Chapter 2

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Derrida and deconstruction

Introduction

Deconstruction, which has attained widespread recognition as one of the most important avant-garde intellectual movements in France and America, is essentially post-phenomenological and post-structuralist. In the history of contemporary deconstruction the leading figure is Jacques Derrida, who published three influential books in 1967: *Of Grammatology*, *Speech and Phenomena* and *Writing and Difference*.[1] Among other things these texts contain powerful critiques of phenomenology (Husserl), linguistics (Saussure), Lacanian psychoanalysis, and structuralism (Lévi-Strauss).

In this chapter I give an exposition of Derrida's thought. Beginning with an outline of his view of language I give an explanation of what he means by phonocentrism and logocentrism. I then present his arguments against the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan. There are also sections on his 'predecessors' Freud and Nietzsche and an account of how they have influenced Derrida's thinking on reading texts and the nature of metaphor. After that I examine some metaphors in common use. Finally, after situating metaphor in the context of political and ideological struggle, I discuss the relationship between deconstruction and Marxism.

The instability of language

In trying to understand Derrida's work one of the most important

concepts to grasp is the idea of '*sous rature*', a term usually translated as 'under erasure'. To put a term '*sous rature*' is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. The idea is this: since the word is inaccurate, or, rather, inadequate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary it remains legible. This strategically important device which Derrida uses derives from Martin Heidegger, who often crossed out the word Being (like this: ~~Being~~) and let both deletion and word stand because the word was *inadequate yet necessary*. Heidegger felt that Being cannot be contained by, is always prior to, indeed transcends, signification. Being is the final signified to which all signifiers refer, the 'transcendental signified'.

In Derrida's view of language the signifier is not directly related to the signified. There is no one-to-one set of corrrespondences between them. In Saussurean thought a sign is seen as a unity, but in Derrida's view word and thing or thought never in fact become one. He sees the sign as a structure of difference: half of it is always 'not there' and the other half is always 'not that'. Signifiers and signified are continually breaking apart and reattaching in new combinations, thus revealing the inadequacy of Saussure's model of the sign, according to which the signifier and signified relate as if they were two sides of the same sheet of paper. Indeed, there is no fixed distinction between signifiers and signified. If one answers a child's question or consults a dictionary, one soon finds that one sign leads to another and so on, indefinitely. Signifiers keep transforming into signifieds, and vice versa, and you never arrive at a final signified which is not a signifier in itself.

In other words, Derrida argues that when we read a sign, meaning is not immediately clear to us. Signs refer to what is absent, so in a sense meanings are absent, too. Meaning is continually moving along on a chain of signifiers, and we cannot be precise about its exact 'location', because it is never tied to one particular sign.

Now, for Derrida the structure of the sign is determined by the trace (the French meaning carries strong implications of track, footprint, imprint) of that other which is forever absent. This other is, of course, never to be found in its full being. Rather like the answer to a child's question or a definition in a dictionary, one sign leads to another and so on indefinitely . . .

What is the implication of this? That the projected 'end' of knowledge could ever coincide with its 'means' is an impossible dream of plenitude. No one can make the 'means' (the sign) and the 'end' (meaning) become identical. Sign will always lead to sign, one substituting the other as

signifier and signified in turn. For Derrida the sign cannot be taken as a homogeneous unit bridging an origin (referent) and an end (meaning), as semiology, the study of signs, would have it. The sign must be studied 'under erasure', always already inhabited by the trace of another sign which never appears as such.

In addition, language is a temporal process. When I read a sentence its meaning often does not emerge until the end of the sentence; and even then the meaning can be modified by later signifiers. In each sign there are traces of other words which that sign has excluded in order to be itself. And words contain the trace of the ones which have gone before. All words/signs contain traces. They are like reminders of what has gone before. Every word in a sentence, every sign in a chain of meaning, has these traces in an inexhaustible complexity.

Meaning is never identical with itself; because a sign appears in different contexts it is never absolutely the same. Meaning will never stay quite the same from context to context; the signified will be altered by the various chains of signifiers in which it is entangled.

The implication of this is that language is a much less stable affair than was thought by structuralists such as Lévi-Strauss. None of the elements is absolutely definable; everything is caught up and traced through by everything else. Eagleton explains: 'Nothing is ever fully present in signs. It is an illusion for me to believe that I can ever be fully present to you in what I say or write, because to use signs at all entails my meaning being always somehow dispersed, divided and never quite at one with itself. Not only my meaning, indeed, but I myself: since language is something I am made out of, rather than a convenient tool I use, the whole idea that I am a stable, unified entity must also be a fiction.'[2]

Phonocentrism–logocentrism

Derrida is mainly concerned with the role and function of language and is famous for having developed a procedure called deconstruction. This is a method of reading a text so closely that the author's conceptual distinctions on which the text relies are shown to fail on account of the inconsistent and paradoxical use made of these very concepts within the text as a whole. In other words, the text is seen to fail by its own criteria; the standards or definitions which the text sets up are used reflexively to

unsettle and shatter the original distinctions. Derrida has used this technique against Husserl, Rousseau, Saussure, Plato, Freud and others; but the method can be applied to any text.

The method of deconstruction is connected with what Derrida calls the 'metaphysics of presence'. It is Derrida's contention that Husserl, along with almost all other philosophers, relies on the assumption of an immediately available area of certainty. The origin and foundation of most philosophers' theories is presence. In Husserl's case the search for the form of pure expression is at the same time a search for that which is immediately present; thus implicitly, by being present in an unmediated way and present to itself, it is undeniably certain.

Derrida, however, denies the possibility of this presence and in so doing removes the ground from which philosophers have in general proceeded. By denying presence, Derrida is denying that there is a present in the sense of a single definable moment which is 'now'. For most people the present is the province of the known. We may be unsure of what took place in the past, of what may take place in the future, or of what is taking place elsewhere, but we rely on our knowledge of the present, the here and now – the present perceptual world as we are experiencing it. By challenging access to the present Derrida poses a threat to both positivism and phenomenology.

Husserl made an important distinction in *The Logical Investigations* between expression and indication. The expression, linked to the intention of the speaker, is what we might call the pure meaning of the sign, and as such is distinguished from indication, which has a pointing function and could occur without any intentional meaning. Now, Derrida has argued that pure expression will always involve an indicative element. Indication can never be successfully excluded from expression. Signs cannot refer to something totally other than themselves. There is no signified which is independent of the signifier. There is no realm of meaning which can be isolated from the marks which are used to point to it.

Having argued that a realm of the independent signified does not exist, Derrida concludes, first, that no particular sign can be regarded as referring to any particular signified and, second, that we are unable to escape the system of signifiers. In combination these conclusions imply that there can be no unqualified presence.

Now, it is because of the assumption of presence that a priority has been given to speech over writing. Derrida calls this phonocentrism. Speech has been regarded as prior because it is closer to the possibility

of presence. It is closer because speech implies immediacy. In speech meaning is apparently immanent, above all when, using the inner voice of consciousness, we speak to ourselves. In the moment of speech we appear to grasp its meaning and are thereby able to capture presence, as if the meaning was decided once and for all. Thus, unlike writing, which is hopelessly mediated, speech is linked to the apparent moment and place of presence and for this reason has had priority over writing. For Derrida, therefore, phonocentrism is one of the effects of presence. Derrida's attempt to deconstruct the opposition betwen speech and writing is linked to the uncovering of the metaphysics of presence as a whole.

Derrida has also criticized Saussure for prescribing that linguistics should be a study of speech alone rather than of speech and writing. This is an emphasis shared by Jakobson, by Lévi-Strauss, indeed by all semiological structuralists. Derrida suggests in *Of Grammatology* that this rejection of writing as an appendage, a mere technique and yet a menace built into speech – in effect, a scapegoat – is a symptom of a much broader tendency. He relates this phonocentrism to logocentrism, the belief that the first and last thing is the Logos, the Word, the Divine Mind, the *self-presence of full self-consciousness*.

Derrida suggests that Husserl found evidence for self-presence in the voice (*phone*) – not the 'real' voice, but the principle of the voice in our interior soliloquy: 'When I speak I hear myself. I hear and understand at the same time that I speak.' Husserl's model of meaningful speech is the silent conversation of consciousness with itself in solitary mental life.

Speech is thought of as remaining closer to psychic interiority than writing which symbolizes interiority only at one remove. When I speak, I seem to be truly myself. My spoken words seem to come from me, my true, or real being. Writing does not seem to be so direct, so natural or sincere. Compared with speech writing seems mechanical, second-hand, a transcript of speech. Writing can be seen as deriving from speech because it is thought of as purely phonetic transcription. Derrida argues that from Plato to Heidegger and Lévi-Strauss, the Western philosophical tradition has downgraded writing as if it were artificial and alienated compared with the immediacy and vivacity of the human voice. (This will be discussed in the next section when we consider Derrida's examination of specific texts by Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss.) Behind this bias is a particular view of human beings; it is assumed that they can spontaneously express themselves and that they can use language as

if it were a transparent medium for an inner truth about their being. What this theory fails to see is that speaking could be just as much said to be a second-hand form of writing as writing is said to be an inferior form of speaking.

One of Derrida's main concerns has been this privileging of voice as the medium of meaning and the consequent dismissal of writing as a derivative form of expression. Western philosophy has focused on speech, it has emphasized the voice. In this tradition the phenomenological structure of the voice is regarded as the most immediate evidence of self-presence. Besides being 'phonocentric', Western philosophy is also 'logocentric'. Derrida uses the term 'logocentric' as a substitute for metaphysics in order to foreground that which has determined metaphysical systems of thought: their dependence on a *logos*. Western philosophy assumes that there is an essence, or truth which acts as the foundation of all our beliefs; hence there seems to be a disposition, a longing, for a 'transcendental signifier' which would directly relate, correspond, to a secure stable 'transcendental signified' (i.e. a *logos*). Examples of such signs include: Idea, Matter, the World Spirit, God, etc. Each of these concepts acts as the foundation of a system of thought and forms an axis around which all other signs circulate. Derrida argues that any such transcendental meaning is a fiction.

There are certain signifieds or meanings attached to such signifiers as Authority, Freedom, Order which are highly valued in society. Sometimes we think of these meanings as if they were the origin of all the others. But it could be argued that for these meanings to have been possible, other signs must already have been in existence in the first place. Whenever we think of an origin we often want to go back to an even earlier starting point. But these meanings are not always seen in terms of origin, they are often seen in terms of goals, towards which all other meanings are advancing. Conceiving of things in terms of their orientation towards a *telos* or end point – teleology – is a way of organizing meanings in a hierarchy of significance.

Derrida calls 'metaphysical' any thought-system which depends on a foundation, a ground, or a first principle. First principles are often defined by what they exclude, by a sort of 'binary opposition' to other concepts. These principles and their implied 'binary opposites' can always be deconstructed.

Derrida argues that all the conceptual oppositions of metaphysics have for ultimate reference the presence of a present. (He often uses the word 'metaphysics' as shorthand for 'being as presence'.) For Derrida

the binary oppositions of metaphysics include: signifier/signified, sensible/intelligible, speech/writing, speech (*parole*)/language (*langue*), diachrony/synchrony, space/time, passivity/activity. One of his criticisms of the structuralists, as we shall see, is that they have not put these concepts 'under erasure', that they have not put these binary oppositions into question.

What are binary oppositions? They are a way of seeing, rather like ideologies. We know that ideologies draw sharp distinctions between conceptual opposites such as truth and falsity, meaning and nonsense, centre and periphery. Derrida suggests that we should try to break down the oppositions by which we are accustomed to think and which ensure the survival of metaphysics in our thinking: matter/spirit, subject/object, veil/truth, body/soul, text/meaning, interior/exterior, representation/presence, appearance/essence, etc. Derrida's importance is that he has suggested a method whereby we can subvert these oppositions and show that one term relies on and inheres within the other.

Derrida argues that phonocentrism–logocentrism relates to centrism itself – the human desire to posit a 'central' presence at beginning and end. He states that it is this longing for a centre, an authorizing pressure, that spawns hierarchized oppositions. The superior term in these oppositions belongs to presence and the logos, the inferior serves to define its status and mark a fall. The oppositions between intelligible and sensible, soul and body, seem to have lasted out 'the history of Western philosophy', bequeathing their burden to modern linguistics with its opposition between meaning and word. The opposition between speech and writing takes its place within this pattern.

Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss

Derrida writes that many philosophers throughout history use the opposition nature/culture. It is often stated that archaic man, living in an innocent state of nature, comes upon a danger or insufficiency of one sort or another bringing about a need or desire for community. In the evolution of human beings from nature to society the latter stage of existence is pictured as an addition to the original happy stage of nature. In other words, culture supplements nature. Before long culture comes to take the place of nature. Culture, then, functions as a supplement in two ways: it adds and it substitutes. At the same time it is potentially both

detrimental and beneficial. The structure of the nature/culture opposition repeats itself in other traditional polarities: for example, health/disease, purity/contamination, good/evil, speech/writing. The first term in each opposition traditionally constitutes the privileged entity, the better state.

Derrida argues that when Rousseau describes an event or phenomenon he invariably ends up relying on the supplement. Although nature is declared to be self-sufficient it needs culture. (In a similar way education for Rousseau aids the insufficiencies of the untrained intellect.) It is suggested by Derrida that there is no original, unsupplemented nature but that nature is always already a supplemented entity. This device, *sous rature*, indicates the equivocal status of the term erased, warning, as I suggested earlier, the reader not to accept the word at face value. The marks of erasure acknowledge both the inadequacy of the terms employed – their highly provisional status – and the fact that thought simply cannot manage without them. Similarly, Derrida has a mistrust of metaphysical language but accepts the necessity to work within that language.

Rousseau believed that speech was the originary, the healthiest and the most natural condition of language; writing was merely derivative and somehow debilitating. What Derrida does (by a close analysis of Rousseau's texts, particularly the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*) is to show that Rousseau contradicts himself, so that, far from proving speech to be the origin of language – and writing merely a parasitic growth – his essay confirms the priority of writing. In other words, Rousseau's text confesses what he is at such pains to deny; his text cannot mean what it says or literally say what it means.

The theme of lost innocence is also to be found in the work of Lévi-Strauss, to which I now turn. However before I outline Derrida's criticism of Lévi-Strauss, it may be useful to go over the main features of the latter's structuralist approach. Structuralism, an attempt to isolate the general structures of human activity, found its main analogies in linguistics. It is well known that structural linguistics performs four *basic* operations: it shifts from the study of conscious linguistic phenomena to the study of their unconscious infrastructure; second, it does not treat terms as independent entities, taking instead as its basis of analysis the relations between terms; third, it introduces the concept of system; finally, it aims at discovering general laws.

What are Derrida's criticisms of structuralism? Firstly, he doubts the possibility of general laws. Secondly, he questions the opposition of the

subject and the object, upon which the possibility of objective descriptions rests. In his view the description of the object is contaminated by the patterns of the subject's desire. Thirdly, he questions the structure of binary oppositions. He invites us to undo the need for balanced equations, to see if each term in an opposition is not, after all, an accomplice of the other.

The structuralism of Lévi-Strauss can be characterized as a search for invariant structures or formal universals which reflect the nature of human intelligence. This approach lends support to the traditional idea of the text as a bearer of stable meanings and the critic as a faithful seeker after truth in the text. Derrida suggests that when Lévi-Strauss describes the life of the Nambikwara and their transition to civilization he takes upon himself the burden of guilt produced by this encounter between civilization and the 'innocent' culture it ceaselessly exploits.[3] Lévi-Strauss gives expression, like Rousseau, to an eloquent longing for the lost primordial unity of speech before writing. Writing for Lévi-Strauss is an instrument of oppression, means of colonizing the primitive mind. In Derrida's view there is no pure 'authenticity' as Lévi-Strauss imagines; the theme of lost innocence is a romantic illusion.

Derrida's critique of Lévi-Strauss follows much the same path as his deconstructive readings of Saussure and Rousseau.[4] Once again it is a matter of taking a repressed theme, pursuing its textual ramifications and showing how these subvert the very order that strives to hold them in check. The 'nature' which Rousseau identifies with a pure, unmediated speech, and Lévi-Strauss with the dawn of tribal awareness, expresses nostalgia for lost innocence, an illusory metaphysics of presence which ignores the self-alienating character of all social existence.

Derrida situates the project of Lévi-Strauss (like those of Saussure and Lacan) in logocentrism. One of the central problems of anthropology is the passage from nature to culture. Derrida argues that Lévi-Strauss regularly and symptomatically ends up privileging the state of nature over culture. He appears sentimental and nostalgic, trapped in a Rousseauistic dream of innocent and natural primitive societies. Beneath the guilt and nostalgia, endemic to the field of anthropology, lies a Western ethnocentrism masking itself as liberal and humane anti-ethnocentrism.

As for writing, Lévi-Strauss conceptualizes it as a late cultural arrival, a supplement to speech, an external instrument. Speech is endowed with all the metaphorical attributes of life and healthy vitality, writing with dark connotations of violence and death.[5]

Derrida has made similar comments on Saussure. He has criticized Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* for the sharp distinction which it maintains between the signifier and the signified, a distinction which is congruent with the traditional opposition of matter and spirit, or substance and thought. (Traditionally, this opposition has always been elaborated in ways which privilege spirit and/or thought as something that precedes matter or substance.) Derrida suggests that the distinction between signifier and signified can only be maintained if one term is believed to be final, incapable of referring beyond itself to any other term. If there is no such term, then every signified functions in turn as a signifier, in an endless play of signification.

Derrida, in short, is critical of Saussure's notion of the sign and argues that the traditional concept of signifier and signified rests firmly within the phonocentric–logocentric *episteme*. One of the characteristics of the logocentric epoch is that there is a general debasement of writing and a preference for phonetic writing (writing as imitated speech). There is, then, a rooted Western prejudice which tries to reduce writing to a stable meaning equated with the character of speech. It is widely held that in spoken language meaning is 'present' to the speaker through an act of inward self-surveillance which assures a perfect, intuitive 'fit' between intention and utterance.

Derrida demonstrates that in Saussurian linguistics privilege is granted to speech as opposed to written language. Voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity, a source of self-present 'living' speech as opposed to the secondary, lifeless emanations of writing. Writing is systematically degraded and is seen as a threat to the traditional view that associates truth with self-presence. This repression of writing lies deep in Saussure's proposed methodology and shows in his refusal to consider any form of linguistic notation outside the phonetic-alphabetical script of Western culture. Against this view Derrida argues that writing is, in fact, the precondition of language and must be conceived as prior to speech. Writing is the 'free play' or element of undecidability within every system of communication.

It should be pointed out that for Derrida 'writing' does not refer to the empirical concept of writing (which denotes an intelligible system of notations on a material substance); writing is the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace. This broadening of the term, Derrida argues, was made possible by Sigmund Freud.

Freud and Lacan

Derrida argues that it is no accident that when Freud tried to describe the workings of the psyche he had recourse to metaphorical models which are borrowed not from spoken language but from *writing*.[6] (This, of course, raises the question of what a text is and what the psyche must be like if it can be represented by a text.)

At first, from about the time of 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' (1895), Freud used mechanical models, but these were soon discarded. As Freud moved from neurological to psychical modes of explanation he began increasingly to refer to metaphors of optical mechanisms. Then, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud thought it more appropriate to compare dreams with a system of writing than with spoken language. In order to suggest the strangeness of the logico-temporal relations in dreams Freud constantly referred to alphabetic writing as well as non-phonetic writing (pictographs, rebuses, hieroglyphics) in general. Dream symbols, he wrote, frequently have more than one or even several meanings and, as with Chinese script, the correct interpretation can only be arrived at on each occasion from the context.

Later, in 'Note on the Mystic Writing Pad' (1925), Freud used a writing apparatus as a metaphor for the working of the psyche. A child's toy had come on the market under the name of the Mystic Writing Pad. You may have come across a modern version of it. Basically, it consisted of a celluloid covering-sheet which rested upon a wax slab. One could write on it with a pointed stylus and the writing could be erased by raising the double covering sheet by a little pull, starting from the free lower end. The pad, cleared of writing, is thus ready to receive fresh messages. Freud argued that its construction was very much like that of the perceptual apparatus. It had an ever-ready receptive surface and could retain permanent traces of the inscriptions made on it; the wax slab, in fact, represented the unconscious.

In short, Freud found in the Mystic Writing Pad a model that would contain the problematics of the psyche – a virgin surface that still retained permanent traces. The Freudian argument is that the establishment of permanent traces in the psychic apparatus precludes the possibility of immediate perception. In other words, we have 'memory-traces', marks which are not a part of conscious memory, which may be energized into consciousness long afterwards and so affect us.

Derrida's chief interest in Freudian psychoanalysis lies in the fact that

it teaches and uses a certain method of deciphering texts. Freud lists the four techniques used by the 'dream-work' of the psychic apparatus to distort or refract the 'forbidden' dream-thoughts, to produce the picto-graphic script of the dream: condensation, displacement, considerations of representability and secondary revision. Condensation and displace-ment may be rhetorically translated as metaphor and metonymy. The third item on the list refers to the technique which distorts an idea so that it can be presented as an image. Secondary revision is a psychic force that smooths over contradictions and creates an apparent connectedness.

Freud suggested that the verbal text is constituted by concealment as much as by revelation. Freud suggests that where the subject is not in control of the text, where the text looks very smooth or very clumsy, is where readers should fix their gaze. Derrida develops this further; he suggests that we should fasten upon a small but tell-tale moment in the text which harbours the author's sleight of hand and which cannot be dismissed simply as contradiction. We should examine that passage where we can provisionally locate the moment when the text transgresses the laws it apparently sets up for itself, and thus unravel – deconstruct – the very text.

Freud's greatest contemporary interpreter is Jacques Lacan. Let me briefly remind you of the key features of Lacan's thought before outlining Derrida's critique of it. Like Freud, Lacan denies that there is a difference in kind between 'the normal' and 'the abnormal'. Moreover, he rejects the work of those American psychologists who stress that the ego is the primary determinant of the psyche. In his view 'the subject' can never be a total personality and is forever divided from the object of its desire. Lacan goes on to define the unconscious in terms of the structure of a language. This extends Freud in a direction that Derrida would endorse, but, nevertheless, the relationship between these thinkers is an uneasy one.

It would seem to an outside observer that Lacan and Derrida have a lot in common: they are both deeply concerned with anti-positivist theories of language and are highly aware of language's metaphoricity. Secondly, both thinkers have been influenced by Freud's theories of the unconscious and the dream as a text. This means that they are interested in (ways of) 'reading' and (styles of) 'writing'. Thirdly, they both draw attention, as did Freud, to the relationship between nature and culture.

And so, why is there an uneasy relationship between them? Derrida argues that the goal of Lacanian analysis is to draw out and establish 'the

truth' of the subject, and it appears to him that in spite of giving to the unconscious the structure of a language Lacan has entrenched some of Freud's (metaphysical) suggestions by making the unconscious the source of 'truth'. Derrida believes that Lacan sees himself as unveiling 'the true' Freud and is sceptical of Lacan's notions of 'truth' and 'authenticity', seeing them as remnants of a post-war existentialist ethic, the unacknowledged debts to Hegelian phenomenology.

Derrida believes that Lacan simplifies Freud's text. In Lacanian analysis the truth (logos) systematically shines forth as spoken or voiced. Psychoanalysis remains 'the talking cure' founded on spoken truth.[7] Derrida cautions us that when we learn to reject the notion of the primacy of the signified (of meaning over word) we should not satisfy our longing for transcendence by giving primacy to the signifier (word over meaning). He feels that Lacan has done precisely this.

I stated earlier that Derrida is attempting to subvert the logocentric theory of the sign. Traditionally, the signifier refers to the signified, that is, an acoustic image signifies an ideal concept, both of which are present to consciousness. The signifier 'dog' indicates the idea 'dog'; the real dog, the referent, is not present. In Derrida's view *the sign marks an absent presence*. Rather than present the object we employ the sign; however, the meaning of the sign is always postponed or deferred.

Derrida has developed a concept which he calls 'différance' and which refers to 'to differ' – to be unlike or dissimilar in nature, quality or form – and to 'to defer' – to delay, to postpone (the French verb *différer* has both these meanings). Spoken French makes no phonetic distinction between the endings '-ance' and '-ence'; the word registers as *différence*. This undetected difference shows up only in writing.

The advent of the concept of writing, then, is a challenge to the very idea of structure; for a structure always presumes a centre, a fixed principle, a hierarchy of meaning and a solid foundation; and it is just these notions which the endless differing and deferring of writing throws into question.

As we have seen, Derrida's analysis of Husserl led him to portray language as an endless play of signifiers. Once an independent signified was abandoned signifiers referred to other signifiers which yet again referred to signifiers. Language is thus the play of differences which are generated by signifiers which are themselves the product of those differences. Derrida incorporates into the meaning of *différance* the sense of deferring. *Différance* is itself endlessly deferred.

Nietzsche and metaphor

Derrida's acknowledged 'precursors' were Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger. They all felt a need for the strategy of *'sous rature'*. Heidegger put 'Being' under erasure, Freud 'the psyche', and Nietzsche 'knowing'.[8] It seems that post-structuralists such as Derrida have not so much followed in Nietzsche's footsteps as rediscovered his philosophical stance, a stance that owes its character to an all-pervasive reflexivity.

The current emphasis on reflexivity (a form of self-awareness, a turning back on oneself) is in part due to a critical shift of focus from the individual subject to the text. Thus from Nietzsche to Derrida we see the human subject – traditionally the focus of philosophical thought as the place of experience, morality, choice and will – gradually abandoned.

Derrida suggests that the main characteristics of Nietzsche's work are a systematic mistrust of metaphysics and a suspicion of the values of 'truth' and 'meaning'. Many cultural relativists believe that, although we may interpret the world differently according to our social context, there is a single world which we are all interpreting. For Nietzsche, however, there is no single physical reality beyond our interpretations. There are only perspectives.

Rooted in Nietzsche's philosophy is the implicit stance that there are no final conclusions; the text can never be fixed and as a result it can never be deciphered either. Nietzsche believes that we are unable to escape the constraints of language and thus have no alternative but to operate within language. He is aware of the reflexive problem: if we say 'we are trapped within language and its concepts', that claim is in itself, of course, part of language. We wish to express our 'trappedness' but we are unable to do so other than in the very concepts which trap us. The original thought therefore eludes us, for if we could express it, we would not, after all, be trapped.[9]

Nietzsche, then, was deeply aware of the problem that one is bound by one's perspective. One of his ways of coping with this was by the strategy of intersubstituting opposites. If one is always bound by one's perspective, one can at least deliberately reverse perspectives as often as possible, in the process undoing opposed perspectives, showing that the two terms of an opposition are merely accomplices of each other. In this way Nietzsche problematized, for example, the opposition between 'metaphor' and 'concept', 'body' and 'mind'. I mention this because

Nietzsche's undoing of opposites is rather like Derrida's undoing of them as a part of deconstructive practice.

For Nietzsche there is no possibility of a literal, true, self-identical meaning. (Derrida, too, is deeply committed to the view that philosophical discourse is something to be deciphered.) Nietzsche described the figurative drive as the impulse towards the formation of metaphors. Every idea, he said, originates through an equating of the unequal. Metaphor is the establishing of an identity between dissimilar things:

> What, therefore, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions . . . coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal.[10]

In his later work Nietzsche gave this figurative drive the name 'will to power'. Our so-called will to truth is the will to power because the so-called drive for knowledge can be traced back to a drive to appropriate and conquer. Sometimes Nietzsche places this abstract will to power, an incessant figuration, not under the control of any knowing subject but rather in the unconscious. Indeed, for Nietzsche the important main activity is unconscious, that is, it takes place in that vast arena of the mind of which the so-called 'subject' knows nothing. Derrida has remarked that both Nietzsche and Freud questioned, often in a very similar way, the self-assured certitude of consciousness.

In many ways, then, Nietzsche anticipates both the style and the strategy of Derrida's writing. Nietzsche held that philosophy from Plato to the present had suppressed the fact that language is radically metaphorical in character. Philosophy utilized metaphors but disguised this fact. All philosophies, whatever their claim to logic or reason, rested on a shifting texture of figurative language, the signs of which were systematically repressed. In Nietzsche's view the Sophists, a school of rhetorician-philosophers in ancient Greece, came closer to wisdom by implicitly acknowledging what Socrates has to deny: that thinking is always and inseparably bound to the rhetorical devices that support it.

Following Nietzsche, Derrida makes the point that all language is ineradicably metaphorical, working by tropes and figures. It is a mistake to believe that any language is literally literal. Literary works are in a sense less deluded than other forms of discourse, because they implicitly acknowledge their own rhetorical status. Other forms of

writing are just as figurative and ambiguous but pass themselves off as unquestionable truth.

One of the implications of this view is that literature can no longer be seen as a kind of poor relation to philosophy. There is no clear division between literature and philosophy, nor between 'criticism' and 'creation'. Since metaphors are essentially 'groundless', mere substitutions of one set of signs for another, language tends to betray its own fictive and arbitrary nature at just those points where it is offering to be most intensively persuasive. In short, philosophy, law and political theory work by metaphor just as poems do, and so are just as fictional.

Understanding metaphor

The study of metaphor is becoming important as it is being realized that language does not simply reflect reality but helps to constitute it. Attention is now being increasingly given to how rhetorical devices shape our experience and our judgements, how language serves to promote the possibilities of certain kinds of action and exclude the practicability of others.

In the past, metaphor was often studied as an aspect of the expressive function of language, but it is actually one of the essential conditions of speech. Language works by means of transference from one kind of reality to another and is thus essentially metaphorical. Some people have urged that technical and scientific language should be purged of metaphor but, as we have seen, metaphorical expressions are rooted in language itself. For example, we habitually think of organizations spatially, in terms of up and down. We tend to think of theories as though they were buildings, and so we talk of foundations, frameworks, etc. 'Base' and 'superstructure' are fundamental concepts in Marxism. As Derrida has shown, even philosophy is permeated with metaphor without knowing it.

Meaning shifts around, and metaphor is the name of the process by which it does so. It is a threat to orderly language and allows for the proliferation of meaning. First, there is no limit to the number of metaphors for any given idea. Second, metaphor is a sort of rhetorical double-bind, which states one thing but requires you to understand something different. (I found it interesting to learn that many schizophrenics cling to the literal and avoid metaphors because these are ultimately undecidable.) Metaphors evoke relationships and the

making of the relationships is very much the task of the hearer or reader. Indeed, understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavour as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules. Metaphor is ubiquitous and ineradicable.

I want to stress the point that metaphors are not just the concern of the poet or the literary critic, not just figures of speech; they represent one of the ways in which many kinds of discourse are structured and powerfully influence how we conceive things. I would like you to consider for a moment the metaphor 'time is money'. In our culture time is money in many ways; we calculate telephone calls, hourly wages, interests on loans. But not only do we *act* as if time is a valuable commodity, we also *conceive* of time that way. 'I don't have the time to give you.' 'How do you spend your time these days?' Thus we understand and experience time as the kind of thing that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, invested wisely or foolishly, saved or squandered. 'Time is money', 'time is a limited resource' and 'time is a valuable commodity' are all metaphorical concepts. They are metaphorical since we are using our everyday experiences with money, limited resources and valuable commodities to conceptualize time. But this is not the only way in which human beings may conceptualize time; it is tied to our culture. There are cultures where time is none of these things.

Let us consider another example: the organizing metaphors surrounding work and leisure. One does a full day's work; one is in or out of work. Leisure time, on the other hand, is to be filled; holiday weekends are breaks between work. We associate the metaphor of work with plenitude, with something of importance, and that of leisure with emptiness, with a vacuum. The metaphors reinforce the idea of life as first and foremost the life of work, while activities outside of it belong to the frivolous and not to the main business of life. Metaphors like these are particularly insidious since they are so interwoven into our speech that their flavour of metaphor is lost upon speakers and hearers.

The politics of metaphor

Our ordinary language is saturated with metaphor. For example, in our society argument is in part structured, understood, performed and talked about in terms of war. There is a position to be established and defended, you can win or lose, you have an opponent whose position you attack and try to destroy and whose argument you try to shoot down. The

language of argument is, basically, the language of physical combat. That 'argument is war' is built into the conceptual system of the culture in which we live. Lakoff and Johnson have pointed out that it need not be so; that one can easily imagine societies in which argument is conceived differently – for example as theatrical performance.[11] In such a society both argument itself and the criteria for success or failure in argument would be quite unlike our own.

Some metaphors, in certain historical periods, have been liberating. The historian Christopher Hill has described how in the seventeenth century nature came to be thought of as a machine to be understood, controlled and improved upon by knowledge.[12] Nature as a machine was (at that time) a tremendously exciting, liberating idea. Human beings were freed from Providence or divine will and could not only understand the world better but could begin to change it.

I think that the creative or imaginative aspect of sociological theories often lies in their use of metaphor. Parsons likens society to a biological organism; Marx uses the metaphor of a building, the base and superstructure; Goffman uses the metaphor of a stage 'performance'. Metaphors serve to draw attention not only to similarities but to differences. As the theory develops and becomes more precise, concepts emerge that sometimes have little to do with the original metaphor.

An influential post-structuralist thinker, the late Michel Foucault (whose work on the social sciences and the relations between power and knowledge will be discussed in the next chapter), was particularly fond of using 'geographical' metaphors such as territory, domain, soil, horizon, archipelago, geopolitics, region, landscape. He also makes profuse use of spatial metaphors – position, displacement, site, field. Althusser, too, in *Reading Capital* uses many spatial metaphors (terrain, space, site, etc.). Foucault suggests that, since Bergson perhaps, there has been a devaluation of space. Space has been treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile; time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic. But to talk in terms of space does not mean that one is hostile to time. Althusser believed that the use of spatial metaphors in his work was necessary but at the same time regressive, non-rigorous. Foucault, on the other hand, was more positive. He said that *it is through these spatial obsessions that he came to what he was looking for*: the relations that are possible between power and knowledge. 'Once knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which

knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power.'[13]

I believe that metaphors determine to a large extent what we can think in any field. Metaphors are not idle flourishes – they shape what we do. They can help to make, and defend, a world view. It is important that the implications of the metaphors we employ or accept are made explicit and that the ways in which they structure our thought and even our action are better understood. I also want to stress that metaphors can be productive of new insights and fresh illuminations. They can promote unexpected or subtle parallels or analogies. Metaphors can encapsulate and put forward proposals for another way of looking at things. Through metaphor we can have an increased awareness of alternative possible worlds.

Deconstruction and Marxism

The metaphor most often used by deconstructionists is that of the palimpsest; reading texts resembles the X-raying of pictures which discovers, under the epidermis of the last painting, another hidden picture. Deconstructive criticism takes the 'metaphoric' structure of a text seriously. Since metaphors are not reducible to truth, their own structures 'as such' are part of the text. The deconstructive procedure is to spot the point where a text covers up its grammatical structure. Gayatri Spivak puts it like this:

> If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbour an unresolvable contradiction, and by virtue of being one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word. If a metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures through the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability.[14]

Derrida has provided a method of 'close-reading' a 'text' very similar to psychoanalytic approaches to neurotic symptoms. Deconstructive 'close-reading', having 'interrogated' the text, breaks through its defences and shows that a set of binary oppositions can be found 'inscribed' within it. In each of the pairs, private/public, masculine/ feminine, same/other, rational/irrational, true/false, central/peripheral, etc., the first term is privileged. Deconstructors show that the

'privileged' term depends for its identity on its excluding the other and demonstrate that primacy really belongs to the subordinate term instead.

Derrida's procedure is to examine the minute particulars of an undecidable moment, nearly imperceptible displacements, that might otherwise escape the reader's eye. He tries to locate not a moment of ambiguity or irony ultimately incorporated into the text's system of unified meaning but rather a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system. Derrida's method is not that of Hegel. Hegel's idealist method consists in resolving by sublation the contradictions between the binary oppositions.

Derrida stresses the point that it is not enough simply to neutralize the binary oppositions of metaphysics. Deconstruction involves reversal and displacement. Within the familiar philosophical oppositions there is always a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms controls the other, holds the superior position. The first move in deconstructing the opposition is to overthrow the hierarchy. In the next phase this reversal must be displaced, the winning term put 'under erasure'. Deconstruction, then, is the attempt

> to locate the promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier, to reverse the resident hierarchy, only to displace it; to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed.[15]

Before making some critical remarks, let me try to sum up. Derrida has made a close study of many philosophers: Nietzsche, Rousseau, Husserl, Heidegger and others. He argues that they have been able to impose their various systems of thought only by ignoring or suppressing the disruptive effects of language. One of the ruling illusions of Western metaphysics is that reason can somehow grasp the world without a close attention to language and arrive at a pure, self-authenticating truth or method. Derrida's work draws attention to the ways in which language deflects the philosopher's project. He does this by focusing on metaphors and other figurative devices at work in the texts of philosophy. In this way Derrida underlines the rhetorical nature of philosophical arguments.

Deconstruction stresses the irreducibility of metaphor, the difference at play within the very constitution of literal meaning. It should be remembered that deconstruction is not simply a strategic reversal of categories which otherwise remain distinct and unaffected. It is an

activity of reading in which texts must be read in a radically new way. There must be an awareness of ambivalence, of the discrepancy between meaning and the author's assertion. Derrida discovers a set of paradoxical themes at odds with their manifest argument. His method consists of showing how the privileged term is held in place by the force of a dominant metaphor and not, as it might seem, by any conclusive logic.[16] Metaphors often disrupt the logic of an argument.

Derrida writes that we have a metaphysical desire to make the end coincide with the means, create an enclosure, make the definition coincide with the defined, the 'father' with the 'son'; within the logic of identity to balance the equation, close the circle. In short, he is asking us to change certain habits of mind; he is telling us that the authority of the text is provisional, the origin is a trace. Contradicting logic, we must learn to use and erase our language at the same time. Derrida wants us to 'erase' all oppositions, undoing yet preserving them.

Deconstructionists tend to say that if a text seems to refer beyond itself, that reference can finally be only to another text. Just as signs refer only to other signs, texts can refer only to other texts, generating an intersecting and indefinitely expandable web called *intertextuality*. There is a proliferation of interpretations, and no interpretation can claim to be the final one. Now, Derrida is sometimes taken to be denying the possibility of truth. This is not so. It is more plausible to think of him as trying to avoid assertions about the nature of truth.

The usual superficial criticism of Derrida is that he questions the value of 'truth' and 'logic' and yet uses logic to demonstrate the truth of his own arguments. The point is that the overt concern of Derrida's writing is the predicament of having to use the resources of the heritage that he questions.

Derrida's work confronts us with many problems. Having argued that there cannot be a realm of the signified independent of the signifier, he opens up the vista of an endless play of signifiers that refer not to signifieds but to other signifiers, so that meaning is always ultimately undecidable. Derrida gives as an example of undecidability Plato's frequent presentation of writing as a drug, *pharmakon*. This Greek word can mean either 'poison' or 'cure' and, as with a drug, which way it is taken (translated) makes a lot of difference. Consider another important case of undecidability: an isolated note found among Nietzsche's unpublished manuscripts, a single sentence in quotation marks: 'I have forgotten my umbrella.' In a sense, we all know what this phrase means, and yet we have no idea of what its meaning is in this instance. Is it a

jotting to himself, a citation, or a phrase overheard and noted for further use? Perhaps the umbrella is seen as some sort of defence, a protection from the weather? Nietzsche, on the verge of breakdown, has left his defences behind; caught in a rainstorm, he has forgotten his umbrella. Of course, it could also be analysed in Freudian terms, as psychoanalysis often focuses on the significance of forgetting and phallic objects. 'I have forgotten my umbrella': the phrase is undecidable. This illustration could be a metaphor for the whole of Derrida's text.

As we saw with Derrida's work on Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, deconstruction questions the self-identity of signifier and signified and the self-presence of the speaking subject and the voiced sign. There is an abandonment of all reference to a centre, to a fixed subject, to a privileged reference, to an origin, to an absolute founding and controlling first principle.

Deconstruction disarticulates traditional conceptions of the author and the work and undermines conventional notions of reading and history. Instead of mimetic, expressive and didactic theories of 'literature' it offers textuality (*écriture*). It kills the author, turns history and tradition into intertextuality and celebrates the reader.[17]

One of the main features of post-structuralist theory is the deconstruction of the self. In place of a unified and stable being or consciousness we get a multifaceted and disintegrating play of selves. The reader, like the text, is unstable. With deconstruction the categories 'criticism', 'philosophy' and 'literature' collapse, borders are overrun. The work, now called 'text', explodes beyond stable meaning and truth towards the radical and ceaseless play of infinite meanings. Critical writing, formerly analytical and coherent, becomes playfully fragmented.

Is this a result of Derrida's view of language? It has been suggested by Terry Eagleton that

> meaning may well be ultimately undecidable if we view language contemplatively, as a chain of signifiers on a page; it becomes 'decidable' and words like 'truth', 'reality', 'knowledge', and 'certainty' have something of their force restored to them when we think of language rather as something we *do*, as indissociably interwoven with our practical forms of life.[18]

The deconstructor's method often consists of deliberately inverting traditional oppositions and marking the play of hitherto invisible concepts that reside unnamed in the gap between opposing terms. In the move from hermeneutics and semiotics to deconstruction there is a shift of focus from identities to differences, unities to fragmentations,

ontology to philosophy of language, epistemology to rhetoric, presence to absence. According to one recent commentator 'deconstruction celebrates dissemination over truth, explosion and fragmentation over unity and coherence, undecidable spaces over prudent closures, playfulness and hysteria over care and rationality'.[19]

It is said that every boundary, limit, division, frame or margin instals a line separating one entity or concept from another. That is to say, every border marks a difference. The question of the border is a question of difference. Derrida writes, 'No border is guaranteed, inside or out.' Applied to texts, this finding becomes 'no meaning can be fixed or decided upon'. According to deconstructionists there is nothing other than interpretation.[20] As there is neither an undifferentiated nor a literal bottom or ground, the activity of interpretation is endless. It is also a fact that every text tends itself to deconstruction and to further deconstruction, with nowhere any end in sight. Finally, no escape outside the logocentric enclosure is possible since the interpreter must use the concepts and figures of the Western metaphysical tradition. The term used to describe the impasse of interpretation ('there is no way out') is aporia. 'The supreme irony of what Derrida has called logocentrism is that its critique, deconstruction, is as insistent, as monotonous and as inadvertently systematizing as logocentrism itself.'[21]

Having given a few criticisms of Derrida and deconstruction, I now want to ask, 'Are his methods allied or opposed to Marxism?' When faced with new approaches such as deconstruction it is very hard to try to work out whether they are useful aids in building a new socialist order or are just other forms of bourgeois recuperation and domination. I think I am right in saying that deconstruction is, for Derrida, ultimately a political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought and, behind that, a whole system of political structures and social institutions maintains its force. But in practice it cannot be denied that his work has been grossly unhistorical and politically evasive.[22] One post-structuralist, Michel Foucault, argued that Derrida's own decision to avoid questions about the extent to which the text arises out of and reflects underlying social practices itself reflects a social practice. He said that by deliberately restricting himself to textual analysis the question of evaluating textual analysis as a social and political practice cannot be raised. In so far as textual undecidability precludes raising questions about truth it perpetuates the status quo.

On the other hand, some commentators have suggested that deconstruction, by unsettling the theories with which we have

surrounded ourselves, serves to indicate that our account of the world could be different but that it cannot tell us how it would be different. Derrida seems to believe that deconstruction is able gradually to shift the structures within which we operate 'little by little to modify the terrain of our work, and thereby produce new figurations'. Is this enough? Is Derrida playing among the webs of language, 'parodying himself, and then parodying the parody'?[23]

Derrida has himself observed that certain American uses of deconstruction work to ensure 'an institutional closure' which serves the dominant political and economic interests of American society. He has also said that Marxist texts are shot through with metaphors disguised as concepts, themes that carry along with them a whole unrecognized baggage of presuppositions. But on the whole Derrida has been silent about Marx – a silence that can be construed as a prolonged postponement, a refusal as yet to engage with Marxist thought.

There are some critics, like Fredric Jameson, who feel that the claims of synchronic thought must somehow be reconciled with those of historical understanding, that there must be a rapprochement between rhetoric and Marxist dialetic.[24] But other critics have suggested that the Marxist model of representation, however refined in theory, is caught up in a rhetoric of tropes and images that entirely controls its logic. Christopher Norris, for example, has argued that deconstruction is inimical to Marxist thought. In his view the insights of deconstruction are inevitably couched in a rhetoric which itself lies open to further deconstructive reading: 'Once criticism enters the labyrinth of deconstruction it is committed to a sceptical epistemology that leads back to Nietzsche, rather than Marx.'[25]

Some of the most trenchant criticisms of deconstruction have been made by the English Marxist critic Terry Eagleton. According to Eagleton the main characteristics of deconstruction are that it rejects any notion of totality and that it is against the privileging of the unitary subject. Deconstructionism asserts that literary texts do not have relations to something other than themselves. It follows that deconstruction is not concerned with blaming anybody for the exploitation that exists, since this would entail some kind of vantage point from which definite judgements could be delivered. Eagleton, in 1981, wrote that

many of the vauntedly novel themes of deconstruction do little more than reproduce some of the most commonplace topics of bourgeois liberalism. The modest disownment of theory, method and system; the revulsion from

the dominative, totalising and unequivocally denotative; the privileging of plurality and heterogeneity; the recurrent gestures of hesitation and indeterminacy; the devotion to gliding and process, slippage and movement; the distaste for the definitive – it is not difficult to see why such an idiom should become so quickly absorbed within the Anglo-Saxon academies.[26]

It is suggested by Eagleton that deconstruction is not only reformist but ultra-leftist too. On the one hand, deconstruction is a sort of patient, probing reformism of the text. Because it can only imagine contradiction as the external warring of two monistic essences, it fails to comprehend class dialectics. On the other hand, deconstruction is ultra-left in that it is 'a problematic that sees meaning itself as terroristic'. Both left reformism (social democracy) and ultra-leftism are among other things antithetical responses to the failure or absence of a mass revolutionary movement.

In a recent book the leading exponent of Derrida's thought in Britain, Christopher Norris, reminds us that Derrida wants to stress the non-availability of any such thing as a direct unmediated knowledge of the world. Derrida wants to emphasize the culturally produced (as opposed to the natural) character of thought and perception. In his polemic against Jean Baudrillard and others, Norris argues that deconstruction has nothing in common with those forms of extreme anti-cognitivist doctrine that would claim to have come out 'beyond' all distinctions between truth and falsehood, reason and rhetoric, fact and fiction. In Norris's view, Derrida has been at some pains to dissociate his project from the kind of irrationalist or nihilist outlook which takes it for granted that truth and reason are obsolete values. He has a continuing critical engagement with the truth-claims and ethical values of Enlightenment thought.[27] Derridean deconstruction supports the Enlightenment critique even while subjecting that tradition to a radical reassessment.

Further reading

D. Hoy, 'Jacques Derrida', in Q. Skinner (ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
A useful discussion of Derridean deconstruction and the Derrida–Foucault dispute.

C. Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*, London: Methuen, 1982.
A good introduction to the subject. Two excellent chapters on Derrida are followed by others that discuss the implications of Nietzsche's writings, the relation between deconstruction and Marxist thought, and the work of contemporary American literary critics.

C. Norris, *Derrida*, London: Fontana Press, 1987.
An excellent book; besides introducing Derrida's writings on Plato, Hegel, Saussure, Rousseau, Kant, it explains the significance of his work, and discusses recent philosophical controversies. It contains a useful bibliography.

D. Wood, 'An Introduction to Derrida', in R. Edgley and R. Osborne (eds), *Radical Philosophy Reader*, London: Verso, 1985.
A lucid exposition.

D. Wood, 'Beyond Deconstruction?', in A. Phillips Griffiths (ed.), *Contemporary French Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
A clear and useful defence of Derrida's deconstruction from the accusation of nihilism, empty reversalism and textual idealism.