is, what is the genealogy of this hierarchical setting? That is, how has it developed historically and are there any biological grounds for it? Dismantling the hierarchical setting requires, according to de Beauvoir, acknowledging the reciprocity between the sexes.<sup>924</sup> She presents several examples of how defining man as an active subject has required defining the woman as a passive object. This shows clearly, for instance, in the traditional division of the roles of man and woman. The man has been able to have an active influence outside the home in social matters while a woman's area of action has remained to look after the home. According to de Beauvoir:

“History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against

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<sup>921</sup> Silverman 1994, 44-46.

<sup>922</sup> De Beauvoir 1988, 17.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 93.

<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

her; and thus she has been definitely established as the Other. This arrangement suited the economic interests of the males; but it conformed also their ontological and moral pretensions."<sup>925</sup>

Thus, according to Beauvoir humanity is considered to be male while woman is not even an autonomous being, but something relative to man.<sup>926</sup> In this context, she presents a somewhat deconstructive view, according to which the battle-like difference between the sexes cannot be removed, because becoming an independent subject always requires a battle. Likewise, when emphasising the erotic character of the difference between the sexes, she preserves the idea of sexual difference in the continuous and undecidable definitions occurring through each. In other words, she dismantles the hierarchy of the juxtaposition but not the continuous reciprocal definitions linked with it.

Poststructuralist French feminism links the kind of analysis inherited from de Beauvoir with influences from Derrida's deconstruction. For instance, one can see clear influences from Derrida in Hélène Cixous' feminist writings.<sup>927</sup> Cixous claims that the basis for the hierarchical system of opposites typical for Western thinking lies in the dualism between the sexes and, furthermore, in direct connection with the patriarchal system of values. Masculinity is seen in terms of positive characteristics, femininity with negative and passive ones. Cixous shows in *La jeune née* (1975) the following group of binary opposites which, according to her, are based on the hierarchic juxtaposition between the sexes:

*Masculine / Feminine*

active / passive

sun / moon

culture / nature

day / night

father / mother

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<sup>925</sup> Ibid, 171. Beauvoir also claims that "woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject, because she lacks definite resources, because she feels a necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the *Other*" (ibid, 211).

<sup>926</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>927</sup> Cf. Moi 1985, 104.

head / feelings  
 intellectual / emotional  
 logos / pathos<sup>928</sup>

According to Cixous, instead of such binary thinking, one should look at the above pairs of opposites from the starting point of heterogenetic *différance*. Thus, masculinity and femininity, as well as other opposite pairs, should rather be understood as plurals. The heterogenetic difference refers to the fact that, for instance, womanliness is defined not only in relation to manliness but in relation to many different men and women as well as to cultural and natural entities. Thus its definition is continuously transforming and developing. Derrida has in fact participated in the gender discussion, for instance in an interview with Christine McDonald, published under the title “Choreographies” (1982). In the interview Derrida proposes a similar kind of binary defined deconstruction of the concept of gender as Cixous. According to Derrida, one should speak about a polyphonic choir rather than two gender categories.<sup>929</sup> In a similar way, Diane Elam considers the task of feminism to be plural and polyphonic:

“Feminism cannot look to deconstruction for a method to make the distinction [between aesthetics and politics] dissolve together. Rather feminism and deconstruction work together to convey the complexity of the articulation of aesthetics and politics. This would be a feminist deconstruction, a deconstructive feminism, that seeks no political truth but *political justice*. The search is unending, like the questioning that goes along with it, for the call to justice is never fully answered and never fully calculable. In deconstructive terms, feminism's ethical obligation is not that pronounced by a moral subject upholding moral norms, it is spoken by multiple voices in multiple contexts; it is repeated over time, yet never quite the same.”<sup>930</sup>

Elam brings forth an important aspect of feminist deconstruction, namely that it cannot be reduced to a particular political programme, thesis or truth that would be

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<sup>928</sup> Cixous 1975, 115.

<sup>929</sup> Cho, 76.

<sup>930</sup> Elam 2000, 100.

universal. Rather, feminist deconstruction implies answering the call of justice as it appears singularly in a particular situation in history.

Deconstruction, as double writing, prevails also in the viewpoint concerned with the problems of the hierarchical settings of ethnic, political, religious and sexual minorities. Among others, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has analysed minorities on the margins on the basis of Derrida's notion of deconstruction. Thus the aim would be to deconstruct the centre and periphery, the binary and hierarchic setting between the mainstream and minority cultures. She has criticised, for instance, the universal application of Western Anglo-American and European feminism as well as more generally the Western concepts of equality in improving the position of Third World women. Improving their position requires, according to Spivak, other kinds of values, viewpoints and concepts than those which have emerged in the debate over equality in the West.

One can see a similar kind of attempt at deconstructing 'marginalia' and the centre in the sociological research concerned with colonialism. Its aim is firstly to show the difference between the ruling hegemony and the colony as well as the binary value systems. On the other hand, it aims to deconstruct the values of the hegemony and the centre through the periphery and marginalia. The central aim of deconstructive analysis, feminist critique and the analysis of marginal cultures and minorities is to re-evaluate general values and to show how power is built on excluding others and different things outside the centre. The aim is to dismantle value settings defined through opposites and to bring forth the value of so-called marginal phenomena. This kind of deconstructive research often sets politics as the central theme. Thus, the aim is to change social concepts and values even more widely. Deconstruction as double writing revealing undecidables is, however, only one form of deconstruction. Derrida has also carried out other types of deconstruction in his writings. These will be discussed next.

### **6.3. Deconstruction as *clôtural* reading**

In *De la grammatologie* Derrida describes deconstruction as a *exorbitant method*, which aims to deconstruct philosophical closures, such as logocentrism by proceeding from a certain point of exteriority:

“To *exceed* the metaphysical orb is an attempt to get out of the orbit (*orbita*), to think the entirety of the classical conceptual oppositions, particularly the one within which the value of empiricism is held: the opposition of philosophy and non-philosophy, another name for empiricism, for this incapability to sustain on one's own and to the limit the coherence of one's own discourse, for being produced as truth at the moment when the value of truth is shattered, for escaping the internal contradictions of scepticism, etc.”<sup>931</sup>

Thus deconstruction as a *clôtural* reading aims to see how philosophical systems construct a closure. What has been closed off in order to form a coherent philosophical system? How does the outside affect the closure on the inside?

Simon Critchley has in his interpretation of deconstruction paid particular attention to this issue, introducing the term *clôtural reading* in *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992). According to him, a deconstructive way of reading differs as a textual practice from other kinds of text analysis in that it is *double reading*. The first reading and interpretation is a commentary and precise reading according to the prevailing interpretation,<sup>932</sup> whereas on the second reading one concentrates on the blind spots and ellipses in the prevailing interpretation.<sup>933</sup> On the first reading one tries to reconstruct as carefully as possible the intended meaning of the text, while on the second reading one becomes conscious of the conflicts in the text, so that the intended meaning is open to otherness.<sup>934</sup> Derrida himself describes deconstruction in the same way, for instance in *Positions*:

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<sup>931</sup> GRAM, 231/162.

<sup>932</sup> But contrary views have also been suggested; for example Jonathan Culler claims that: "Although Derrida's writings all involve close engagement with various texts, they seldom involve interpretations as traditionally conceived. There is no deference to the integrity of the text, no search for a unifying purpose that would assign each part its appropriate role. Derrida characteristically concentrates on elements which others find marginal, seeking not to elucidate what a text says but to reveal an uncanny logic that operates in and across texts, whatever they say." (Culler 1981, 14-15) Thus, Derrida's deconstruction describes "a general process through which texts undo the philosophical system to which they adhere by revealing its rhetorical nature." (Ibid, 15).

<sup>933</sup> Critchley 1992, 23.

<sup>934</sup> Ibid. 26.

“To ‘deconstruct’ philosophy, thus, would be to think – in the most faithful, interior way – the structured genealogy of philosophy’s concepts, but at the same time to determine – from a certain exterior that is unqualifiable or unnameable by philosophy – what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid, making itself into a history by means of this somewhere motivated repression.”<sup>935</sup>

Critchley calls this double reading *clôtural reading*. *Clôtural reading* is derived from Derrida’s term *clôture*, meaning ‘closure’. Thus, *clôtural reading* means an analysis occurring within the closure, that is, following its internal logic, as well as simultaneously striving towards the edges and borders of the enclosure, which offer a starting point for looking at the text from the outside. Derrida has also characterised his aim as the deconstruction of the logocentric enclosure from a place outside it.<sup>936</sup> According to him, however, one can not step outside the closure, because there is no place outside logocentric metaphysics or the metaphysics of presence to where one could move. According to Derrida “every transgressive gesture reencloses us – precisely by giving us a hold on the closure of metaphysics – within this closure”.<sup>937</sup> However, closure does not refer to any (hermetically-sealed) circle-shaped entity, but rather inside there are holes and edges which offer an outsider view within the text.

Another option is to consider deconstruction as a reading occurring on the edges of tradition. One can then say that the aim of deconstruction is to understand as precisely as possible some totalizing thought or text in a way within the tradition, and yet on the other hand to study these from a viewpoint that is alien to tradition. Tradition is then seen not as a uniform and consistent whole, but as something containing conflicts and loopholes which enable deconstruction.

A view of deconstruction as *clôtural reading* or a reading occurring on the edges of tradition also reveals the connection of deconstruction to Heidegger’s term ‘destruction’ (*Destruktion*); as mentioned earlier, Derrida’s term deconstruction is a free application and translation of Heidegger’s term. Heidegger strived with his

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<sup>935</sup> POS, 15/6.

<sup>936</sup> D&o, 106.

<sup>937</sup> POS, 21/12.

‘destruction’ to get to the edges of the ontological tradition, from where its dismantling and rethinking would be possible.<sup>938</sup>

According to Critchley, clôtural reading is ethical reading because its aim is to localise the otherness contained in philosophical and logocentric concepts, and from within this otherness deconstruct those concepts.<sup>939</sup> More concretely, the aim of deconstruction is to reveal what the prevailing interpretation has pushed aside in order to be consistent. In this way one can become conscious of the limits and limitations of prevailing interpretations, as well as produce a displacement in the traditional interpretation, which thus changes the whole field of interpretation. Critchley's and Derrida's characterisation, according to which deconstruction happens from within otherness, raises the question of what this otherness is. How can otherness be attained and how can deconstruction occur within it? What are the edges and borders of the text?

According to Levinas, otherness is something that cannot be understood from the sphere of consciousness: it escapes all cognitive approaches.<sup>940</sup> How, then, does otherness occur in the text, and how can it be understood? The kind of otherness that Derrida has particularly brought out is an otherness occurring in meaning, which manifests itself as a *trace* or *différance*. From this it follows that meaning cannot be understood as fully present, but rather it withdraws and thus continuously escapes any totalizing occupation. Likewise, the text does not refer to any fixed referents present, but rather meanings change continuously in relation to different readers and different reading occasions. Thus, the meanings are formed from different fields of tension that are always built up in a different way to replace the absence of the referent. Thus, otherness can, in fact, be understood as being constitutive of the text and all linguistic marks. More problematic, however, is the question of what such a theoretical notion

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<sup>938</sup> Heidegger claims that “If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved. We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being...” (Heidegger 1979, 22-23/44).

<sup>939</sup> Critchley 1992, 26.

<sup>940</sup> Levinas writes particularly about the otherness of the Other (person). The Other is more than any idea about him or her (Levinas 1988a, 59). Thus, the otherness of the Other cannot be reduced to me or to my own thoughts (ibid., 24).

of the text and meaning means in a concrete text analysis. How does otherness manifest itself in a text?

Critchley mentions in this regard the blind spots and ellipses of any text. Derrida himself terms *blind spots* the points in the text which are unforeseen by the author. He claims that a critical reading should produce the signifying structure of the text. This would imply that “the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses.”<sup>941</sup> As an example, he claims that the concept of the supplement is a sort of blind spot in a text by Rousseau, the not-seen that opens and limits visibility.<sup>942</sup> Thus the blind spots are the points where the writer is not in control of the language or where there is an inner conflict in the thinking which haunts the text. The blind spot limits the visibility of the text and at the same time opens a view into the text. Paul de Man has indeed stated in *Blindness and Insight* (1983) that texts (including fiction, philosophy and particularly critical analysis) contain a constitutive asymmetry between the blindness of the claim and the view of the meaning. That part where the text becomes obscure and the reader loses sight of what is spoken about does indeed offer an excellent opportunity for insight.<sup>943</sup> For de Mann, however, the interpretation of the blind spots of the text does not offer the reader a privileged position in understanding the text, but rather it is a question of mis-reading,<sup>944</sup> in other words, the interpretation of the blind spots, ellipses or enigmas of the text does not lead to any reconstruction of the intentions of the author or to an understanding of the original meaning. Instead, it is essentially a misreading, because there are meanings linked to the text which the text does not directly tell about.

According to Gasché, deconstruction begins from a systematic analysis of conflicts, paradoxes, discontinuities and aporias typical for discursive philosophy, conceptualising and argumentation.<sup>945</sup> In other words, the conflicts, discontinuities and aporias manifested in the text can also be interpreted as a sign of otherness, another viewpoint and logic hidden within the text.

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<sup>941</sup> GRAM, 227/158.

<sup>942</sup> Ibid., 233/163.

<sup>943</sup> De Man 1983, 109.

<sup>944</sup> Ibid. 112.

<sup>945</sup> Gasché 1986, 135.

Harvey in turn speaks about “hinge terms” concealed within a text. According to her, the starting point of deconstruction is the thought that the text consists of two levels: the visible and the concealed. The author of the text masters one level but not the other; declares one level but describes the other; one level is metaphysical and the other is not; one level contains the form and the other the content; one level contains principle and the other practise.<sup>946</sup> These levels of the text, according to Harvey, are in a disjunctive relation to each other, such that the appearance of one level is necessarily followed by the disappearance of the other. The text, however, contains linking terms, so-called ‘hinge terms’, which simultaneously belong to both levels and play a double role.<sup>947</sup> The aim of deconstruction is to find a hinge term and to reveal a connection between the levels. The hinge term does not, however, unite the different levels of the text, but only enables a displacement of the interpretation and a shift of perspective.<sup>948</sup> Thus the hinge term is a kind of undecidable, which fits in neither level, yet appears in both levels as a conflicting element. Further, it produces the logical conflict in the text, in which case the text cannot be understood coherently. According to Harvey, this economy of presence and absence (the presentation of one level shifts the other into the background or absence) prohibits the closure, the absolute visibility, and the finitude of interpretation.<sup>949</sup>

Harvey’s characterisation of deconstruction as a kind of search for hinge terms is an interesting and justifiable way of perceiving deconstructive readings. Derrida’s deconstructive analysis of Rousseau’s writings in *De la grammatologie* can be interpreted specifically as a kind of tracing of hinge terms and blind spots. Rousseau’s use of the word “substitute” functions in the text in a conflicting way, leading from the level of what Rousseau tries to say to the implicit and unconscious level of the text. Derrida describes the concept of *supplement* as the blind spot of the text (and Rousseau), through which new insights are opened into the text.<sup>950</sup> According to Derrida, reading should concentrate on the structures of writing which the writer does or does not master, or on what the writer is not aware of.<sup>951</sup> Derrida’s view here can be criticised, however, because when doing the practical text analysis it is impossible

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<sup>946</sup> Harvey 1987, 142.

<sup>947</sup> Ibid.

<sup>948</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>949</sup> Ibid.

<sup>950</sup> GRAM, 233/163.

<sup>951</sup> Ibid., 227/158.

for the reader to present in a tenable and justified way which structures or meanings the writer masters or not. Thus inevitably one requires some kind of recognition of the intentions of the author, which is what is being questioned from the deconstructive point of view. For example, de Man has criticised Derrida's analysis of Rousseau because, according to him, Rousseau was in fact conscious of the metaphysics linked with the language to the extent that there are in fact no blind spots in his text.<sup>952</sup> One can claim, however, that Derrida's analysis shows a conflict in both the description and use of the concepts of "supplement" and "substitute". On the text level, Rousseau presents the word "substitute" as something secondary; for instance, culture is the *substitute* for nature, the wet nurse for a real mother, and writing for speech, but at the same time he implicitly describes its first-handness in relation to the original.

Derrida presents a similar type of hinge term analysis in *La dissémination*, in which he analyses Plato's views of writing as poison/medicine (*pharmakon*). The word *pharmakon* is specifically a hinge term that produces a conflict between what Plato aims to say and what he inadvertently says. Plato claims in his text that writing is a *poison* for thinking because man does not need to remember things when he can rely on the written text. But at the same time, he says that writing is a *medicine* because it continues the existence of thought irrespective of memory. One can indeed say in the deconstructive viewpoint the different levels of a text and the conflicting interpretations are intended to be seen side by side. Thus, the aim of deconstructive analysis is to study the conflict created by different levels and to present an interpretation of its construction and logic. It is only in this way that one can cause a shift in the deconstructive perspective.

Hugh J. Silverman has elaborated, in particularly in *Inscriptions* (1987), the idea of deconstruction as "the praxis which is employed in the movement to the limit, border, or hinge, and by which *difference* is inscribed as arché-writing"<sup>953</sup>. Thus, deconstruction functions at the juncture which Merleau-Ponty characterised as the chiasm between the visible and invisible, between philosophy and non-philosophy.<sup>954</sup> Silverman develops the idea of hinge terms in *Textualities* (1994), by calling them deconstructive indicators. According to him, there are certain deconstructive

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<sup>952</sup> "Rousseau's text has no blind spots: it accounts at all moments for its own rhetorical mode." (de Man 1983, 139).

<sup>953</sup> Silverman 1987, 283.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

indicators in a text. They indicate the places where a deconstructive strategy must operate. For example trace, mark, margin, referral, blank, edge, border, limit etc, operate as a deconstructive indicators in the text. They mark same time that which is outside and that which is inside the text. Thus they serve as the hinge between: bringing together and separating of the two.<sup>955</sup>

In her article on deconstruction titled “Kuka tuntee Vilho Jooseppi Keppilän?” [Who knows Vilho Jooseppi Keppilä?] Leena Kristinä also raises some concrete ways of defining the limits of a literary text for deconstructive reading. According to her, the crossing points at the limits of the text are, for instance, the name of the book, the writer’s name, the beginnings, the ends, the *eruption points* in the text, and the enigmas and unresolved factors.<sup>956</sup> These eruption points are, for instance, the names of the characters, place names, foreign words, as well as intertextual references. Kristinä then employs such ideas in her interpretation of Finnish author Veijo Meri’s novella *Manillaköysi* [The manila rope]. According to her, one can differentiate the chain of meaning from the novella’s title, *man-illa-köysi*; in other words *man* (English/Swedish) plus *illa* (‘ill’ in Swedish) and *köysi* (‘rope’ in Finnish), which in an elliptical form tells of the events in the story. Kristinä analyses the different meanings names produce, and likewise the intertextual references and discourses of a manila rope. In her conclusion, however, she ponders on the meaning of the deconstructive analysis:

“The interpreter can go as far as she can to invent terms produced by the text. But does one not end up in a dead end (aporia) - let’s think, for instance, about the connections, the names of the main characters leading to the *Manila Rope* - unless this chain is cut? The supplement brought in by the reader diffuses and does not gather, but that is after all the intention, because the critique of deconstruction proves the bottomlessness and nihilism of the meanings.”<sup>957</sup>

Kristinä’s characterisation of deconstructive analysis brings forth its central characteristic, which might seem confusing in a traditional Western interpretation, which emphasises the importance of objective, central and core meanings in the

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<sup>955</sup> Silverman 1994, 67-68.

<sup>956</sup> Kristinä 1987, 53.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, 67. Translation from the Finnish by GG.

interpretation of texts. It has been seen in the latter that the interpretation of texts is a kind of recognition of pure Platonic ideas amidst that which is in the process of transformation. The task of such a researcher is to present the basic idea of the text as lucidly and clearly as possible, for in the original text it is veiled in different literary, rhetorical, plot and historical features. The language of theoretical research is mainly one of pure ideas, which it attempts to describe. One can indeed say that traditional research strives to crystallise and encapsulate the core point. In deconstruction, however, the question is about a movement aimed towards contextuality and intertextuality. There is an attempt to expand the borders of the text by showing everything that the text refers to and is in an intertextual connection with. The allusive meanings can never be presented finally and exhaustively, but through its intertextual connections the text can be endlessly interpreted in different ways.

Studying the edges and limits of texts is one of the central motifs in Derrida's writings. For instance, in *Signéponge* Derrida examines the meaning of the name of the writer and her signature in defining the edges of the text. It is commonly thought that the name and signature demarcate the text as a separate and private totality. Derrida attempts to show that the text is not enclosed within a totality, but rather that the borders are reproduced again and again. The meanings of the text change, especially in interaction with other texts. Expanding the edges and borders of texts simply happens by studying the viewpoints of the text in relation to other texts. In his writings Derrida often sets very different texts and viewpoints side by side, and consequently each text appears differently than in an interpretation based solely on the work itself. At the same time, different conflicting fields of meaning are revealed in the text, which occur as ellipsis, condensations and undecidables.

However, research must not remain at the level of pointing out conflicting elements, but it must also attempt to interpret how the conflict is created, and in that way produce a displacement within the field of tradition. The aim is to produce an opening of the limits of the field of tradition to otherness, another logic or structure, which enables change and displacement within the field. The aim is not to completely abandon the interpretation maintained by tradition and only present its reverse image but to analyse the relationship between the tradition and the reverse image it represses. In connection with deconstruction as double writing, Derrida argues that the displacement is produced through undecidables, which in themselves contain two conflicting interpretations and meanings. The displacement can also be produced by

showing the double bind between opposites. Thus, the aim is to preserve the logic, hierarchy and causal order that have been presented in the tradition or text, yet also simultaneously to show the opposite meaning in relation to the view proposed by tradition. It is a kind of simultaneous acceptance and preservation of opposites. Then the opposites are not merged into a whole, nor can one be understood without the other. The aim of deconstruction is, however, not to mechanically show the simultaneousness of opposites, because then the research object would be reduced to a certain pre-set scheme or structure. The character of the displacement is dependent rather on the object.

The otherness occurring in the text has also been interpreted as the expression of the *unconsciousness* of the text. Thus deconstruction shows itself as a kind of psychoanalysis of the history of philosophy. Among others, Stephen Melville has suggested that it would be tempting to say that Derrida has brought psychoanalysis into the analysis of the history of philosophy.<sup>958</sup> This view is supported by Derrida's own comment that:

“To ‘deconstruct’ philosophy [...] would be to think – in the most faithful, interior way – the structured genealogy of philosophy's concepts, but at the same time to determine – from a certain exterior that is unqualifiable or unnameable by philosophy – what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid, making itself into a history by means of this somewhere motivated repression.”<sup>959</sup>

In other words, in deconstruction the question is about bringing out the repressed or unconscious. Derrida has, however, been very critical towards identifying deconstruction with psychoanalysis, stating that the deconstruction of logocentrism is not the psychoanalysis of philosophy.<sup>960</sup> The similarities are only apparent, as for instance with the use of the words 'repression' or 'unconscious'.<sup>961</sup> According to

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<sup>958</sup> “It can be tempting to describe Jacques Derrida's work as in large measure an extension of psychoanalysis into the history of philosophy” (Melville 1986, 84).

<sup>959</sup> POS, 15/6.

<sup>960</sup> F&scce, 293/196.

<sup>961</sup> One can say, however, that Derrida's thinking has to a large extent been influenced by Freud's writings. In *Mahdoton Freud – analysejä pskoanalyysin aporioista ratkeamattoman ja différancen ajatteluna* [The impossible Freud. The aporias of the analysis of psychoanalysis as the thinking of the undecidable and *différance*] (1995)

Derrida, Freud's concept of *repression* differs from his own use of the term, which he uses in connection with the logocentrism of deconstruction. According to Derrida, Freud's term belongs to the history of metaphysics, and thus contains metaphysical implications.<sup>962</sup> Likewise, Freud's term 'unconscious' is linked with the presence of consciousness in metaphysics.<sup>963</sup> For Derrida, on the other hand, the 'unconscious' is nothing secondary, but rather a mark of otherness decisively hidden from all processes of performance, with the help of which it can be made manifest. According to Derrida, "There is then no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having written in elsewhere".<sup>964</sup> Thus, the 'unconscious' can never be fully presentable or understood such as it is in the sphere of consciousness, but it can only appear through a detour, through transcriptions.

Both Derrida and Freud consider identity to be created by closing off something on the outside. For instance, when attempting to create a philosophical idea that is as logical as possible, something is always necessarily closed off on the outside. But what is closed off on the outside and repressed always affects the identity inside the enclosure or totality as a condensation (metonymy), displacement (metaphor) or conflicting element (aporia). Deconstruction concentrates on these elliptical, metaphorical and aporetic features, bringing out what the thinking in

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Merja Hintsa has analysed the similarities and differences in the thinking of Derrida and Freud. She argues that in his writings Freud wavers between a way of thinking following the metaphysics of presence and a thinking that dismantles it: "In the same way that it is difficult to think of deconstruction without Derrida it is just as difficult to think of it without Heidegger or Husserl, and just as difficult to think of it without Derrida's reading of Freud" (Hintsa 1995, 2, English translation by GG). Hintsa finds links to Derrida's thinking particularly in Freud's views about the subconscious, memory, writing and repetition compulsion.

<sup>962</sup> F&sce, 294/197.

<sup>963</sup> This means that, according to Derrida, Freud's view of psychoanalysis and the structure of the psyche is dominated by the thought of consciousness as something which the subject can look at, as well as the belief in the controllability of the psyche. In Freud's terminology, the subconscious is secondary in relation to the conscious: it is a kind of store where what is already from the beginning conscious is moved aside. The subconscious, according to Freud, is born out of the repression of memories and experiences which cause discomfort: we call an event a repression where a phenomenon which can become conscious, and thus is preconscious, is stopped from becoming conscious and ends up in the subconscious. The things which are repressed into the subconscious continue their existence as different psychological symptoms, anxiousness, hysteria, neuroticism, errors, slips-of-the-tongue, jokes and dream imagery.

<sup>964</sup> F&sce, 313-314/211.

question has had to close off outside itself in order to be logical. One must emphasise, however, that the kind of psychoanalysis that Freud represents is characterised by the primariness of consciousness, evident in the oft-quoted slogan of psychoanalysis: “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden” [Where it was I will be]. In other words, Freud had a strong belief that the subconscious can be made conscious, which is also connected with the therapeutic aim of psychoanalysis. The negative influence of subconscious phenomena can be neutralised when the nature of the phenomena is understood within the sphere of consciousness. Making something conscious thus means integrating the distressing subconscious phenomena into the whole of conscious identity. Deconstruction, however, does not promise a corresponding therapeutic effect. It does not attempt to neutralise the influence of otherness, the aporetic and conflicting elements, but rather to preserve its conflicting character in order to dismantle the view of a totalizing identity and a logical unity of thought, closure or tradition. Thus, otherness and aporia are seen as constitutive of the creation of identity and its existence. Or as Hugh J. Silverman states, “the textual invisible that hovers at the limits of any particular text” is brought into play through deconstructive practice.<sup>965</sup>

All in all, one can say that deconstruction as *double writing* and *clôtural reading* attains endlessly different forms depending on the text. The margins of different texts appear different. They may occur as blind spots, ellipses, conflicts, aporias, hinge terms, margins or edges of the text, the title of the text, headlines, the signature of the author, etc. Likewise, the deconstruction occurring from a place outside the text or its margins can receive several different forms, such as, for instance, a disseminating textual interpretation or a demonstration of the connection (double bind or *chiasm*) between levels. Deconstruction can also be understood as a different kind of operation than double reading and clôtural reading.

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<sup>965</sup> Silverman 1994, 44.

#### 6.4. Deconstruction as the analysis of foundations and infrastructures

According to Gasché, the goal of deconstruction is, just as with the case of Husserl's *Abbau* and Heidegger's *Destruktion*, to attain the 'ultimate foundations' of concepts and the clarification of how they occur.<sup>966</sup> In other words, deconstruction originally appears as the same kind of critical operation as the projects of Husserl and Heidegger, which analyse the foundations of philosophical traditions.<sup>967</sup> Derrida, just like Heidegger before him, was interested in how the ontological tradition has historically been formed, such as it is. The aim is to understand the construction of tradition so that another kind of thinking can be constructed. According to Gasché, however, deconstruction differs from the Husserlian and Heideggerian projects in that with deconstruction the question is no longer about understanding the foundation as Being or substance, but rather as kinds of infrastructures.

Gasché takes the term 'infrastructure' from Derrida, because, according to him, it best describes the structure of Derrida's proposed quasi-concepts.<sup>968</sup> The analysis of infrastructures is, as the word indicates, a rather basic philosophical project; in other words, the aim is to look for the foundations of already existing structures and Being. The aim is to examine how the structures have been produced, that is, to seek the foundation of the foundation. Gasché, however, associates with infrastructures a thought typical for deconstruction, according to which they are structures beyond structures, and thus pre-logical. They can never be understood in the meaning of the existent foundation, because they create the being-present.

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<sup>966</sup> "Surely deconstruction shares with *Abbau* and *Destruktion* the goal of attaining 'the ultimate foundations' of concepts." (Gasché 1986, 120).

<sup>967</sup> Gasché emphasises that with Husserl and Heidegger it is a question of a non-reflexive approach to the origins of the idealising superstructures of the pre-given world (Gasché 1986, 111-114). Both attempted to return to the ultimate ground, which, when viewed reflectively withdraws (ibid., 118). According to Gasché, as far as Heidegger's view about destruction (*Destruktion*) and Husserl's view of dismantling (*Abbau*) are non-reflective, they function as a model for Derrida's deconstruction (ibid.). Thus *Destruktion*, *Abbau*, and deconstruction are non-reflective methodological devices. They are positive movements because they attempt to construct, in a more or less systematic way, foundations of greater generality for what is to be accounted for (ibid.).

<sup>968</sup> Gasché 1986, 7.

According to Gasché, infrastructures enable the structure: “An infrastructure is not an existent. It *is* not. Nor, however, is it simply absent.”<sup>969</sup> They erase their own existence and withdraw.

Still, according to Gasché, infrastructures are not *the* foundation, but rather they are the non-foundational structure or an abyssal structure in the sense that it is without a bottom, a foundationless foundation.<sup>970</sup> This means that they are not any kind of essential or concrete foundation which can be verified experientially or empirically, but rather they are concepts which express the structuring of concepts and meanings. Infrastructures express how linguistic meanings and concepts receive their structure and identity. In the structurizing process a difference is made between interiority and exteriority. The infrastructures are “the opening or the possibility of what opens up closed structures, and what closes structures off against any exterior interference.”<sup>971</sup> Thus they are the principles that guide the decentring and centring of the structures.<sup>972</sup> Gasché considers the terms *arche-trace*, *différance*, *supplementarity*, *iterability* and *re-mark* as infrastructures which are the non-substantial and non-present foundation of present structures.<sup>973</sup> Thus, the task of deconstruction is specifically to analyse how foundations are produced. One can indeed say that Derrida’s analyses of the deconstruction of being, meaning and subject are exactly the analyses of infrastructure described by Gasché. Derrida discusses the foundations of these basic philosophical concepts and how they have been produced, and ends up specifically at the infrastructure of *différance*, which is a foundationless foundation, on the basis of which the basic concepts are defined as foundations.

A good example of a description of infrastructure is found in Derrida’s analysis of Franz Kafka’s short story *Vor dem Gesetz* [Before the Law].<sup>974</sup> Derrida analyses the impossibility linked with the expression ‘Before the Law’: “It is to let oneself be tempted by the impossible: a theory of the origin of law, and therefore of its non-origin, for example, of moral law.”<sup>975</sup> The short story describes a man who prays for admittance to the law. A doorman stands ‘before the law’, preventing his

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<sup>969</sup> Ibid., 149-150.

<sup>970</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>971</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>972</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>973</sup> Ibid., 185-224.

<sup>974</sup> Bl, 183-220.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid., 192.

entry. The guardian of the law says that there is another door behind that door, in front of which is another doorman, and behind that in turn is a third door in front of which stands a third doorman, and so on. The guardian behind each door is always stronger than the one before him. The man stays waiting to be let in and the years pass by. He gets older and asks just before his death why nobody else has asked permission for entry through that door during all these years when he has been waiting for entry. The doorman replies that “No one could ever be admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it.”<sup>976</sup> According to Derrida, Kafka’s short story reveals the undecidability of “Before the Law”. On the plot level the expression means that the law is in front of the man and defines his existence. On the level of the content and message, however, it is stated that man himself defines the law. This is manifested in the guardian’s last sentence, when he closes the door. Derrida thus claims:

“Like the man from the country in Kafka's story, narrative accounts would try to approach the law and make it present, to enter into a relation with it, indeed, to enter it and become *intrinsic* to it, but none of these things can be accomplished. The story of these manoeuvres would be merely an account of that which escapes the story and which remains finally inaccessible to it.”<sup>977</sup>

On the basis of Kafka’s short story, Derrida points out the infrastructure of *différance* linked with the expression “before the law”: “The law is prohibition/prohibited [*interdit*]. [...] It forbids itself and contradicts itself by placing the man in its own contradiction: one cannot reach the law [...]”<sup>978</sup> Derrida sees in the short story the hierarchical view of the law as an expression of *différance*. The law can never be present here and now, rather it is always ahead, in which case its presence and occupation withdraws and is postponed.<sup>979</sup> Derrida applies the same logic to the law of literature, i.e. to that which is defined as literature. The law of literature thus precedes a singular literary work, in which case it enables the work to be written within a particular genre and to be read as literature. However, no universal or strict

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<sup>976</sup> Kafka 1978, 65.

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>978</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>979</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

definition of literature can be given. The law of literature escapes any particular description: "Under these conditions literature can *play the law*, repeating it while diverting or circumventing it."<sup>980</sup> One must note, however, that deconstruction should not be understood as simply a pointing out of mechanical infrastructures linked with thought structures such as *différance*; rather, the expression, notion or text that is deconstructed must already in itself contain an infrastructural logic.

Gasché's characterisation of deconstruction as the analysis of the building up of structures and foundations brings out the basic philosophical dimension of deconstruction, which can be found in Derrida's early production. His view of deconstruction as the analysis of infrastructures can be criticised, however, for making deconstruction into a goal-oriented philosophical project. It can easily become a mechanical model with the help of which texts are interpreted. Derrida himself has criticised such a monotony and emphasised that deconstruction is an unanticipated event. However, when reading Derrida's texts one can easily get the impression that he has a certain way of understanding things, and he repeats this same infrastructural model that can also be called the *logic of différance*. This raises the question, cannot infrastructure also be manifested in some other way and thus be structurally different? Both Gasché and Derrida emphasise that infrastructure has no permanent structure, yet they present a rather clearly definable logic concerning how infrastructure produces structures. As a solution to this problem one can say that Derrida's analyses of *différance*, repetition and trace are historical analyses. But how infrastructures or the foundations of the foundations are manifested in the future is not foreseeable.

### 6.5. Deconstruction as textual grafting and inscription

In *On Deconstruction* (1983) Jonathan Culler characterises deconstruction as *tracing textual graftings*:

"It is clear, however, that deconstruction is, among other things, an attempt to identify grafts in the texts it analyses:

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<sup>980</sup> Ibid., 216.

what are those points of juncture and stress where one scion or line of argument has been spliced with another?”<sup>981</sup>

Hannu Sivenius presents a similar view in his article “Dekonstruktion puolesta” [In defence of deconstruction](1988):

“In deconstruction discourse is dealt with as the result of different combinations and grafts. There discourse is looked at in different contexts and one tries to find out the ways by which other discourses have been grafted into a specific discourse.”<sup>982</sup>

Derrida first presents the term ‘textual graft’ [*la greffe textuelle*] in *La Dissémination* (1972). The French word *la greffe* [graft] refers to the branch of a plant, but Derrida is also interested in its connection to the word *le graphe* [graph]. Both words are derived from the Greek word *graphion* meaning writing tool, drawing pen, stylus or engraving tool.<sup>983</sup> Through this linguistic link, Derrida derives the thought of the text as a kind of tree or plant which has been formed from different textual grafts. Thus, textual grafting exists in close connection with intertextuality. Different from the concept of intertextuality, textual grafting refers to the merging of texts, so that the grafted intertext begins to live its own life in the context of the new text, and thus no longer needs the connection of the earlier text.<sup>984</sup> The notion of textual grafting is more widely linked to the questioning of the general concept of context. According to Derrida, there is no correct context for a text, but the text can be read in several different ones.<sup>985</sup> The author’s intentions and the context in which s/he has written are, according to Derrida, exhaustively determinable.<sup>986</sup> They can be approached, but they are not fully definable. For this reason the text opens up to several different contexts, and can thus be read in many different ways. Philosophical texts are readable, for instance, within psychoanalytical or feminist contexts.

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<sup>981</sup> Culler 1973, 135.

<sup>982</sup> Sivenius 1988a, 62 [English translation by G.G].

<sup>983</sup> DIS, 230/202.

<sup>984</sup> Ibid.

<sup>985</sup> Sec, 381/320.

<sup>986</sup> Ibid.,389/327.

In *La dissémination* Derrida carries out a deconstructive reading specifically as *grafting*. Thus the intention is not to look for one correct or even several different meanings of a text. Also, it is not a question of looking for the author's intentions or contexts. Instead, one tries to clarify points of dissection and intertextuality between different texts. In the chapter "La double séance" Derrida places two different texts side by side: a dialogue from Plato's *Philebus* [38e-39e], dealing with imitation in painting and writing, and a page from Mallarmé's *Mimique*, dealing with mime theatre performance. Derrida analyses what happens in textual grafting when two heterogeneous texts are placed side by side. What different aspects of the nature of mimesis do the texts in the constructed 'dialogue' tell about?

One can say that Derrida transfers the analysis carried out in literary research into the context of philosophy. In literary research the literary text is studied in the context of some theory. Thus, the literary text is in a way linked to the 'tree' of an overall theory, from which it begins to live in a new meaning context. The contextual grafting carried out by Derrida differs, however, from traditional literary research in that the text is not grafted as part of some theoretical system, but rather the intention is for the texts to encounter each other on an equal basis by preserving their own identity. This means, for instance, that the literary text is seen as equal with the theoretical or philosophical text, even to the extent that the literary text can question the philosophical text and show its defects, and thus change the theory behind it. In this sense, the deconstructive analysis has connections with poststructuralist viewpoints. For instance, in his article "From Work to Text" Barthes questions theory and metalanguage. According to him, one cannot step outside the text in the sense of being a master, analyser, confession-maker or decoder. The theory of the text can only unite through the practise of writing.<sup>987</sup> In Derrida's analysis the question is specifically about 'writing within the text' (often the literary text), that is, an 'inscription', in which case it is difficult to differentiate between theory and the original text.

Textual grafting can also be done by studying the etymology of words in the text, something which Derrida calls *paleonymy*.<sup>988</sup> *Paleonymy* is concerned with the investigation of the ancient (*palaoi's*) meanings of words (*nomen*), and through this with finding new meanings. One can indeed claim that Derrida uses the word

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<sup>987</sup> Barthes 1988, 164.

*palaeonymy* because it is less like a metaphysical property and actuality than the word ‘etymology’. The word ‘etymology’ is derived from the Greek words *etymos*, meaning ‘real’ and ‘right’, as well as *logos* meaning reason and reason. Thus, it refers above all to the real, original and correct meanings of words. Philosophers have often strived to clarify the original meaning of some word by investigating its etymology. For instance, Heidegger has in connection with the destruction of the Western tradition analysed the etymological meanings of traditional philosophical concepts, such as *being* and *truth*. Particularly the etymology of Greek words from antiquity offered him a fresh and different way to understand present-day concepts. Heidegger has the tendency, however, to see the earliest meanings revealed through etymological research as the actual and original meanings.<sup>989</sup> Instead, Derrida’s own goal in palaeonymic digressions is not to look at any literal (*propre*) and original meanings of words, but simply to highlight the ambiguity of words. Derrida gives an example of the logic of paleonymy in “Signature, évènement, contexte”:

“For example, writing as a classical concept, carries with it predicates which have been subordinated, excluded, or held in reserve by forces and according to necessities to be analysed. It is these predicates (I have mentioned some) whose force of generality, generalisation and generativity find themselves liberated, grafted onto a 'new' concept of writing which also corresponds to whatever always has *resisted* the former organisation of forces, which always has constituted the *remainder* irreducible to the dominant force which organised – to say it quickly – logocentric hierarchy. To leave this new concept the old name of writing is to maintain the structure of graft, the transition and indispensable adherence to an effective *intervention* in the constituted historic field.”<sup>990</sup>

Culler sees the meaning of textual and palaeonymic grafting in the very fact that they bring the techniques of poetry into reading, which breaks open ordinary ways of

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<sup>988</sup> See, for example, Sec, 392/329.

<sup>989</sup> For example, in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger claims that "it [tradition] blocks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn" (Heidegger 1979, 22/43). So the task of the destruction of ontology is to arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being (Ibid, 22/44). The way Heidegger proceeds to the primordial experiences is through etymological analysis of philosophical terms and their original Greek meanings.

understanding. Thus, the intention is to study the phonetic, graphic, morphological and etymological relationships or semantic connections of individual terms.<sup>991</sup> For instance, in *La dissémination* Derrida adds new semantic meanings for understanding the nature of textuality by joining the various meanings carried by the French word *la greffe* (the graft), which, as mentioned above, refers to the grafting of plants or uniting and *le graphe* (the graph), both derived from the Greek word *graphion* meaning ‘writing tool’.<sup>992</sup> Through this etymological and morphological link he emphasises that writing/reading is a kind of grafting, where a text is built by linking together (that is, by grafting) different texts and contexts.

Derrida also takes words from literary texts and transforms them into kind of philosophical terms. For instance, in *Signéponge* he analyses the poetry of Francis Ponge, turning Ponge’s poetic images and metaphors into unconventional and philosophical concepts, through which he describes the formation of meaning and language.<sup>993</sup> Derrida studies, for instance, Ponge’s use of the metaphor of the washing machine (*lessiveuse*) as a description of a writing event and transforms it into a philosophical term and quasi-concept. The writer is a washing-machine who washes the laundry, which can be interpreted as metaphors for the words. Words are dirty laundry which receives an authentic and unique meaning when being used (washed). Derrida’s analysis of Ponge’s poetry is mixed with Ponge’s own texts, so that it is difficult to know which is Ponge’s and which is Derrida’s, that is, which thought belongs to Derrida and which to Ponge.

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<sup>990</sup> Sec, 393/329-330.

<sup>991</sup> Culler 1983, 141.

<sup>992</sup> DIS, 230/202.

<sup>993</sup> This type of literary research has been carried out by, for instance, Nicholas Royle in his book *Telepathy and Literature* (1991). In the chapter “Killer in the Rain” he deepens the theme of telephone conversations in Raymond Chandler’s novels, analysing the communication relationship between the speaker and the listener. He turns the often recurring word ‘telephone’ into a quasi-concept which expresses the *différance* of the voice. He highlights the palaeonymy of the word telephone. The word is formed from the Greek words *tele*, meaning ‘far’, ‘far away’ and ‘at a distance’, and *phone*, meaning ‘voice’. The telephone produces the distancing of the subject’s voice from itself; on the telephone the voice is not present, but rather presence is always postponed. Likewise, the presence of communication is postponed. The speaker cannot know whether the other person is still listening at the next moment. The displacement of meanings between the speaker and the listener is postponed and the breaking up of the connection is possible at any moment. Royle’s analysis applies Derrida’s logic and way of thinking, specifically the critique of auto-affectation and notion of *différance* to the analysis of the telephone conversation.

Scientific writing normally demands that the research object be kept separate from one's own thinking, so that it is possible to objectively study the former. Derrida, however, does not slavishly follow this requirement. One can even say that his later writings (particularly *Glas*, *Signéponge* and *La carte postale*) are not scientific research, but rather resemble a literary essay. Thus his writing method after 1972 can be described rather as an empathetic way to approach the research object, in which case the border lines between researcher and text are blurred. At the same time, he questions the objectivity of the researcher's objectivity. The text cannot be purely an external object to the reader, because after it has been written the text exists only historically and is uniquely subjective within the reading process brought to life by the reader.

Typical for Derrida's way of reading is associativeness. For example, the text *Signéponge* is not organised according to Ponge's production or themes; instead, Derrida proceeds from one theme and poem to another, returning occasionally to some themes and occasionally moving past others. One can indeed say that textual grafting receives its most natural form when the text is not organised by a pre-set structure or research order, but rather the intertextual relationships are manifested spontaneously in the text. In *Positions*, Derrida says of his own way of reading: "I read while writing: slowly, taking pleasure in long prefaces to each term"<sup>994</sup> His way of reading is not so much guided by any method but by an interest in interpreting alternatives and conflicts contained within a text. Thus, the deconstructive way of reading can be characterised as close reading. Texts can be read slowly so that it is possible to observe as many different shades of meaning, connotations, allusions, conflicting meanings and dispersions of meaning as possible. Thus deconstruction reveals the ambiguity of different philosophical and literary concepts, their intertextuality and disintegration of meaning. The deconstructive analyses carried out by Derrida have raised debate about the ethics of such research which does not attempt to understand or even deconstruct texts from the starting point of the intentions of the writer, but from the reader's intertextual allusions.

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<sup>994</sup> POS, 116/110.

## 6.6. The ethics of deconstruction

The deconstructive approach has raised a lively debate about the ethics of reading. To whom is the researcher responsible in her/his interpretations? Is s/he responsible to anybody? What does the responsibility of research and reading actually mean? For instance, the attempted debate began by Gadamer with Derrida about the relationship between hermeneutics and deconstruction concerns specifically the ethics of interpretation.<sup>995</sup> From a hermeneutic viewpoint, the deconstructive way of reading can easily appear as an unethical way of interpretation, because in hermeneutics the ethics of interpretation and reading means above all that the interpreter strives to understand what the writer has intended. The aim of the interpretation is to understand what the writer would have wanted to say to me if I would have been the original receiver.<sup>996</sup> The role of the interpreter is thus to transcend the conflicts and ambiguities created by language, and not to concentrate on describing them as is done in deconstruction. In hermeneutics the interpreter is merely an intermediary who strives to find out what hinders understanding in order to present the actual idea of the text.<sup>997</sup> Thus s/he attempts to put her/himself into the other's viewpoint, to understand it, and to put forward what the other would probably have said. If deconstruction, for its part, questions whether the interpreter is capable of reconstructing the author's intentions, what, then, does the writer tell about, and for what or to whom is the interpretation responsible?

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s several studies were published which discussed the ethics of deconstruction.<sup>998</sup> In *The Ethics of Reading* (1987) J. Hillis Miller follows a New Criticism approach in outlining an ethics of deconstruction with the text as the starting point. According to Miller, deconstruction is ethical because it follows the "you must" imperative of the text.<sup>999</sup> The text itself contains the ethical requirement of how it should be read. This imperative occurs in the text as a kind of a path that one can walk along with strides of different lengths. In

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<sup>995</sup> Gadamer 1989a.

<sup>996</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>997</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>998</sup> For instance, J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading* (1987); John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* (1987); and Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992).

<sup>999</sup> Miller 1987, 101.

other respects the path is the same for different readers.<sup>1000</sup> However, Miller's view does not follow Derrida's kind of deconstruction, because Derrida has specifically emphasised the dissemination of the text, the indeterminacy, undecidability and unique historicity of meaning. Miller's point about the "you must" imperative seems to be a modification or metaphor for the intentionality of the author. Miller claims, like Gadamer, that the intention behind reading is to understand the thing behind the text. One can indeed say that Miller's view of the ethics of deconstruction reveals the problem of whether it is possible to talk about the ethics or responsibility of interpretation irrespective of the author or the idea behind the text.<sup>1001</sup>

In turn, Simon Critchley in *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992) justifies deconstruction on the basis of the concept of ethics of Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>1002</sup> Thus ethics is not understood as a separate philosophical subsection, but as an all-

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<sup>1000</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>1001</sup> In his article "Det performativa och frågan om praktiskt förnuft hos Derrida" (2002) [The performative and the question of practical reason in Derrida's writings] Kristian Klockars considered Derrida's views on ethics from a wider perspective than merely the problem of texts. He analyses the notion of practical reason in Derrida's writings (particularly in those that have appeared since the mid-1980s) concerning ethical and political questions. Klockars argues that in Derrida's writings certain aporia, undecidability and performativity belong to practical reasoning and decision-making. No political or ethical standpoint can consider as being absolutely right (justified), because practical reasoning implies 'responding' to the future (that cannot be premeditated) and responding to both singular and universal demands (that are infinite and incommensurable). Therefore, to every ethical and political standpoint belongs uncertainty, contingency and situationbound undecidability. (Cf. Klockars 2002, 255-256). Derrida's analysis of responsibility as reflective living within opposite tensions between different worlds and imperatives that arise from different contexts shows that the original difficulty belongs to ethical and practical decision-making. Klockars considers Derrida's example in *L'autre cap*, that we (as Europeans) have a duty to respect the differences between different cultures and groups of people, but simultaneously we must communicate across the borders, translate etc.. If only the other duty is preferred over the other as part of an ethical or political programme, then the difficulty belonging to practical reason is reduced (Ibid, 257).

<sup>1002</sup> Also Geoffrey Bennington has analysed the similarities and differences between Levinas' and Derrida's notions of ethics. He claims that "Deconstruction cannot propose an ethics", because the notion of ethics is thoroughly metaphysical. (Bennington 2000, 64). However, he argues that deconstruction has an ethical import, but not within the traditional notion of ethics, but within the notion of ethics as Levinas has elaborated it in his writings (ibid, 63). One of the main differences lies in that Derrida radicalises Levinas' notion of alterity. Derrida has criticised Levinas for absolutizing alterity. Hence Bennington claims that: "Derrida's construal of alterity as *always less than absolute* in fact constitutes a thought of the other as *more than the absolute other*" (ibid, 74).

encompassing ethical experience.<sup>1003</sup> Levinas defines ethics as the “calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other.”<sup>1004</sup> In other words, the other person questions my way of looking at the world and other people. The terms ‘Other’ (*l’Autrui*), ‘other’ (*l’autre*) and ‘same’ (*le même*) are the basic concepts of Levinas’ philosophy and notion of ethics. Spelt with a capital O, *Other* refers to a personal other person, while spelt with a lower-case O, *other* refers to general otherness and difference. The term *same* refers to the region of the self, consciousness and knowing subjectivity.<sup>1005</sup> Thus, as metaphors *other* and *same* refer to the division of experience into 1) the area of the alterity and otherness and 2) the area of the familiar. According to Levinas, the Western philosophical tradition is characterised by the appreciation of the *same*, in which otherness, heterogeneity and alterity have been rejected or erased.<sup>1006</sup> This is visible in the Western ontological view of knowledge, with the goal of making everything known and familiar. The problem with this Western thinking is its circularity: only what is already known is always understood. This circularity of thinking, which reduces everything to the *same* Levinas calls the *totality of the same*, which he is interested to dismantle. According to Levinas, this can only occur from within otherness, when the Other questions the same, and this moment is, according to Levinas, ethical.<sup>1007</sup>

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<sup>1003</sup> Critchley 1992, 3.

<sup>1004</sup> Levinas 1988a, 13; Levinas 1979, 43.

<sup>1005</sup> Levinas describes the Same as the site (home), where everything is at my disposal: "Everything is here, everything belongs to me; everything is caught up in advance with the primordial occupying of a site, everything is com-prehended [Levinas writes *com-pris* intentionally with hyphen]. The possibility of possessing, that is, of suspending the very alterity of what is only at first other, and other relative to me, is the *way* of the same. I am at home with myself in the world because it offers itself to or resists possession" (Levinas 1979, 37-38).

<sup>1006</sup> Levinas 1988a, 60.

<sup>1007</sup> It should be noted, however, that Levinas himself does not write ethics: he merely ponders upon its meaning. Levinas claims in *Totalité et Infini* that one of the objectives of his work is to establish the primacy of the ethical, that is, of the relationship of man to man – signification. Upon this primacy all the other structures rest (Levinas 1979, 79). This means that Levinas’s aim is only to ponder on what one means by the ethical, and how it is constituted in life. In this respect, Levinas shares Heidegger's view that ethics is normative, while they consider the meaning of ethics (Levinas) and meaning of Being (Heidegger). The norms and values are drawn from the original ethical experiences which they describe; for Levinas the relation to the Other and for Heidegger being-towards-death. Thus the content of the values and norms can change according to tradition, culture and above all according to how the primordial ethical experiences are interpreted. For example, Levinas has argued that

What does a Levinasian ethics mean in regards to reading and interpretation?<sup>1008</sup> One can say that in deconstruction the reader does not aim to define from within her/his own intentions what s/he finds in the text. Reading is not bound by the basic theme, idea or transcendental signified of the text. The reader does not attempt to construct a whole from a discontinuous text, but rather ponders why such statements or contradictions have come about. What feature of language or the way of thinking in question produces conflicts? In this sense deconstruction differs from the hermeneutic starting point described by Gadamer. According to Gadamer, the task of interpretation and reading is to transcend what is alienating and incomprehensible in the text,<sup>1009</sup> and to make the text comprehensible by putting unclear, conflicting and odd claims in relation to the basic idea or theme constructed from the text. Deconstruction, on the other hand, aims specifically to study alien and incomprehensible features within the text, without aiming to organise these within the basic themes of the text into a harmonious overall unity.

In the deconstructive way of reading ethics concerns mainly the reader's relationship to the text. The text is a trace of the reader's otherness, which does not reveal the author's intentions as such. In a trace-like way, the text refers, however, to the otherness of the author. In other words, the text refers indirectly and through a broken connection to the intentions of the writer. Deconstructive analysis does not aim to understand or reconstruct what a writer would have wanted to say, but rather it analyses those meanings that the reader finds in the text. Derrida, however, does not completely abandon the influence that the author or the time of its writing has upon

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one central moral experience is that: "What I permit myself to demand of myself is not comparable with what I have the right to demand of the Other" (ibid., 53); yet the normative ethical tradition has emphasised a symmetrical relation, that is, "to treat others as I would expect me to be treated." Both Levinas and Heidegger nevertheless make claims about values: Levinas values the Other, as absolute otherness, and Heidegger gives value by calling authentic Being individualised Dasein. Still, the main emphasis of both their work is in giving a metaphysical (Levinas) and ontological (Heidegger) explanation for the grounds of living (Levinas) and Being (Heidegger), not writing a normative ethics.

<sup>1008</sup> According to Jari Kauppinen ethics is the ground of textuality (Kauppinen 1998, 270). He considers the ethics in levinasian sense as appearing in Saying before propositional language (Said). Even though the meanings of the text can be decided, the horizon of interpretation is undecidable, the inner or outer origins of the text cannot be found (Ibid, 270). The (inter)context is undecidable and nonsaturable, which means infinite responsibility to the undecidability (ibid, 271)

<sup>1009</sup> Gadamer 1989, 41.

the text. The starting point for his interpretations is a traditional interpretation of the writer in question and her/his basic ideas, as well as an awareness of the tradition within which the writer in question has written her/his text, and how it has been interpreted by others. When seen against traditional interpretations the deconstructive analysis can appear to dismantle tradition because it brings forth the text's inner contradictions.

One can ask, however, whether it is ludicrous to talk about ethics if the ethical relationship does not concern the reader's responsibility towards the text or the author. Can one speak of ethics if it does not concern the relationships between people and how people treat one another? For Levinas ethics means specifically the relationship towards another person.<sup>1010</sup> Because of this, he has also claimed that hermeneutics expresses most profoundly the ethical relationship to the *Other*, where the subject (the *same*) does not dominate the *Other*.<sup>1011</sup> In hermeneutics one attempts to erase the obstacles to understanding resulting from the historical limitations of the subject. One can say that in hermeneutics the question is about attempting to understand the otherness of the *Other* through the text. One can indeed justifiably claim that in deconstruction the question is not about ethics as a responsibility to some other human being, but rather it is only dismantling closing totalities and pointing out contradictions created by textuality: it is answering the call of the text, but not a responsibility towards a concrete author. One must indeed emphasise that it also does not aim to fully question the author, because the intentions of the author appear also at the textual level (even though the intentions can be interpreted in several ways).

Nevertheless, the position of the reader is more meaningful in deconstruction than in hermeneutics. In deconstruction the reader is not just a transmitter of the message of the *Other*, but rather the interpreter can use her/his whole historical position in the interpretative event. In hermeneutics, on the other hand, one aims to

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<sup>1010</sup> Levinas 1988a, 13. Levinas presents in *Ethique et infini* (1982) an even more profound view of responsibility: "I think that in responsibility for the Other, one is, in the final analysis, responsible for the death of the other. Is not the rectitude of the other's look an exposure par excellence, an exposure unto death? The face in its uprightness is what is aimed at 'point blank' by death. What is expressed as demand in it certainly signifies a call to *giving* and *servicing* – or the commandment to giving and servicing – but above this, and while including it, the order is to not let the Other alone, be it in the face of the inexorable. This is probably the foundation of sociality and of love without *eros*. The fear for the death of the other is certainly at the basis of the responsibility for him." (Levinas 1985, 118-119).

transcend those limitations that the reader's historical interpretative position inevitably carries with it: one aims to understand the text from that very historical context in which it has been presented. Thus the aim of hermeneutics is to understand something unfamiliar from within the otherness. Deconstruction has indeed been criticised for the fact that the reader can bring his own unique historical perspective into the interpretation. Due to this critique, Derrida has himself repeatedly characterised the position of the interpreter as a passive submission to the text, rather than the active producer of an interpretation. Derrida is partly right, in that the deconstructive way of reading is a passive event, with no attempt to actively understand the text in a context that is alien to it, but rather one concentrates on how it appears to the subject uniquely historically in the reading event. One must again note, however, that the deconstructions carried out by Derrida are not the passive operations without any pre-set notions, he says they are. Even they are guided by certain values and notions of the language which differ from the language notions guiding the hermeneutic way of reading. The view of textuality as a network and continuous play of differences, as well as the contradictions, incoherencies and undecidables contained within it, guide the deconstructive way of reading.

On the other hand, the difference between deconstruction and hermeneutics is not necessarily so radical. For example, Silverman describes in *Textualities* hermeneutics as “a philosophy of go-betweenness”.<sup>1012</sup> Thus, hermeneutics does not operate from a throne, rather its mission is to carry the message and to disclose what is unspoken in the word or sentence. Hence, Silverman argues that “[t]he task of hermeneutics is to operate in the space of difference between subject and object, ground and non-ground, thinker and thought, speaker and spoken about, knower and that which is to be known.”<sup>1013</sup> In a similar way, he considers deconstruction as a practice, that occurs in places of difference, but “the placing between” differs from that of hermeneutics. Deconstruction functions in between the visible and the invisible of the text, in between the inside and outside of the text. Thus it brings forth the chiasmatic features of the text, indecidables, hinge terms and supplementary logic of the structuration of the text.<sup>1014</sup>

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<sup>1011</sup> Cf. Levinas 1996, 90.

<sup>1012</sup> Silverman 1994, 33.

<sup>1013</sup> Ibid., 33

<sup>1014</sup> Ibid., 44-46, 66-69.

In the article “Force de loi” Derrida discusses the ethics of deconstruction more extensively and states: “Deconstruction is already engaged by this infinite demand of justice”.<sup>1015</sup> According to him, deconstruction gets its power, movement and motivation from the appeal linked with a justice that always remains unfulfilled, which comes from beyond the given definitions.<sup>1016</sup> Derrida states that he does not know anything more just than what he today calls deconstruction.<sup>1017</sup> Justice means to Derrida, however, the experience of the impossible, answering the call or demand which can never be present. Justice is what guides and produces deconstruction. Laws and norms are constructed so they can also be deconstructed. Instead, justice is, according to Derrida, not deconstructible.<sup>1018</sup> Texts such as laws and norms are constructed so that inevitably something is closed off on the outside. One can indeed say that deconstruction answers that call or demand which is heard from outside the text, from the edges, that is, from that which in the text which has been repressed, passed by or silenced, but which is preserved even when absent. In other words, the ethics of deconstruction means above all bringing forth and analysing that which has been repressed or pushed aside in the text.

### 6.7. Philosophy as creative thinking

Derrida’s research would seem to support the view that philosophy is only about the deconstruction of canonised philosophical texts, in other words rereading, analysing and dismantling traditional interpretations. However, Derrida also sets out deeper aims for philosophy.<sup>1019</sup> Concrete philosophical texts operate as a fixed point from which he develops new ways of thinking. Indeed Derrida also speaks of a new responsibility which, from a philosophical point of view, cannot be purely

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<sup>1015</sup> Fl, 19.

<sup>1016</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>1017</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>1018</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>1019</sup> The following analysis is based on Derrida's views on philosophy as presented in his article "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its pupils" (1983). Though he discusses the teaching of philosophy in the newly founded *International College of Philosophy*, as well as making general claims about the nature of philosophy and its place in present society, he does not limit his discussion to

academic.<sup>1020</sup> “If they [the responsibilities] remain extremely difficult to assume, extremely precarious and threatened, it is because they must at once keep alive the memory of a tradition and make an opening beyond any program, that is, toward what is called the future.”<sup>1021</sup> Derrida supports a Heideggerian ‘thinking’, which typically proceeds without method, as well as aiming for a radical thinking concerned with roots and foundations.<sup>1022</sup> Such thinking cannot, according to Derrida, be reduced to only technique, science or philosophy, but rather such radical thinking arises from such a foundation where some special scientific field or set of concepts has not been predefined. In other words, radical thinking is not built on already existing knowledge, but it asks for the foundation and substantiation of already existing knowledge, for instance, philosophical knowledge. However, according to Derrida, pondering upon this foundation and also questioning it occurs within a certain tradition that defines the questions one sets. Radical thinking can open new angles to tradition, and thus transform its basic way of understanding. In this sense the deconstruction viewpoint differs from such philosophical thinking (e.g. perennial philosophy), according to which the basic questions of philosophy are universal. From the deconstructive viewpoint, philosophy appears as creative thinking, differing thus from the description that reports or imitates (mimetic) reality. Philosophical thinking is a continuous process that creates new textual ways of understanding ways and metaphors. Particularly the intersections of different contexts, quasi-concepts and theories enable the creation of new ways of thinking and the displacement of old notions.

According to Derrida, a “new responsibility” means answering to the requirements also outside academic life, in other words, to the interests born from communal and social life.<sup>1023</sup> Thus, also philosophy should be on the border of society and its own discipline. It should aim to answer the challenges coming from within its field and from social life. Derrida does not want, however, to reduce the meaning of philosophy to social, current, historical or social requirements, nor does he want to

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philosophy only, but rather he speaks of the task and the grounds of the university in general.

<sup>1020</sup> Pr, 16. The sentence refers rhetorically to Nietzsche's *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882) (See Nietzsche 1959, § 382).

<sup>1021</sup> Pr, 16.

<sup>1022</sup> Derrida writes: “...stressing the dimension I call ‘thought’ – a dimension that is not reducible to technique, nor to science nor to philosophy.” *Ibid.*, 16-19.

keep philosophy completely as an island outside of and independent from them. Instead, the task of philosophers and the university in general is to be continuously on the border, where one proceeds on the one hand according to the requirements of the internal logic and substantiations of the science (in other words, *principium reddendae*),<sup>1024</sup> and on the other hand philosophical truths are put in proportion to the social life outside the field, as well as to other forms of science and knowledge. Derrida has indeed noted that: “‘Thought’ requires *both* the principle of reason *and* what is beyond the principle of reason, the *arkhe* and an-archy.”<sup>1025</sup> Thus, the deconstructive view on the historicity and processuality of conceptual thinking does not remove the aims essentially linked with philosophy and academic studies in general, that is, to substantiate, understand wholes and create syntheses. But it emphasises that these substantiations and syntheses are historical and thus changing.

From a deconstructive point of view, the task of a philosopher is to analyse in what context philosophical terms or concepts can be understood, and what contradictions and interpretational aporias are created in the meeting of different contexts. Furthermore, a philosopher should ponder on the one hand upon what consequences the analysed concepts have in relation to all of textuality, and on the other hand upon what presuppositions concerning the foundation have been thus made. In other words, the central task of philosophical research and all academic research is the rendering of reason. Thus, according to Derrida the task of philosophy is “To respond to the call of the principle of reason is to ‘render reason’, to explain effects through their causes, rationally; it is also to ground, to justify, to account for on the basis of principles or roots”<sup>1026</sup> This clause of substantiation requires being on the border of textuality and philosophy, which essentially offers the deconstructive position. Philosophical research does indeed manifest itself from a deconstructive

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<sup>1023</sup> Pr, 16.

<sup>1024</sup> Ibid. The formulation of the so-called *rationem reddere* can be found, for instance, in a late text by Leibniz called *Specimen Inventorum*: “There are two first principles in all reasoning, the principle of non-contradiction, of course... and the principle of rendering reason”. In other words, for any true proposition, *reason can be rendered*. Leibniz has common points with Plato’s views, according to which knowledge differs from mere belief or opinion (*doxa*) in that knowledge is based on explanation (cf. *Meno* [97b], *Theaetetus* [201a-210d] and *The Symposium* [202a]).

<sup>1025</sup> Pr, 18-19.

<sup>1026</sup> Ibid., 8. Derrida’s claims about answering the ‘principle of rendering reason’ and ‘thinking’ refer to Heidegger’s views in *Der Satz vom Grund* (1957).

angle specifically as an analysis of textual displacements. In other words, the task of philosophy is to specify what effects displacements have in the field of textuality.

According to the deconstructive viewpoint, philosophical knowledge does not grow or develop linearly towards perfection but is formed when different historical texts and concepts of different times meet. Old (palaeonymic) meanings give a new angle to understanding present-day concepts and create endlessly different conflicts and displacements. Emphasising creativity in philosophical thinking means above all that writing (in other words, textual thinking) creates new ways of perceiving the world, which did not exist before new linguistic and textual inventions and descriptions. Philosophy does thus not just describe some universal way of existence, in which case different descriptions would only portray different metaphors using the same objects. The starting point is rather that the world transforms historically and new historical ways of understanding influence the changing of the world. Thus, also new philosophical metaphors, quasi-concepts and neologisms create genuinely new objects of knowledge and ways of understanding the world.<sup>1027</sup>

## 6.8. Evaluating deconstructive models of analysis

All in all deconstruction, as a way of reading or analysis or as an attitude, contains as many contradictions and paradoxes as does Derrida's views on language. As mentioned earlier, Derrida first presents deconstruction as his translation and adaptation for his own ends of the Heideggerian word *Destruktion*.<sup>1028</sup> Derrida's description in *Positions* of deconstruction as a strategy leads to the misunderstanding that deconstruction is a method. In several writings<sup>1029</sup> he argues that deconstruction should not be understood as a strategy or method. One can indeed say that deconstruction is not a method in the traditional sense; in other words, it does not refer to a clearly demarcated or systematic method, with the help of which systematic knowledge is obtained from the research object. Rather, Derrida dismantles the traditional concept of method. He questions the goal-oriented and systematic way of

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<sup>1027</sup> For instance, before Bergson's concept 'duration' (*durée*) and Heidegger's term 'the "they"' (*Das Man*), the conceptual idealities expressed by these words did not exist.

<sup>1028</sup> Laj. 388/270.

reading, and instead proposes way(s) of reading in which the characteristics and features of the research object would appear more clearly than when looked at from a clearly demarcated methodological way of observing. Derrida does indeed question the view guiding the traditional way of reading concerned with the coherence of the text. The text is an internally contradictory, discontinuous, and inter-textual entity defined within the network of the play of differences. Thus, according to Derrida, deconstruction does not so much stem from the reader, but the text rather contains its own deconstruction. Deconstruction is thus not a method that can be applied to the text, but rather a property of the text and textuality as such.

I would claim, however, in opposition to Derrida's own explanation, that his deconstructive analyses are guided by numerous different goals and values. Thus, a certain circularity is contained within the deconstructive way of reading. The reader is not able to recognise the deconstruction contained in the text unless s/he recognises the deconstructive way of looking at it. In other words, doing such an analysis requires a deconstructive view of the language and the meanings as the play of difference and textuality. Thus, it is not a way of looking that is any freer of presuppositions than other ways of interpretation that have defined their goals more clearly. That is why I have discussed the structure of deconstruction as presented by Derrida and other philosophers who have made interpretations of his texts. The interpretations do not form a uniform whole, but one can say that Derrida has carried out several different deconstructions under the name of *deconstruction*.

Deconstruction should indeed be understood rather as an intermediate form between a way of reading defined by a goal-oriented method and a non-goal-oriented reading. Such a way of reading could be called an *intermediate form* between *method* and *non-method*. Thus it contains some goals and values that could be called deconstruction, and at the same time the reader attempts to understand the text from outside her/his goals within the text itself. Derrida has indeed said that in deconstruction is a matter of experiencing the impossible: "It [deconstruction] *must* be what it both is and is not in itself: an effect of after the event, a sort of afterword to 'all', this 'all' that cannot totalise itself: [...] *afterword to the presence or presentation of the present itself.*"<sup>1030</sup> Thus, as a sort of intermediate form between method and non-method it requires some deconstructive disposition and at the same time it

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<sup>1029</sup> Laj, 391/273, Aft, 210/199.

attempts to understand the text from within itself. The goal of deconstruction is to find something different, new and contradictory within the text which is left outside in the strictly demarcated goal-oriented observation. In order to approach that which in traditional interpretations or methodological studies is left outside, the reader must be aware of how the methodological observation lines off its object and at what point the outside can manifest itself. Accordingly, deconstruction entails an unending analysis which cannot be totalised or presented as a system. The deconstructive element, or the otherness, of the text is not to be found or seen using the same method because the methodological observation brings forth that which one already wants to find. Thus, a certain presupposition is linked with the methodological observation in what one is seeking for. Instead the deconstructive element is essentially something new and unanticipated, which requires giving up presuppositions or transforming them in order for deconstructive element to be visible.

The best known form of deconstruction is double writing (double gesture or double science), which Derrida has described for instance in *Positions*.<sup>1031</sup> It is particularly suitable for deconstructing hierarchical binary oppositions. As a double writing deconstruction proceeds in two directions: it strives to understand the text as exactly as possible from within the text, but it also strives to deconstruct the central meaning of the text from some place outside it. Critchley has called this way of reading *clôtural reading*, that is, a bifurcated reading. On the other hand it is *precision reading*, where one strives to reconstruct the interpretation upheld by tradition about the author's intended meaning and the content of the text, and yet one also looks at the blind spots contained in the text, which offer a deconstructive viewpoint. In other words, reading occurs on the one hand within the closure, and on the other hand on its edges and borders, which offer an outsider view into the text. These border crossing points are conflicts (aporias), condensations (ellipses), displacements of meaning (metaphors), hinge terms, and even the name of the text and other proper names contained within it, etc.

Critchley's notion of *clôtural reading* is justified because Derrida himself has emphasised that a complete stepping over tradition is impossible: "Every transgressive gesture reencloses us [...] within this closure".<sup>1032</sup> Deconstruction only

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<sup>1030</sup> Aft, 210/199.

<sup>1031</sup> POS, 56-58/41-42.

<sup>1032</sup> Ibid., 21/12.

aims towards the edges of the tradition, text or closure of the thought structure, from where deconstruction can occur. Furthermore, Critchley's view that deconstruction can best be understood specifically in relation to Levinas' writings is very fruitful. One can indeed say that the critique of the Western metaphysical tradition as presented by Levinas can be seen as one central background influence in Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence. Both of them question very systematically the primariness of totalisations, being and closures, and instead value otherness, unfamiliarity, difference and contradictory elements questioning totality.

Gasché has proposed that deconstruction is a kind of basic philosophical project concerned with the origin and foundation of the foundation. He does not present deconstruction as any separate method, but rather as an event with a content. Thus, it cannot be understood separately from what has been deconstructed and the results of deconstruction. Gasché does indeed end up describing deconstruction based on results, in which case it appears as an analysis of infrastructures. In other words, it analyses the foundation of structures. Accordingly, he outlines a sort of systematic view in Derrida's thinking. According to Gasché, the basic insight of deconstruction lies in that infrastructures make up the bases of structures, which in themselves are not structures but rather dynamic processes which produce the structure. His interpretation is interesting for many reasons. It highlights deconstruction's connection to the philosophical tradition and its basic project, and the thinking about foundations. Also it shows how the understanding of deconstruction presupposes an investigation of content. Deconstruction is not a technical method that could be understood separate from the object of study.

Deconstruction can also be understood as textual grafting, in which case the intertextuality contained within the text is studied, which broadens and disseminates the understanding of the text. Thus one can say that one central feature of the deconstructive way of reading is that it does not aim to present some final meaning that would stabilise it; rather, it aims to open the borders of the text, which in this context means pointing out the equivocality and textual connections of words, sentences and totalities of thought. One way of highlighting the univocality of words is indeed to study the old (palaeonymic) meanings of words. Due to intertextuality, conflicts and loopholes are inevitably linked with the philosophical systems and structures. In this sense deconstructive analysis differs from a more traditional interpretation of the text, in which one aims to understand the text as a complete

unbroken whole, that is, to repair the contradictions contained in the text with the help of interpretation and to understand the transcendental signified or thing-in-itself behind the text.

Derrida has taken a very critical attitude towards structural descriptions of deconstruction, and has emphasised that it must always have some complementing ‘afterword’. Thus, the description of deconstruction presented in this chapter can only be seen as an initial starting point of deconstruction. In other words, the question is about the history of deconstruction. Deconstruction as a way of reading or as an attitude cannot be reduced to these descriptions nor can one present a normative law of deconstruction based upon them.<sup>1033</sup> They can act only as source of inspiration, so that new deconstructive ways of analysis and interpretations can develop. They are also not purely separate methods, but rather they describe a similar kind of aim and event, in which case it is a question of a difference of emphasis. Derrida indeed denies that a normative system of deconstruction could be made from the historical analyses he has presented, because it would hide the deeper motivation of deconstruction as answering to the call of the other.<sup>1034</sup> In “Force de loi” Derrida describes deconstruction as operating on the basis of an infinite “idea of justice”, “infinite because it is irreducible, irreducible because owed to the other, owed to the other, before any contract, because it has come, the other’s coming as the singularity that is always other.”<sup>1035</sup> One can indeed claim that the deconstructive approach is best characterised by the Heideggerian “openness to the secret” or the Levinasian ‘openness to the other and otherness’.

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<sup>1033</sup> However, the question is not of a complete abandonment of normativity. If normativity is completely abandoned it would not be possible to ascertain whether a particular research is deconstructive or not. However, in deconstruction one cannot speak of normativity in a strict sense, but rather of aims, critical observation and goals, which cannot be formulated into unambiguous norms. With normative methods one aims to select the correct application of the method in question. With deconstruction it would be very odd to speak of the ‘correct application’ of deconstruction or of an ‘unsuccessful’ deconstructive analysis. Rather, the deconstructions presented by Derrida are united by a certain aim towards the borders of the philosophical tradition, as well as by questioning the grounds of philosophy and philosophical concepts.

<sup>1034</sup> Fl, 25.

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid.

## 7. Conclusion

In this study I have attempted to show that Jacques Derrida's notion of deconstruction is not merely a nihilistic critique of traditional philosophy, but that there is also a constructive side to it, that is, it leads on to displacements of the tradition of Western metaphysics. I have concentrated on the study and description of the constructive side of deconstruction, that is, how deconstruction changes a ways of conceiving traditional philosophical notions and shows the limits of logocentrism, phonocentrism and the metaphysics of both presence and the proper. But what way of perceiving reality does it present? With this question in mind, my study has been aimed at certain sub-sectors of Derrida's work, from which I have reconstructed his views on being, meaning and subjectivity. He has not proposed any systematic theory of knowledge or metaphysics of his own, and his writings are mainly analyses of philosophical texts and their critique. I have highlighted Derrida's claims about deconstruction as well as the critiques from which one can make generalisations about how both particular philosophical problems and the central ideas of philosophy could be understood differently. I have concentrated on philosophical questions such as how being, subjectivity, meaning, language, truth, and ethics, as well as philosophy itself and deconstructive analysis in general should be understood. Derrida's writings, however, contain many other themes, and the issues I have chosen do not immediately manifest themselves in his texts as central ones. He often analyses specific issues or concepts from the text of a specific philosopher. His context-bound analyses also contain a philosophical level that is general, and from which generalisations can be made, which is what I have attempted to bring forth in this study.

The goals I have set for this study and the method of analysis can be criticised for the fact that I have made deconstruction into a non-deconstructive research project.<sup>1036</sup> In looking at the viewpoints contained in Derrida's texts I have

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<sup>1036</sup> What is meant by a deconstructive analysis? If by this one means the critical and careful close reading of a text, analysing the ambiguities and contradictions contained within the words, and the blind spots and intertextual references, my research could be characterised as deconstructive. But if one understands deconstruction as the analysis highlighting the associative ambiguity of words and intertextuality such that

concentrated on certain questions and in that way also constricted Derrida's views on the basic concepts of philosophy. Derrida, for his part, has taken a very critical attitude towards attempts to show deconstruction as a kind of doctrine or system. According to him:

“(D)estruction’ *must* have the *afterword* that it *cannot* have. For, always incomplete, of an incompleteness which is not the negativity of a lack, it is interminable, an ‘interminable analysis’ (‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ as we used to say). As it is never closed into a system, as it is the deconstruction *of* the systemic totality, it needs some supplementary afterword each time it runs the risk of stabilising or saturating into a formalized discourse (doctrine, method, delimitable and canonized corpus, teachable knowledge, etc.).”<sup>1037</sup>

In this study I have aimed to solve the above-mentioned problem by emphasising that I am presenting several interpretations, which are not very uniform, particularly, for instance, when it comes to Derrida's views about language, meaning and method. The question in the present study is thus not about the core or central idea of deconstruction, but about certain interpretations arising from the formulation of the questions. Deconstruction can be carried out and developed only when one understands what it *can be*. Derrida's published writings offer a framework for how deconstruction can be viewed as a historical phenomenon.

In Derrida's persistent claim that deconstruction must remain an open project<sup>1038</sup> one can see the desire to preserve it as a developing way of analysis that is not guided by any static world view or aims. As an inevitably historical phenomenon, it receives certain formulations, and without them deconstruction would not have an identifiable character. The most important aspect of my research has been to outline the character of ‘deconstruction’, because otherwise the term would be meaningless,

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it is not guided by any goal, central idea or theme, then my research does not appear as deconstructive. On the other hand, one can differentiate between a deconstructive analysis and a deconstructive operation on the content of a text. In other words, the former concerns the method and the latter concerns a change of thinking and a critical rethinking. In his early production (i.e. up until 1972) Derrida uses no systematic method, but rather calls it a critique aiming at a change of thinking, that is, a transgression, through the metaphor of ‘deconstruction’. Only in his later writings does deconstruction receive more the character of textual and literary writing.

<sup>1037</sup> Aft, 211/199.

an empty concept. Derrida himself presumably believes that an endless number of different operations can occur under the term ‘deconstruction’, and which cannot be reduced to the deconstructions that he himself has carried out; in other words, *deconstruction will continue to receive new formulations in the future*. The problem with the too open and moving definition of deconstruction is that any critical analysis could end up being called deconstruction. The term deconstruction receives in Derrida’s texts very detailed definitions in relation to other critical projects in the philosophical tradition, such as Husserl’s *Abbau* and Heidegger’s *Destruktion*. It is possible to discern a clear similarity structurally and content-wise between Derrida’s texts, which is due to a repeated use of his own neologisms and a similarity in certain ways of thinking or logic.<sup>1039</sup> On the basis of this, I have reconstructed Derrida’s views about central philosophical questions: namely, language, meaning and the subject.

In my study I have analysed the constructive side of deconstruction, in other words the side that expands the borders of tradition to a large extent through the critique of metaphysics occurring in Derrida’s early production (1967-1972). Derrida critiques the metaphysics of presence, the static view linked with it about being as a presence in the now-moment, the dualistic notion of the subject as a spiritual entity and the substantial illusion about meaning as a prepredicative idea existing in consciousness. Instead of these static, dualistic and substantial notions he proposes a view of the dynamic formation of presence in the process of *différance*. It would indeed be tempting to speak of the *metaphysics of différance* in connection with Derrida’s deconstruction, because the term *différance* occurs several times in his early production as a kind of constitutor of foundation and origin. Derrida, however takes a very critical standpoint towards the onto-theologisation of *différance*. It is, however, according to him, a metaphysical borderline concept.<sup>1040</sup>

All in all, *différance* is a quasi-concept with very many interpretations, receiving different meanings in different text contexts. Through the quasi-concept of

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<sup>1038</sup> Cf. Aft, 211/199, Laj, 391/273, 389/271.

<sup>1039</sup> One must, however, note that the views of different researchers differ radically at this point, as I mentioned already in the introduction; that is, according to others, it is not possible to find a uniform way of perceiving the world (e.g. Rorty, Bennington) in Derrida’s production, while according to others Derrida’s analysis systematically highlights certain physical and ontological views (e.g. Gasché).

<sup>1040</sup> “...*différance* remains a metaphysical name...” (Dif, 28/26).

*différance*, Derrida dismantles the staticness of the thinking of being typical for the metaphysics of presence. Thus *différance* refers to the fact that no being, origin or foundation exists or is present without a relationship outside itself. Identity and being are formed in relation to otherness and in relation to those non-substantial differences from which they differ. The presence of being and consciousness is formed in relation to its absence. Derrida states, for instance, that: “My death is structurally necessary to the pronouncing of the *I*. [...] [H]ere we understand the ‘I am’ out of the ‘I am dead’.”<sup>1041</sup> Thus the presence of the being of consciousness is after all not seen as a spiritual entity or substance present in itself, but rather it is formed dynamically in relation to absence and to what it is not. Likewise, meaning is formed, according to Derrida, in relation to what it is not and other traces of difference. With grammatology Derrida speaks of smaller units than the transcendental signified or an idea as constitutive of the formation of meaning. He calls the smallest units of meaning *différance* or *gram*: these are, for instance, letters, syllables and sounds. Differences are thus not permanent or static entities, but they, too, are defined in relation to one another.

It is possible to see common points between Derrida’s description of *différance* and the views of Saussure and Husserl. One can indeed say that the term *différance* refers to Derrida’s special way of combining the Saussurean theory of meaning, which contains the notion of meaning as the play of differences, with the hermeneutic phenomenological way of looking at meaning in relation to experience and time. *Différance* is thus a historical play of differences. In other words, meaning is formed in the network of differences in differing from other insubstantial differences, and at the same time it is formed uniquely at each moment. The term *différance* does indeed refer to both spatial differing as well as temporal postponement. Thus, meaning is formed in a unique historical process to which there is no return. The linguistic mark, however, enables a relative returning to this event. The repeatable mark creates a conceptual ideality which is understood differently depending on the historical moment.

From the point of view of understanding Derrida’s texts, one of the most problematic questions is, What is the relationship between language and experience? How language-accentuated is his view of meaning? In my study I have differentiated

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<sup>1041</sup> V&P, 108/96-97.

between four different interpretations of the relationship between language and experience in order to show that several different interpretations of the same issue can be derived from Derrida's texts. Firstly, it is possible to draw the conclusion that such a conceptual entity as meaning does not exist without language. The play of differences made possible by language produces the meaning. This view is supported, for instance, by Derrida's claim that: "There is no conceptual reality outside of language, which would allow the term to have a univocal semantic content over and above its inscription in language."<sup>1042</sup> I call this interpretation the "radical language accentuated interpretation". The problem with this view, however, is that it denies the role of the subject as a language user: we do not use language in order to express our thoughts, but rather language produces thoughts and meanings.

However, there are other ways of interpreting the views on language and the formation of meaning occurring in Derrida's writings. The relationship between language and the subject can be understood such that the former forms the prerequisite for subjective thinking. On the other hand, in order to carry meaning language requires consciousness, experiences, and observations as well as an ability to combine and derive from the subject new viewpoints from experiences. I have called this interpretation the "complimentary relationship between language and mind interpretation". This interpretation highlights the aim for non-reductivist and heterological philosophy characteristic of Derrida's texts: meaning is not reduced to mind or language but requires both. This interpretation, however, leaves open the question of what thinking is like without language, and whether it can exist at all.

One can also derive from Derrida's writings an interpretation emphasising the pre-predicative level of meaning. I have reconstructed such an interpretation based on Derrida's notion of 'arche-writing' (*l'archi-écriture*). Arche-writing can be interpreted as a kind of play of differences, and the mental form of the process of *différance*. Thus one can argue that all forms of mental meaning, observations, experiences and thinking occur in accordance with the play of differences and the process of *différance*. In this interpretation, however, the influence of language on the formation of meaning is given too little attention. Thus, I have proposed an interpretation that attempts to explain the relation between the levels of experience

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<sup>1042</sup> D&O, 111.

and language, and which takes into account the function of both levels in an all-encompassing way. I call this the “bi-levelness of meaning interpretation”.

The “bi-levelness of meaning interpretation” is based on the idea that a viewpoint can be found in Derrida’s texts according to which meaning is formed on two different levels: 1) the prepredicative level, and 2) the linguistic level. The prepredicative level is a kind of *arche-writing* of meaning, a shapeless, illusive and flowing play of differences. It is only on the linguistic level that one can actually talk about the ideal meaning, the signified and concepts. The language makes it possible to speak about a repeatable ideal meaning and identity. The relationship between the levels can be interpreted on the basis of Derrida’s texts, such that one aims through language to describe and express the level of *arche-writing*, but when moving to the linguistic level a transformation occurs. Thus the network of the linguistic play of differences transforms and postpones the contents occurring as *arche-writing* such that they are joined to a new kind of context and network that alters their meaning. Thus, when moving on to the linguistic level the question is not only about receiving a linguistic expression but also a completely new kind of conceptual way of thinking which is not possible without language. Language does indeed begin to produce thinking and influence the prepredicative level. Thus Derrida subscribes to Peirce’s claim that “We think only in signs”.<sup>1043</sup> The meanings produced by language are an emergent level of meaning, which can not be returned to either the prepredicative experience or to language; it is rather a matter of their unique interaction. Thus the prepredicative level is not specifically the origin of conceptual ideality or meaning, but paradoxically language combined with transcendental life produces the level of conceptual meaning.

I have presented these different interpretations separately so that their ontological and epistemological differences show more clearly. Nevertheless, they can be fitted together, as I have attempted to do in the interpretation describing the bi-levelness of meaning. I myself see the interpretation emphasising the bi-levelness of meaning as the most interesting one when thinking about the relationship of meaning, experience and language. On the basis of Derrida’s texts, however, one cannot uniquely claim that it would be the correct interpretation of his views in regard to meaning. It is possible to find several points in Derrida’s texts which can be seen to

contest the bi-levelness of this kind of meaning.<sup>1044</sup> On the other hand, there are parts to be found in his texts which also support this interpretation.<sup>1045</sup> There are simply no clear-cut answers to these issues to be found in Derrida's texts. However, his views on the formation of meaning as the play of difference, that is, the process of *différance*, are clearer and easier to understand.

In Chapter 4 of this study I attempted to reconstruct Derrida's views on what he terms grammatology, that is, the science of writing, which studies the formation of meaning and the smallest meaning units affecting it. One can say that one of Derrida's central ideas is moving from the semiological to the grammatological way of thinking. This means moving, within the understanding of meaning, from the sign concept to the quasi-concepts of *gram*, *différance* and *trace*, which refer to the smallest units of meaning, phonemes, graphemes, phones and grafts, as well as the even more insubstantial units formed through *différance*. Thus meaning is not seen as a complete and entire spiritual entity (transcendental signified) existing in the mind, but rather as forming in the dynamic play of differences. From this follows that meaning refers endlessly to the whole network of differences, in other words, to textuality. The meaning of words cannot be fully analysed because they are endlessly intertextual.

In Chapter 5 I examined Derrida's views regarding the deconstruction of the subject. He often refers to the *deconstruction of the subject* in the singular, but a

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<sup>1043</sup> "From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. *We think only in signs.*" (GRAM, 73/50).

<sup>1044</sup> In, for example, *Positions* Derrida claims that: "In the extent to which what is called 'meaning' (to be 'expressed') is already, and thoroughly, constituted by a tissue of differences, in the extent to which there is already a *text*, a network of textual referrals to *other* texts, a textual transformation in which each allegedly "simple term" is marked by the trace of another term, the presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority" (POS, 45-46/33). Also, in *De la grammatologie* Derrida wonders: "What can a science of writing begin to signify, if it is granted [...] that writing is not only auxiliary means in the service of science – and possibility its object – but first, as Husserl in particular pointed out in *The Origin of Geometry*, the condition of the possibility of ideal objects and therefore of scientific objectivity." (GRAM, 42-43/27).

<sup>1045</sup> In, for example, *De la grammatologie* Derrida asks: "Where and when does the trace, writing in general, common root of speech and writing, narrow itself down into 'writing' in the colloquial sense? Where and when does one pass from one writing to another, [...], from the trace to *graphie*, [...]" (GRAM, 109/74). He also claims that "Before being or not being 'noted', 'represented', 'figured', in a *graphie*, the linguistic sign implies an originary writing" (GRAM 77/52).

closer examination of the texts reveals an approach deconstructing several different notions of the subject. I have analysed these critiques separately. There emerge, for instance, interpretations of the subject as a metalinguistic, substantial and present spiritual entity, as well as a conscious consciousness. However, the deconstruction of the subject does not mean rejecting the concept of the subject or some sort of adaptation of the subject, but rather it concerns the deconstruction of certain Western philosophical notions of the subject. The deconstruction of the subject is aimed above all at the view that the subject would be a spiritual entity manifested as a present consciousness. Instead, Derrida presents the view that the subject is formed in self-reflection, which is a manifested form of *différance*. The subject is not present until it separates from itself (from being in itself) in order to look at itself as an object. Before self-reflection the subject is actually neither present nor absent. Accordingly, Derrida does not see presence as the foundation, but rather as the effect which is produced through self-reflection.

In Chapter 6 I discussed the character of the deconstructive method, and moreover, whether even a methodology at all can be constructed on the basis of Derrida's texts. Derrida himself has taken a very negative attitude towards attempts to present deconstruction as some carefully defined method, because it turns deconstruction into a technical and mechanical way of approaching a text. He criticises the goal-orientedness linked with methodological observation because it directs interpretation and pre-defines what is found in the text. Instead, he is interested in how the text manifests itself when reading is not guided by a special goal, such as the aim to reconstruct or understand the basic idea of the text. According to Derrida, deconstruction is, after all, not the method produced or chosen by the subject, but is contained in textual systems. Thus, the reader does not produce deconstruction, but rather s/he only describes the dismantling of the self contained in the text.

However I slightly disagree with Derrida's claim that deconstruction "does not return to an individual or collective *subject* who would take the initiative and apply it to an object, a text, a theme, etc. Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organisation of a subject, or even of modernity."<sup>1046</sup> And also the argument that "deconstruction is not a method"<sup>1047</sup> makes it impossible to identify what deconstruction actually *is*. On what grounds

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<sup>1046</sup> Laj, 391/274.

could someone call her/his reading deconstructive? Derrida himself has described deconstruction as the experience of the impossible,<sup>1048</sup> and stated that deconstruction “*must* be what it both is and is not in itself.”<sup>1049</sup> This kind of description would seem to allow almost all kinds of readings under the title of 'deconstruction'. Thus I agree with Gasché's suggestion that “it would be a great mistake to conclude that because deconstruction is critical of the discourse of metaphysics and its concept of method (scientific or philosophical), it would, in total disrespect of all levels, indulge in uncontrollable free play.”<sup>1050</sup> Also it can be argued that the reader cannot recognise the deconstruction contained in a text without the deconstructive way of understanding the text. Thus, a completely unmethodological reading, without any conscious decisions, does not lead to the kind of deconstructions that Derrida himself has presented. Thus, one of my central claims is that deconstruction cannot be understood as a separate technical or mechanical method, but rather that the deconstructive notions of language, text and subject define the deconstruction. In other words, deconstruction requires different ideals about the character of textuality and the subject than, for instance, in the hermeneutic method of reading texts. This would probably be a claim that even Derrida would agree with, even though he claims that deconstruction cannot be stabilised into a formalised discourse or doctrine<sup>1051</sup> (as, for instance, a deconstructive theory of textuality and the subject can). Furthermore, one can also say that it is possible to find a deconstruction of the method behind Derrida's characterisations of deconstruction. This means that deconstruction aims to understand texts outside a goal-oriented and systematic research method. In my study, however, I have raised the suspicion that Derrida is not able to avoid circularity in research, or able to look at texts purely without self-interest,<sup>1052</sup> as he himself has characterised the task of the person doing the deconstruction.<sup>1053</sup> The deconstructive way of research requires a certain kind of deconstructive notion of both language and

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<sup>1047</sup> Ibid., 389/271, Aft 211/199.

<sup>1048</sup> Aft, 210/201.

<sup>1049</sup> Ibid., 211/199.

<sup>1050</sup> Gasché 1986, 123.

<sup>1051</sup> Laj, 210/199.

<sup>1052</sup> Here I refer to Derrida's claims that deconstruction does not imply decision or calculation of the subject (Laj, 391/273-274).

<sup>1053</sup> See Chapter 2.1, “A preliminary definition of the term *deconstruction*. Cf. Laj, 391/273; POS, 109/82.

textuality, according to which textual aporias, conflicts, play of differences and intertextuality are valued.

Under the name of 'deconstruction', Derrida has carried out many different kinds analysis. Thus deconstruction can be seen, for instance, as a double writing, *clôtural* reading, tracing of hinge terms, analysis of infrastructures, analysis of palaeonymic meanings or textual grafting. Deconstruction can also be understood in other ways depending on the object of research. The most well-known form of deconstruction is 'double writing'. However, it fits mainly with the dismantling and rethinking of hierarchic binary oppositions. Thus, it has been applied, for instance, to the dismantling of the power hierarchies of man versus woman, mainstream versus minority culture, and centre versus periphery. On the other hand, as a *clôtural* reading, deconstruction is more clearly applicable to dismantling different texts and thought structures. Thus the aim is, on the one hand, to proceed as carefully as possible in a way internal to the text and, on the other hand, to locate aporetic and elliptic features contained in the text which offer a viewpoint outside the text.

Gasché, on the other hand, sees deconstruction as a way of looking at a text which aims to understand how different foundations have been defined in the philosophical tradition. Derrida does indeed use the term 'deconstruction' as a free translation of Heidegger's term *Destruktion* and Husserl's term *Abbau*. Heidegger aims through the destruction of traditional ontology to arrive at a new view of Being. Likewise, Derrida localises how Being is understood in the metaphysics of presence, and makes proposals for how it should be understood differently. According to Gasché, deconstruction does indeed analyse how structures have been formed and what can be found behind them. Gasché's interpretation clearly brings forth the view that deconstruction cannot be understood as a unconnected method but rather through concrete deconstructions and their results.

Deconstruction can also be understood as *textual grafting* or as the analysis of textual grafts. Thus it radically differs from an interpretation concerned with analysing central meanings of a text, because it aims to look at the inter-textuality of the text. One can indeed say that a research analysing the central meanings of the text is closing the text and giving an account of it as a totality. In contrast, the grafting of textuality is a disseminating and dispersal reading, the aim of which is to open the edges of the text by showing intertextual connections to other texts and networks of meaning. In textual grafting one sees the valuing of equivocality and networking.

Also other forms of deconstructive analysis can then be formed on the basis of these values.

One can indeed say that different characterisations of deconstruction do not aim to define a deconstructive method or to present deconstruction as a doctrinal system, but rather they can act as case examples of what kind of form the deconstructive process can take. I do indeed claim that Derrida's different and differently formulated deconstructions are united by a deconstructive way of understanding the text and textuality. The historicist analyses carried out by Derrida can act as a source of inspiration, but deconstruction as a more extended way of looking at the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism can also receive other formulations.

All in all, Derrida's writings have in an interesting way opened new viewpoints into the classical philosophical texts. Derrida has paid attention to very fundamental ways of thinking and concepts in Western philosophy, and he has been able to dismantle presuppositions linked with these and to present new, even avant-gardist views of them. He has proposed a notable number of new concepts and ways of conceptualising which enrich philosophical thinking. Derrida's writings have in turn had an influence, such that many methods of conceptualising typical for Western thinking have begun to be looked at critically: for instance, notions about the identity of the subject or the permanence of meaning. Likewise, ways of thinking legitimising foundations, origins and centres now appear problematic, as do the ways of conceptualising as hierarchic pairs of oppositions. Derrida's writings are linked with a new stage of theoretical thinking, the values of which are the manifoldness of reality, networking and admitting that it is impossible to master the overall within the framework of a single theory by a single theoretician. The result of this is the dismantling of static and hierarchic sets of values, the questioning of the relationship between centre and periphery, and at its best highlighting the repressed and silenced voice.

## 8. Bibliography

### Abbreviations used in the text

The following is a list of abbreviations of books and articles by Jacques Derrida. When reference is made to any of these texts, the first page number given refers to the French edition and the second to the English translation, even in replicating a specific English quotation. The only exception to this notation system is where only the French or English version was available.

- Act "The Deconstruction of Actuality", *Radical Philosophy* 68, Autumn 1994, pp. 28-41.
- Aft "Afterwards ou, du moins, moins qu'une lettre sur une lettre en moins", *Afterwords*, edited by Nicholas Royle, Tampere: Outside Books 1992, pp. 204-216. English translation by Geoffrey Bennington as "Afterwards or, at least, less than a letter about a letter less", *Afterwords*, edited by Nicholas Royle, Tampere: Outside Books 1992, pp. 197-203.
- An "The Animal That Therefore I am (More to Follow)", *Critical Inquiry* 28 Winter 2002, English translation by David Wills, pp. 369-418.
- Bl "Before the Law", *Acts of Literature*, edited by Derek Attridge, English translation by Avital Ronell, New York, London: Routledge 1992, pp.181-220. (Orig. "Devant la loi", *Philosophy and Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984)
- Chf "Cogito et histoire de la folie", *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967. pp.51-98. English translation by Alan Bass as "Cogito and the History of Madness" in *Writing and Difference*, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 31-63.
- Cho "Choreographies", Interview by Christie V. Mc Donald, *Diacritics*, Vol. 12, The Johns Hopkins University Press 1982, pp. 66-76.
- CIN *Cinders* (Orig. *Feu la cendre*, Paris: Editions des Femmes 1987), English translation by Ned Lukacher, Lincoln: University Press of Nebraska Press 1987.
- Dif "La Différance", *Marges - de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit 1972, pp. 1-31. English translation by Alan Bass as "Différance", *Margins - of Philosophy*, (*Marges - de la philosophie* 1972), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1986, pp. 1-27.
- DIS *La Dissémination*, Paris: Seuil 1972. English translation by Barbara Johnson as *Dissemination*, 5<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1985.
- Dis "Discussion with André Jacob", *Altérités*, Paris: Osiris.
- Disc "Discussion Nietzsche aujourd'hui", Paris: Union Générale d'Édition.
- D&o "Deconstruction and the other", An interview with Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1982, pp. 105-126.

- Ec "Et Cetera..." *Deconstructions, A User's Guide*, edited by Nicholas Royle. English translation by Geoffrey Bennington, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave 2000, pp. 282-305.
- É&D *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967. English translation by Alan Bass as *Writing and Difference*, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999.
- Ew "Eating well, or the Calculation of the Subject" *Who Comes After the Subject?* edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy, New York: Routledge 1991, pp. 96-119.
- Fins "Les fins de l'homme", *Marges - de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit 1972, pp. 129-164. English translation by Alan Bass as "The Ends of Man", *Margins – of Philosophy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1986, pp. 109-136.
- F&s "Force et signification", *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967, pp. 9-49. English translation by Alan Bass as "Force and signification", *Writing and Difference*, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 3-30.
- Fl "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority" (Orig. *Force de loi. Le 'fondement mystique' de l'autorité*, Paris: Galilée 1994), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, edited by Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson, English translation by Mary Quaintance, New York, London: Routledge, pp. 3-67.
- FPG An Radio interview in the Federal Republic of Germany. Published in *Französische Philosophen im Gespräch*, edited by Florian Rötzer, München: Klaus Boer Verlag 1987, pp. 67-87.
- F&scé "Freud et la scène de l'écriture", *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967. s. 293-340. English translation by Alan Bass as "Freud and the Scene of Writing", *Writing and Difference*, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 196-231.
- GRAM *De la grammatologie*, Paris: Minuit 1967. English translation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore, 9<sup>th</sup> printing. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1997.
- G&s ""Genesis and Structure" and Phenomenology" (Orig. ""Genèse et structure" et la phénoménologie", *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967, pp. 229-252). *Writing and Difference*, English translation by Alan Bass. 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 154-168.
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- Laj "Lettre à un ami japonais", *Psyché. Inventions de l'autre*, Paris: Galilée 1987, pp. 387-393. English translation by David Wood and Andrew Benjamin as "Letter to a Japanese Friend", *A Derrida Reader – Between the Blinds*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991, pp. 270-276.

- LI *Limited Inc., a, b, c.*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1988.
- Liv "Living on: *Border Lines*", *Deconstruction and Criticism*, edited by Harold Bloom et al., English translation by James Hulbert, New York: The Seabury Press 1979, pp.75-176.
- MAR *Marges - de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit 1972. English translation by Alan Bass as *Margins – of Philosophy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1986.
- Mb "La mythologie blanche - la métaphore dans le texte philosophique", *Marges - de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit 1972, pp. 247-308. English translation by Alan Bass as "White Mythology – Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy", *Margins – of Philosophy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1986, pp. 207-272.
- OA *The Ear of the Other* (Orig. *L'Oreille de l'autre*, textes et débats, edited by Cl. Lévesque et Ch. Mc Donald, Montréal: VLB 1982), English translation by Peggy Kamuf, New York: Schocken Books 1985.
- OG *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, (Orig. *L'Origine de la géométrie* 1962, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), English translation by John P. Leavy Jr. Stony Brook (N.Y): Nicholas Hays Ltd. 1978.
- OG: I NB: Refers specifically to Derrida's introduction in *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, pp. 25-153.
- O&g "Ousia et grammè", *Marges - de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit 1972, pp. 31-78. English translation by Alan Bass as "Ousia and Grammè": Note on a Note from *Being and Time*", *Margins – of Philosophy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1986, pp. 29-68.
- PGH *Le problème de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, Paris: PUF 1990.
- POS *Positions*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1972. English translation by Alan Bass as *Positions*, 10<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1998.
- Pr "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils", *Diacritics*, Fall 1983, English translation by Catherine Porter and Edward P. Morris, pp. 3-20.
- Punc "The time of a thesis: punctuations", *Philosophy in France Today*. edited by Alan Montefiore. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, pp. 34-50.
- PSY *Psyché. Inventions de l'autre*, Paris: Galilée 1987.
- Rge "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve" (Orig. "De l'économie restreinte à l'économie général", *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967, pp. 369-408). *Writing and Difference*, English translation by Alan Bass, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 278-294.
- Rlw "Racism's Last Word", English translation by Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry* 12, 1985, pp. 290-299.
- Rm "The *Retrait* of Metaphor", English translation by Frieda Gasdner, Biodun Iginla, Richard Madden and William West, *Enclitic* 2, no 2, 1978, pp. 5-33.
- Sec "Signature, événement, contexte", *Marges - de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit 1972. pp. 365-394. English translation by Alan Bass as

- "Signature Event Context", *Margins – of Philosophy*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1986, pp. 307-330.
- SP *Signéponge/Signsponge*. French and English edition, English translation by Richard Rand, New York: Colombia University Press 1983.
- S,s&j "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines", *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967, pp. 409-428. English translation by Alan Bass as "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", *Writing and Difference*, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 278-294.
- Tb "Des tours de Babel", *Psyché. Invention de l'autre*, Paris: Galilée 1987, pp. 203-235.
- Tq "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer", *Dialogue and Deconstruction - The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, edited by Diane P. Michelfelder & Richard E. Palmer, New York: State University of New York Press 1989, pp. 52-54.
- V&m "Violence et métaphysique - essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas". *L'Écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil 1967, pp. 117-228. English translation by Alan Bass as "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas", *Writing and Difference*, 13<sup>th</sup> printing, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1999, pp. 79-153.
- V&P *La Voix et le phénomène*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1967. English translation by David B. Allison as *Speech and Phenomena - and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, 6<sup>th</sup> printing, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1996.

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*A Derrida Reader - Between the Blinds*, edited by Peggy Kamuf, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

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