

The Philosopher-Son

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ABSTRACT. Many elements of Derrida's "psychoanalytic" philosophy support the view that for most of his career he remained a philosopher-son: the disruptive attitude toward a systematic style, the tendency to exaggerate, the fervor— so like that of Heidegger, Freud, and especially Nietzsche— with which he repeatedly stages confrontations with his father-masters. However, Derrida never claimed, with the postmoderns, that every kind of reality is socially and historically constructed. His "mistake" is rather to have confused ideal objects, such as geometrical shapes and theorems, with social objects, such as promises, contracts, and bills; for ideal objects do not depend on their embeddedness in a trace-structure as contracts and marriages undoubtedly do. The "Husserlian" theme of the centrality of writing becomes a powerful tool when applied to social reality: inscriptions are the ground of an enormous ontology that everywhere surrounds us. Derrida's achievement resides in his denunciation of the unconscious denigration of this ground and in his having foreseen the coming of our present "era of writing".

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What is enlightenment? This was Kant's question. His answer: the emergence of humanity from its present condition of immaturity. *Réveille-toi, sors de ton enfance*, he added with emphasis, quoting Rousseau. What is deconstruction? I believe it is the compelling (although not necessarily true) proposition that we can never definitively transcend our infancy and will therefore spend the

greater part of our lives angrily confronting our fathers. On the one hand, this behavior dethrones and overthrows patriarchal rule, by sharply and impiously revealing the debility of established order, but on the other, it preserves and tacitly reaffirms the existing authority.

Such is precisely the case with Derrida's philosophy, which is far from an isolated one (there are many philosopher-sons in the twentieth century). For instance, an author with whom Derrida has often been compared, Theodor Adorno, manifested in his own philosophical work, and in particular, his negative dialectics, a strikingly similar behavior. So similar, in fact, that Habermas could not help expressing an evaluation of him very close to the one I am tentatively presenting here: "Teddy" Adorno never became an adult but remained for much of his life a child.

In contrast with Habermas, however, I regard as a compliment this assessment of Adorno as a "Teddy" who never parted company with his teddy-bear. I would, in fact, like now to characterize Derrida in similar terms. In one of his last public statements before the onset of the disease that would eventually cause his death, on the occasion of the 2001 awarding of the Adorno prize in Frankfurt, Derrida discoursed at some length on the analogy between deconstruction and negative dialectics. But in the course of so doing, he would eventually declare his even more profound sympathy for another philosopher, Walter Benjamin, who more than any other thinker in a whole generation of philosopher-sons most fully exemplified a filial orientation — so youthfully impulsive as to take his own life when overwhelmed by anxiety that was itself provoked by the prospect of dying, and so much a child as to allow even Teddy to treat him like a son.

Hyperbolite

Fathers would be proud of their successful sons were they not themselves consumed with envy of their offspring (consider, in this connection, the case of France, which has never been keen to acknowledge that it is, after all, Derrida's *patrie*). Countless essays, symposia, dissertations, books, as well as several films and even a cartoon (*Deconstructo*) have been dedicated to Derrida. His career extends over more than half a century of intellectual life, triumphing over the hostility that this exotic transplant from Algeria to the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* was apt to provoke. Yet Derrida's manifold accomplishments were achieved by a

frantic movement that was all the while *sur place*. During fifty years of astonishing productivity he never swerves from his course but instead steadily enriches and enlarges a framework that— to a remarkable extent— can already be discerned in the earliest writings. We may describe this framework as the reading of the philosophic tradition in terms of “denial” and “repression” or— to employ a schematization that Derrida, I am not sure quite rightly, despised— as a psychoanalysis of philosophy. How, then, did this philosopher attain such fame and notoriety? And what is the central insight, the kernel of Derridean thought that remained unchanging through all of its successive restatements and interpretations?

Here is the crux of the matter: if we were to distinguish between philosopher-fathers and philosopher-sons, Derrida would surely be counted among the latter, since according to him (save for the last, most patriarchal phase of his career which will be discussed toward the end of the present essay) the revolt against tradition has won the day, at least as far as the form of expression is concerned, when we compare Derrida’s style to a traditional systematic exposition of a *corpus* of doctrines. The texts that from 1967 onwards have made him famous, transforming him into the most widely recognized among all of the continental philosophers of his generation, are characterized by two stances, both vaguely neurotic and openly Oedipal. On the one hand, evincing a spirit of renunciation that clashes with the revolutionary optimism of the philosophy of May ‘68, Derrida claims that we will never be able overcome metaphysics, that it is neither possible nor sensible to try and radically emerge from the tradition, or go beyond the inherited rationality. On the other hand, all of his writings, in their very language— filled with puns, ironic passages, allusions— constitute a sustained effort to evade the burden of the past, and they manifest a desire for excessiveness, or more exactly a syndrome that Derrida diagnosed as “Hyperbolite,” understood as a tendency toward exaggeration that is the philosophical equivalent of hyperbole.ⁱ(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

Hyperbolite constitutes a prototypically philosophical attitude, one shared by philosophers as diverse as Descartes and Husserl: in brief, at least once in your life, you have to exaggerate, you have to throw away commonsense and everything you have been taught—

otherwise you will never become a philosopher. However, Derrida— I find myself talking as if he were alive, as I will do for most of this essay— reveals a peculiar fervor in this connection. Superficially, his questions and answers, especially at the beginning of his career when the imprinting of the “*Normaliste*” is most obvious, are consistent with the high decorum of abstractly philosophical themes. But it is not difficult to discover in his works, at first implicitly, then during the later years wholly in the open, different sorts of questions, questions tied to political and existential issues: Will there ever be a genuine revolution? Is everything historical and relative or is anything transhistorical and universal? Can we do away with Oedipality? Can we ever be really happy? And here Oedipus shows himself once more. Derrida thus confronts a tradition that has excited in him high aspirations even as it has profoundly frustrated those hopes.

At times the Oedipal scenario is quite explicit. Consider what may well be the first such episode: the 1963 essay on Michel Foucault’s *History of Madness*. After an opening statement that is still very much in the manner of Foucault, Derrida commences his discussion of the relationship with the long tradition of master-thinkers, especially his relationship with his own very young master Foucault, only four years Derrida’s elder. Suddenly, the *master* with whom, in Derrida’s rhetoric, one may not enter into conversation because he already has all the answers, is transformed into a *father*. A father— Derrida continues— who is invariably absent, in the Academy as in everyday life. We might count the number of times Derrida relates the story of a son who feels himself to be an orphan because he despises a father he does not consider worthy, a father to whom he is bound by indissoluble family ties but against whom he revolts.

Ultimately, as he continues complaining and scolding, he reproaches this father above all for the fact that the father is *never there* but has always been absent. Consider the conclusion of *Speech and Phenomena*: real presence is always receding (like an absent father who is never at home but instead always on the road in connection with his work); and writing, an important and recurring topic in Derrida’s work with which he openly identifies himself, is depicted, following Plato, as a *paidia* or game for children and as an orphan deprived of its father’s assistance, weak and unable to defend itself.

The contrast with, for instance, Jean-Paul Sartre could not be more pronounced. Sartre thus begins his own autobiography, *Les Mots*, by rejoicing in the fact that he was born an orphan because a father would have crushed him with his huge body. Clearly, Derrida's relationship with the paternal as with the philosophic tradition in general is far more fraught. Do I exaggerate? Isn't this account itself a kind of psychoanalytic hyperbolite? Perhaps. But consider this: on the one hand, Derrida has confronted the entire philosophical canon, i.e., the whole *cursus* of authors one is supposed to master for the *agrégation*. On the other hand, among the reigning authorities, there are a privileged few who do not provide occasions for Oedipally charged encounters but, to the contrary, provide the means with which to challenge the authority of the tradition: Heidegger, Freud, Nietzsche.

Fervor

From Heidegger, Derrida first of all appropriates the thesis that there is a history of metaphysics with which one must come to terms, as with a father. Even though this history, in contrast with Heidegger's, is not conceived as unitary, Derrida shares the basic assumption of the "later" Heidegger to the effect that the fundamental object of philosophical reflection— Being, what there is— conceals itself behind the phenomenal world, and that even its overt manifestations coincide with a further disappearance (the father must always be absent). Secondly, most of the terms Derrida uses in his works, beginning with "deconstruction" and "difference," have a clear Heideggerian provenance, even though Derrida arrives at somewhat different conclusions. In particular, Derrida does not believe, as Heidegger evidently does, that a final moment of revelation may eventually arrive when it will become possible truly to think Being, unobscured by its historical veils. The deconstruction of metaphysics thus looks like an interminable analysis destined to consume the entire career of the philosopher. A third Heideggerian element (already thematically present in Husserl but lacking Heidegger's passion and intensity) is the positing of a transcendental philosophy that, in contrast with Kant's, refers not only to an impersonal "*I think*," but to a historically determined subject: philosophy will

henceforth be embedded in the family matrix. In this case too, however, we find a critical divergence: although Heidegger's "I," unlike Kant's, is a historical "I," it remains the site of a fundamentally conscious agency, whereas in Derrida we find instances of the unconscious and of all those phenomena (from sensations to feelings) in relationship to which we are far more passive than active, patients than agents.

Plainly, Derrida owes much to Freud. Metaphysics cannot be overcome because it is not a conscious structure. Metaphysics constitutes— though this may sound oxymoronic— a theoretical unconscious. From psychoanalytic discourse derives not just a theme or a set of themes but the assumption that a latent meaning hides behind the manifest sense of any given text. The aim of the interpreter, therefore, is to bring to light what has been repressed. From Freud there comes a model of philosophical work too, the idea that, in its analytical practice, philosophy configures itself as endless interpretation, never yielding a definitive insight, but rather increasingly complex explanations and approximations to a truth that as such— alas— is structurally unreachable and constitutes a regulative ideal for the philosopher as much as for the reader.

Derrida's philosophical radicalism may be traced to Nietzsche— whose own oeuvre provides Derrida's works with their characteristic mood and emotional tenor. The archetype of the philosopher-son rebelling against his predecessors derives from Nietzsche too— a rebel's passion and fervor much stronger than that transmitted by Heidegger or Freud. Indeed, Nietzsche provides the crucial inspiration for Derrida's philosophical confrontations with tradition. Unlike so many of the other leading figures in French philosophy of the nineteen sixties and seventies, Derrida never wrote a full-fledged book on Nietzsche. But he dedicated to Nietzsche several essays and here and there notable remarks in which he underlines that the extremist character of Nietzschean philosophy does not constitute so much a body of themes to be researched as it does a set of anti-philosophical arguments. Although these may prove useful in deconstructing metaphysics, they cannot be summed up or systematized in a series of theses that might become the basis for a cohesive doctrine. Nietzsche's role is that of a monist against

dogmatism; he is, together with Freud (and in contrast with Heidegger), the model for an unending analysis. In another respect as well— made manifest only during Derrida’s last years— Nietzsche plays a canonic role in Derrida’s philosophy, precisely, with respect to the centrality of autobiography and of the discourse on the individual. In this second sense, the Nietzsche who is most consequential for Derrida is neither the immoralist nor the thinker of will-to-power and eternal recurrence, but rather the egotist who unveils his heart in *Ecce Homo*.

For the generation of 1968, Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* constitutes the philosophic antipodes of Derrida’s project. But it is worth noting that, as in Derrida, the characteristic tone of the *Anti-Oedipus* is especially influenced by Nietzsche, arguably the thinker most haunted by the shades of both parents. The presence of Freud— who “discovered” the already open secret of Oedipus— is less prominent in Deleuze and Guattari’s collaboration. Less evident still is Heidegger, who professionalized revolt by turning it into an academic drill.

Themes

To this point we have primarily been concerned with the question of the tonality of Derrida’s work. Regarding his characteristic thematic preoccupations, Derrida depends very largely on Husserl’s phenomenology, which is at first the object of an explicit and intimate critical confrontation, and then of a highly original elaboration. Husserlian phenomenology was for Derrida both a model of methodological rigor and the source of his principal philosophical themes. Indeed, according to Derrida, Husserl recapitulates the entire metaphysical tradition from Platonism to Cartesianism to the quest for evidence and for the things themselves. But from the beginning of his career, Derrida has stressed that he felt closer to Heidegger, especially with respect to the way Heidegger approaches philosophical questions. In fact, with the widespread diffusion of the “later” Heidegger’s thought in contemporary continental philosophy (that is, the Heidegger who thinks the nexus between language and poetry, history and metaphysics), Derrida begins to look very much like a “third” Heidegger, albeit one who is

rather more a Parisian sophisticate than a forest-loving German.

There are good reasons for Derrida's Parisian attitude. Derrida could never be completely at ease with Heidegger's thought, and not just because of the aspiration for the authentic and the fundamental that characterizes Heideggerian thinking (an aspiration that most philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century find hard to accept). Ultimately, Derrida does not believe philosophical questions to be questions of language. Rather—and this, together with “deconstruction,” defines his image in the eyes of late twentieth-century culture—he thinks philosophical questions concern, more peculiarly, writing, and this foregrounding of writing is not at all, in Derrida's view, a variety of the famous linguistic turn.

We thus approach a sensitive knot. Precisely the promotion of writing rather than language shows the influence of Husserl on Derrida's philosophy. I would say “curiously” so, because it is not at all obvious at first, since Husserl, according to Derrida's interpretation, remains implicated in the “logocentric” privileging of speech over writing that characterizes the metaphysical tradition.ⁱⁱ respect to the idea. Still, the entire development of phenomenology and therefore of the ensuing theoretical extrapolations from the late sixties onward are polarized around the role of writing—and the question of inscription in general—in the construction of theory, science, and experience itself. These reflections quickly intertwine in Derrida, who explicitly focuses on the relationship between literature (the practice of writing *par excellence*) and philosophy (a writing practice to be sure, but one that, in the decisively influential Platonic tradition, nonetheless aspires to do away with writing).

In this connection, Richard Rorty has defined the philosophy of Derrida and his followers as “a kind of writing,” explaining Derrida's approach with reference to a great partition between two primary philosophical orientations: the “Kantian,” which is interested in saying what there is and is driven by a scientific ideal; and the “Hegelian,” which is interested in relating to a tradition and may be identified by its literary-historical style.ⁱⁱⁱ Consequences of Pragmatism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 90-109. Derrida would be the final exemplar of this latter lineage, the last of the line who brings the system to perfection by

rendering philosophy a diverting and sophisticated game whose object is the unmasking of those who Mme Verdurin once called “the boring”. But while the division between Kantians and Hegelians may be compelling, far less so is the suggestion that Derrida is a funambulist who dreams of turning the world (or at least himself) upside down, as in a famous drawing by Levine in the *New York Review of Books*.

The question Derrida repeatedly asks is simply this: can a theory, an idea, a theorem ever be said to exist— in the way such entities do exist, namely, outside of space and time— if it has not had at least *one* actualization in space and time, e.g., in someone’s notebook or on a chalkboard? And how much does this circumstance— empirical, but systematic and therefore necessary— count in the constitution of our theories? An appeal to writing is not a way to make post-philosophy more entertaining and less demanding, but rather— and here is the element that most of all, more than the radicalism, the Heideggerianism, the psychoanalysis, and more than Derrida’s own version of the linguistic turn — puts Derrida at the heart of twentieth century philosophy: Derrida’s transformation of philosophy into *meta-philosophy*, in other words, the assumption that what really matters for a philosopher is everyday to put on the philosophical agenda the conditions of possibility of her or his own work.

Writing, the sign of being a son, of being linked to a tradition, thus becomes the fundamental philosophical theme, probably the only theme, and we owe its foregrounding not to the three exemplary rebels, but to Husserl, that great clerk of philosophy. Derrida bestows upon writing an unsuspected private and political significance: to speculate about writing means to attempt to shed light on the personal and material background from which theoretical discourse emerges. Such may represent the typical stance of a philosopher from the second half of the twentieth century, a rash and frankly incorrect approach if we pretend thereby to disclose the reasons for doing philosophy, but altogether legitimate if, on the other hand, our goal is to illuminate the nature of social reality— so intimately linked to the existence of writing, traces, documents and records. Let us now briefly consider Derrida’s error or, at least, exaggeration, before concluding, as we should, with a review of his positive achievements.

Exaggeration

In addition to his foregrounding of writing, then, Derrida engages in a practice of meta-philosophy, a discourse on the conditions of possibility of philosophic thought that influences theoretical discourse apparently from without or, in Derrida's words, from "the margins of philosophy."

The anomaly is thus normalized: in Derrida we find signs of an intense preoccupation with the existential, political and institutional implications of philosophy that constitutes a profound affinity linking him to other continental philosophers of his generation including Foucault, Habermas, and Rorty. Derrida asks the same questions: What presuppositions underlie our talk of philosophy? What institutions and what requirements condition our practice? What role does our subjectivity play in the philosophy we profess? Which one of the two dichotomies— "truth" versus "falsehood" and "justice" versus "injustice"— count more in philosophy? As much as the critical theory of Habermas, Foucault's genealogy of power-knowledge, and Rorty's post-analytical pragmatism, Derrida's deconstructionism would seem to be less interested in the "things themselves" than in the mediations by means of which we gesture at them. With this proviso: even if we did desire to relate to the things themselves, we would nonetheless find ourselves grappling with mediations; philosophy therefore becomes meta-philosophy.

Hence the sense of the sentence "there is nothing outside of the text."^{iv} Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 158-159. The sentence has often been interpreted as if it were a claim to the effect that there is no reality independent from our interpretations, from the language we adopt, from the theories to which we have recourse. In these terms, the motto is plainly false, since taken literally it would amount to the nonsensical claim that texts exist, but not the world to which they refer.

This is how John Searle construes the statement when he endeavors to establish an essential difference between those aspects of reality dependent upon language (for instance, the sentence "Mount Everest has snow and ice at its summit") and those parts completely

independent from language (the fact that Mount Everest actually has snow and ice at its summit).^v and 177-197. Or when he debunks the nonsense hidden in the conflation of reality with the instrument used in defining it (e.g., the world itself and the physical theory we may formulate with respect to it) by referring to the manifest nonsensicality of claiming that a Searle who weighs 73 kilos and a Searle who weighs 160 pounds constitute two distinct realities.^{vi}

However, as Derrida would eventually find himself compelled to explain, the sentence should in fact be construed to say that “nothing exists outside of a context,” thereby indicating that, say, the aesthetic appreciation of a meadow during a walk makes available a different vantage on the world than the classifying gaze of a botanist.^{vii} Searle regards Derrida’s clarification as simply trivial, but such is not obviously so given that in ontology— at least as far as physical and ideal objects are concerned— *everything* does exist outside of texts, if it is true that snow and ice cover the summit of Everest and that $2 + 2 = 4$ independently from our language, our interpretation and our conceptual scheme.^{viii} outside of *texts* is the banality that everything exists in some *context* or other!”

A simple consideration should suffice to demonstrate that Derrida’s statement concerns epistemology (namely, the way we know things) rather than ontology (namely, their way of being). Given Husserl as his point of departure, Derrida could never have come to believe that physical reality is constructed. Physical reality possesses, by definition, a being distinct from that of the knowing subject and from that of whatever theories the subject may have. The principle that “there is nothing outside of the text” can, then, find a legitimate application only with respect to the *socialization* of ideal objects (which need to be culturally articulated after their independent being has been discovered) and the *construction* of social objects (which, on the other hand, require for their very existence, a record)

And here we find the error— indeed the only one —ever made by Derrida. Derrida’s mistake is not that of the postmoderns (who really do believe that physical objects are socially constructed), but a far more sophisticated one: the confusing of ideal with social objects, knowledge with its socialization. Briefly, although a triangle may subsist even without an

inscription, contracts do not, and Derrida has confused triangles with contracts. But this confusion has the advantage of enabling us to derive a positive principle for social ontology, even though— I must admit— our postulate may be less alluring than the slogan “there is nothing outside of the text”: Inscription is a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for social objects.

2001: A Space Odyssey

And now a few remarks concerning Derrida’s positive achievements. Contrary to what Derrida claimed, one would not be wrong to characterize deconstruction as the psychoanalysis of philosophy. As is well known, platitudes may score a point. Just as Derrida’s wife, Marguerite, in her professional life has psychoanalyzed human beings, so Derrida has psychoanalyzed texts. In addition to revealing the unconscious conflicts and even delusions of canonical philosophers (of which there are many, as Derrida has amply demonstrated), deconstruction managed to uncover a powerful act of repression implicating the entire cultural realm: the denigration of writing, together with its corollary, the praise of speech and of presence. Rather than a lengthy discussion, a simple example will here suffice.

In 1968, Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey* was released and, as you may recall, the various characters in the film employed the spaceship’s computer as a problem-solving device with the aid of which they might engage in thought, but never one with which writing could be produced. When they felt the need to produce written text, the crew of the spaceship instead turned to ordinary electric typewriters, as if to say that in the age of McLuhan conventional wisdom had decided that writing was outmoded, that the epoch of writing was nearing its end. But within a few years of the film’s release, the unthinkable did indeed occur when writing suddenly proliferated everywhere, on the World Wide Web, in text-messaging devices of every sort, just as Derrida— reading Aristotle, Plato, Rousseau, Hegel— had prophesied in *Of Grammatology*, published only a year or so before Kubrick’s film.

Let us therefore honor Derrida’s achievement. This achievement might seem a small one

in comparison with the philosophic magniloquence of the announcements in Nietzsche and Heidegger of the coming of a new god, but it has the advantage of being both true and verifiable. By diagnosing logocentrism, Derrida has foreseen the return of that evidently abjected other upon which we have turned our backs since the time of the Sumerians: precisely, writing and the phenomenon of the trace in general. And thanks to this interpretive perspective—at once anomalous, modest and original—he has, I think, provided us with the most powerful instrument with which to read the nature of social objects, the fact of their being *written objects*. No one, it should be noted, has ever proposed a social ontology that would be an ontology of writing, no one previously has brought to our attention the fact that what we call “our papers,” all the sheets and notes in our pockets, all the digital code in our computers, constitute the basis for the existence of social objects that are really important in our lives. And by thus foregrounding writing, during the final years of his career the deconstructor was transformed at last into a constructor, this father began to take care of his offspring.

However, and with this we come to an end, Derrida’s thematization of writing must also be recognized as the outcome and elaboration, over the course of some five decades, of the essence of being a son, of his filiality, so to speak. The father, the thing in itself, is forever inaccessible. The paternal figure, always absent or traveling, sends home during the course of his interminable travels his postcards, just as Derrida himself did in the *Carte postale*, postcards from a father traveling in connection with his work, enigmatic expressions of a father’s apparent concern for the welfare of his offspring. These writings, these postcards, are the only link that his heirs have with their father and such will be the case even upon his death when he leaves behind his last will and testament in the form, precisely, of yet another written document. This has been the thread that has kept Derrida tied to the metaphysical tradition and its canonical texts, even though he tried continually, like an adolescent in revolt, to dispense with them. He never managed to do so, until the thread was severed by his death and, like the astronaut in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* who leaves his spaceship, he began to drift in space. What were the lyrics of that old David Bowie song?

“Ground control to Major Tom
 Ground control to Major Tom
 Take your protein pills and put your helmet on
 Ground control to Major Tom
 Commencing countdown engine’s on
 Check ignition and may God’s love be with you
 This is ground control to Major Tom
 You’ve really made the grade!
 And the papers want to know whose shirts you wear
 Now it’s time to leave the capsule if you dare
 ‘This is Major Tom to ground control
 I’m stepping through the door
 And I’m floating in the most peculiar way
 And the stars look very different today
 For here am I sitting in a tin can
 Far above the world
 Planet Earth is blue and there’s nothing I can do.’”^{ix}
 And what were Derrida’s last, necessarily written words, given to his son to read at his
 grave?

Mes amis, je vous remercie d’être venus.

Je vous remercie pour la chance de votre amitié.

Ne pleurez pas: souriez comme je vous aurai souri.

Je vous bénis.

Je vous aime.

Je vous souris, où que je suis.

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Notes

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- ⁱ “An exaggerated hyperbole. Eventually, I exaggerate. I always exaggerate.” See *Monolingualism of the Other, or The Prosthesis of Origin*, translated by Patrick Mensah
- ⁱⁱ During the 1930s, at a time when he was considering leaving Germany, someone urged Husserl to attend to the preservation of his writings (which were in fact subsequently transported to Louvain), but Husserl remained unperturbed, answering as a true idealist: “It does not matter, since everything I have written is true.” Quite the contrary was to befall Derrida. Not simply with respect to his bibliography (as when, according to the anecdote, in a conversation with Foucault outside the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Foucault exhorted him to commence writing, claiming that the phrases would begin to occur to him if only he once overcame his writer’s block, the obstacle of the empty page) but theoretically, since all of Derrida’s thought is concentrated on the non-exteriority of expression with respect to essence, and of writing with
- ⁱⁱⁱ See: Richard Rorty, “Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida,” in
- ^{iv} As Derrida puts it: “*There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n’y pas de*

hors-texte]....in what one calls real life...there has never been anything but writing; there has never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references...”; see “Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by

^v John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), pp. 59-78

^{vi} *Ibid.*, p. 165.

^{vii} J. Derrida, *Limited, Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 136.

^{viii} J.R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 159: “Derrida, as far as I can tell, does not have an argument. He simply declares that there is nothing outside of texts [...]. And in any case, in a subsequent polemical response to some objections of mine, he apparently takes it all back: he says that all he meant by the apparently spectacular declaration that there is nothing

^{ix} David Bowie, “Space Oddity,” on Space Oddity (Virgin, SB00001OH7M, 1999; original release date: 1969).