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Eric Gans / anthro@humnet.ucla.edu
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Religious Differance

Andrew McKenna

Department of Modern Languages & Literatures
Loyola University of Chicago
Chicago IL 60626
amckenn@orion.it.luc.edu

In one of his more recently published essays, "Foi et Savoir," Jacques Derrida asks the question: "What would a book with a title like Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* ("la simple raison") look like today?" (*La Religion* 16). All those concerned with the reason/faith, or science/religion, conundrum will have their own candidates, but Derrida's preoccupation here with links among belief ("croyance"), credence, and credibility with credit, confidence ("fiabilité"), fiduciarity, and market capitalism (see 28, 58, 60), points to Eric Gans's "The Unique Source of Religion and Morality" as the best place to start. In this brief, programmatic essay, Gans shows succinctly how the transcendental realm of Mosaic religion, whose "iconoclasm" places divinity vertically and utterly beyond figuration or representation, "prepares its dialectical antithesis in the modern process of 'secularization'" (53). This dialectic extends to the inexorable levelling process that leads to free market economies, a primarily horizontal relation among humans, the market being "a locus where value is determined through exchange" (63) rather than in relation to a ritualized, sacralized centrality. Nothing undergirds or presides over exchange as a principle of order; nothing mediates transactions except other transactions, where needs and desires are especially negotiated by disguising the latter as the former. Paradoxically, or ironically, a certain form of vertical transcendence opens the way to our optimally horizontal system of distribution. In another text, Derrida meditates on "the structure of the laws of the market" as a "permanent operation of ... sacrifice" (*The Gift of Death* 86) driven by substitutive mechanisms in a way that fairly beckons the "'return to Girard'" that Gans announces in his latest book (*Signs of Paradox* 8), where he yet more fully explores the cognitive implications of René Girard's theory of the sacrificial origins of human culture.

My own paraphrase here is an excessively condensed summary of an argument spanning several of Gans's books, including his *Science and Faith*, which reverberates with the title of Derrida's essay as much as the latter's subtitle, "Les deux sources de la 'religion' aux limites de la simple raison" echoes Gans's laconic pun on Bergson's *Les Deux Sources de la religion et de la morale*. The one source Gans avers for all our ethical concerns is evoked as Derridean differance in ways I shall delineate further. I shall conclude with some theological implications that James Alison has mined in Gans's work. This will leave Derrida somewhat in the margins of centrally religious issues, a position the the author of *Marges de la philosophie* has been wont to occupy.

Neither Derrida nor Gans mention Hegel's *Glauben und Wissen* (i.e., "Foi et Savoir," believing and knowing) as a possible pretext for their reflections, though one of Derrida's commentators does (see Vincenzo Vitiello's "Désert, éthos, abandon: contribution à une topologie du religieux" in *La Religion*). It

is worth mentioning for the Hegelian strain that Gans regularly acknowledges in his work, by way of contrasting his interpersonal and historical sense of institutional and intellectual unfolding to Derrida's more recondite and abstract formulations--abstract in the sense that concrete human interaction is less often evoked. Typically, Derrida will evoke human interaction in order to illustrate and ultimately deconstruct concepts (see, for instance, his treatment of the notion of "witness," [83]), while Gans shows how concepts precipitate out of interaction, thereafter becoming philosophical property whose intersubjective context is ignored or forgotten. There is a real methodological difference here between the two authors regarding identical thematic foci; it involves radically divergent notions of origin and history for generative anthropology (henceforth GA) and deconstruction that Gans himself has insisted on in his one-way conversation with Derrida's work--whose importance is nonetheless acknowledged as "a major turning point in postmodern understanding" (*Signs of Paradox* 183).

2

The conversation between Gans and Derrida began as early as *The Origin of Language* (1980), whose abrupt title is fairly a provocation for deconstructive critiques of origins, as it spells out the implications of Derrida's thought for an anthropology whose possibility it denies in principle. According to the Derridean line of argument, a non-theological foundation--for language, for thought, for human culture--is unthinkable, the very notion of origin being a religious principle that deconstruction uncovers, decodes, decrypts as the theo-logocentric motivation of Western metaphysics.

But as Gans shows, this antifoundationalist critique is an obsessive quest for the origins it debunks. It fairly requires that we conceive imitation, replication, or mimesis itself, as originary, which is just what Girard's anthropological hypothesis, as first outlined in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, allows us to do. In order to account for formal mimesis, or linguistic representation, we have to allow as a logical and empirical necessity for the priority of behavioral mimesis--unformulated, instinctual, or genetic: we don't yet know(1)--that humans share with the higher mammals from which we are descended. At stake here is our continuity with other living species, in terms of which alone our rupture with them can be imagined or rationally conceived. The first act of naming had to consist in behavior generating performative representation--speech acts--for the possibility of formal, abstract representation to arise at all.

Gans hypothesizes the emergence of language from the protosacrificial destruction of a single victim whose appropriation by its predators is aborted by the very mimetic attraction it exercises upon them. The act of seizing the prey is transformed into a gesture, the ostensive sign, designating the prey to one and all as dangerous to appropriate by reason of the very attraction it exerts on all those surrounding it, on all those dangerously competing for its appropriation, on all those mimetically repeating the sign of its desirability. The use of signs emerges from this fundamental paradox of mimesis, whereby the model of our desiring behavior functions as well as the obstacle to its fulfillment (*Signs* 20). The very act which reaches for the object generates competitors and--consequently, not subsequently--ensures thereby the impossibility of its completion; it compels the deferral of its instinctual aim, according to a mimetic dynamic that conforms to that of differance as described by Derrida:

> *First, differance* refers to the (active *and* passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving. In this sense *differance* is not preceded by the originary and indivisible unity of a present possibility that I could reserve, like an expenditure that I would put off calculatedly or for reason of

economy. (*Positions* 8-9)

But this is just what Gans's hypothesis asserts: the originary, indivisible, primordial unity of an antecedent hieratic entity that is awarded to a unique central object is a by-product, a corollary, not a premise, of the active and passive effects of mimetic deferral on the part of all (*Signs* 3). The founding divinity is in effect an afterthought that is viewed by the new- born community as its forethought. The notion of a sacred beginning, of divine origin, is a retrospective illusion that issues from the signing behavior of mimetic partner-rivals.

Our species' first speech act represents its object as immune to contact; it performs that immunity as the condition of survival for each and every one of those surrounding it. The sacred as "immunity" and "indemnity," as "le non-contaminé, l'intouché", as "heilig, sacré, sain et sauf, intact, integrité saine et sauve, pureté intact," that so preoccupies Derrida in "Foi et Savoir" (34, 59, 83) is born of this hallowing gesture that we might, borrowing a Derridean neologism from *La Carte Postale*, label a "perverformative" (148) to specify its paradoxical dynamic. As Gans writes in *Signs of Paradox*, "It is the object that appears as the obstacle to its own appropriation; this is what we call its sacrality" (24). What is also born with it is the ordinary human capacity to refer to objects by the use of signs, a capacity that will increase and evolve with the ritual repetition of this originary scene, the festive and sacrificial commemoration of origins, that will be necessary for the perpetuation of the newly born human community (and that virtually every community, with its flags and fireworks, repeats periodically down to this day). Reverence and the sacred, and reference too, as objective representation, are born of one and the same gesture, which had to be the mimetic gesture of all for it to take effect, to effect the presence of a community to itself as mediated by a sacralized center. Thus Gans's hypothetical scenario for the origin of language, a perspicuous revision of Girard's sacrificial scenario at the origin of culture, can accommodate and in fact integrate the deconstructive critique of origins because it shows that origin and mimesis, origin and repetition, origin and doubling are one. Origin and differance as the deferral of violence through representation are one.

3

RELIGIOUS ORIGINS

I have argued this more amply in my book about Girard and Derrida (1992). My attention here will focus more specifically on religion, as occasioned by Derrida's "Foi et Savoir," which is his contribution to a seminar published under the comprehensive title *La Religion*. It is a volume of essays which rightly assume that the Derridean critique of structure and hierarchy impinges critically on "properly" theological issues. I use quotes for this word because, after Derrida, what is deemed proper to any domain, or even about any name or meaning, invites a critique of what he neologizes as theologocentrism. Likewise, the dynamic and paradoxical relations of sacralized center and gesturing periphery are the focal issues for GA as a cultural--and therefore religious--hermeneutic.

The notion of a single origin can only be theological, or mythical, as we typically find in creation narratives, where human culture is the gift of some divinity. Yet behind such monogenesis there is a stereo-genesis, a relational conception of foundation that Gans hypothesizes and that Derridean differance describes. At our cultural nucleus, we typically find as well a violent death and dismemberment that precedes this gift, as its prelude. This is why anthropological reflection on this notion of the gift, from Marcel Mauss (*Essai sur le don*) and Georges Bataille (*La Part maudite*) through Levi-Strauss (*Mythologiques*) and Derrida, is riddled with unresolved paradoxes bearing on sacrifice. In

Derrida, we regularly find a strangely monolithic, undeconstructed conception of sacrifice, in which violent destruction or expulsion is accompanied by notions of indemnification, compensation, or remuneration (Mauss's *do ut des*). From his interviews in *Positions* through his *Donner le temps* (on Benjamin and Baudelaire) and his more recent *The Gift of Death*, we find Derrida judiciously concerned with the "economy of sacrifice," though we are never provided a sense of mimetic activation that explains its emergence or its ubiquity, that makes it necessary or foundational for culture. Sacrifice is just there--it's everywhere in fact; we find it all over "Foi et Savoir"--but there is no effort to explain its first appearance on the human scene. Sacrifice accurately names relations of expenditure and reserve, of order as deferral--economy, in a word--but its genesis, or generation, is never investigated.

There is lacking overall a sense of human interaction in Derrida's thought--he is a philosopher, after all--that has lately been somewhat recompensed by his attention to performative language. We can trace this attention to his initially polemical encounter with speech act theory in *Limited Inc*, but also to his ever more probing responses to the work of Levinas, where the negative imperative, "Don't kill me," is posited as the foundational human utterance.(2) When interviewed on "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Derrida confesses to his disinterest in the novel (*Acts of Literature* 39). The value of Gans's work, by contrast, is that it builds on the insights first explored by Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* in such a way as to supply a narrative line that is capable of unraveling Derridean paradoxes, lending them a human plausibility, and contributing a perfectly homely realism to their seemingly uncanny perceptions and relentlessly counterintuitive formulations.

Derrida's declared indifference to realist narrative fiction, his predilection for resolute anti-narratives like those of Blanchot (see, for instance, "Living on/Borderlines," and "La Loi du genre") is symptomatic in this regard. What is at stake here are the competing claims of literature and philosophy as cognitive resources for the human sciences, more precisely for human self-understanding that is institutionalized in academic research as anthropology. For GA differance is the motor of history, as the deferral of violence through representation allows for all sorts of institutional development, transformation, and evolution. For deconstruction it is too often evoked as an inhibitor of historical understanding to the extent that its detection is evidence of mystified origins, crypto-theological narratives, false starts ("Faux bonds" is the title of one of Derrida's texts).

4

The conception of origin that emerges from the mimetic interaction of rival doubles logically requires no antecedent divinity to set it in motion. For deconstruction, theologocentrism is the ontological presupposition underlying foundational discourse; for GA, quite to the contrary, divinity is the effect rather than the cause of mimetic behavior, its organizational or institutional residue, that is retrospectively construed as hieratic origin. The central object of desire is sacred for being at once attractive and repulsive, desirable and taboo, whereby center and circumference regenerate each other dynamically via the active and passive relations of desire, as it issues from the originary gesture of deferral. This logical anomaly conforms to notions of the sacred that we discover in every culture, as we find, for instance, in Emile Beneveniste's *Vocabulaire des Institutions indo-européennes*, to which Derrida attends in "Foi et Savoir" for other purposes, namely those of deconstructing the etymological lineage of responsibility, of questioning "le couteau tranchant de la distinction assurée" (44) exercised by Beneviste ("par exemple"). More than anyone else, Derrida has made the detection of violence informing conceptual differentiation an axial gesture of hermeneutics. For GA, the fragility of our concepts is coterminous with their dynamic mobility and proliferation, their availability to clarification and

extension. For deconstruction, it is a mark of the violence of their origin. For Derrida language begins--and endures--as violence, which inheres to all representation.(3) For GA violence is indeed central to culture, but only as deferred, suspended, first as sacrifice, then as substitutive mechanisms leading to sacrifice's demise, retreat, disguise, or transformation. The god effect, viewed *post hoc* as the origin of language and the foundation of pacific representation among humans, is the transcendental signified of an object whose immunity to appropriation alone guarantees concord and harmony among its signifiers, among its mimetically deferential designators.

The structural linguistics of this originary scene is thoroughly paradoxical in the same way that the Saussurian sign, in its dual make-up as signifier and signified, is itself available at any time as the signifier of yet another sign. For the central object is a genuine referent of the ostensive sign, but it is also a transcendental signifier of reference in general, of reference as such, "the creation of form-in-general" (*Signs* 29). Of course, there is no such thing, not in any real, concrete sense; it must be a god. That explanation alone "makes sense" in strictly human terms--until we see that sense is only made possible by deferring to its imaginary maker.

The origin is paradoxical, to be sure, but it is not inscrutable, undefinable, mysterious, mystical, or in any way theological, except in the eyes of its mystified beholders, who attribute to the sacrosanct center of their non-instinctual attention, of their ec-static signing behavior, the power of deferring violence that they owe to the mimetic interaction of signs alone. Along with the mimetic generation of divine transcendence we can discern the more fundamental--and foundationally human--paradox that consists in the generation of the vertical relation of signs to their referents as emerging strictly from within the horizon of human interaction. We encounter here the generation of a transcendent difference, which attends all nomination, from non-difference, from repetition, which is imminent to the use of signs. The vertical relation of signs to their referents is in fact chiasmic, doubly helical, as Gans describes it: "The sign that is in the world represents the world it is in; the sign that stands above the world remains within the world of the sign" (*Signs* 25). The world and its signs compose a tangled hierarchy that is available to finite analysis, while allowing for infinite elaboration and exploration; concrete and precise explanation is possible for a limitless variety of phenomena and relations.

This structural anomaly of inside as outcast conforms to the deformed logic of the Derridean supplement, which completes an ensemble that it repeats, represents, from without (*Of Grammatology* II.2). This analysis has made the world of signs, and the world they represent, seem scandalously unrepresentable, weirdly unavailable to coherent depiction, as every effort to untangle linguistic reference, or every effort of "straightforward" representation, embroils us in aporetic contortions of self-reference, of hieratic self-grounding, the name that names itself as god or origin being the necessary and impossible basis of all conceptualization. This is yet another version of the "faux bond," a boot-strapping operation (*Signs* 13) in which Gans locates, by the very same logical twist, the paradoxical source of our rationality. What for deconstruction has long remained a logical impasse, a source of cognitive dissonance, is for GA the dynamic wellspring of cognitive development that ensures the non-closure of human self-understanding, its openness to corrective amplification, thanks to which all science, including anthropology, can proceed on its necessarily open-ended path.(4)

5

The originary scene of language, as the paradoxical or "ironic"(5) generation of a vertical sign system from within the horizon of protohuman interaction, as a sacrificial scenario that contains violence in a

way that generates value as a notion available to reflection and manipulation--this is the very process that we find Derrida describing, however unwittingly and abstractly, in answer to the question that he poses in "Foi et savoir," namely: "Quelle est la *mécanique* de cette double postulation (respect de la vie et sacrificialité)?":

> This mechanical principle appears to be very simple: life only has absolute value by being worth more than life. And therefore it goes in mourning for it, it becomes what it is in a work of infinite mourning, in the indemnification of a boundless spectrality.

This more than life implies a mourning process, a "trauerarbeit," implying its other, a death from which it draws its value, and, just as soon, a divinity. It implies a victim, though Derrida's focus is on the transcendence that the victim occasions:

> [Life] is only sacred, holy, infinitely responsible in the name of what is worth more than it and is not limited to the naturalness of biozoology (which is sacrificeable).... Respect for life thus concerns, in the discourse of religion as such, only "human life," in as much as it bears witness, in some sense, to the infinite transcendence of what is worth more than it (divinity, the law as sacrosanct). The price of the living human, that is to say of the living anthropo-theological being, the price of what must remain safe (holy, sacred, safe and sound, indemnified, immune) as absolute price, the price of what must inspire respect, modesty, reserve, this price has no price. It corresponds to what Kant calls human dignity (*Worthiness*) of the end in itself, of the reasonable finite being, of absolute value that is beyond all value that could be subject to comparison in a market (*Market price*). This dignity of life can only be upheld beyond the individual living at present. Whence transcendence, fetichism, whence the religiosity of religion. (68)

It appears that human life as a value in itself is won at the price of a plus value, a transcendence. *Homo economicus* is always already *homo religiosus*; there is no "anthropo-" except by being "théologique." The definition of the human being offered here is one that subsists, exists, persists in its differance with divinity. According to this reading, we put life on a pedestal and proceeded to revere the pedestal as much or even more than life ("whence fetichism"). The absolute respect of human life becomes respect for the absolute at the expense of life. This economy can only be conceived or formulated in sacrificial terms. Such pricelessness can only be envisaged in the face of a violent death, the absolute appropriation of life, "respect, modesty, reserve" being the deferral to the divinity, the absolute, meaning the deferral of violence that Gans locates in the use of signs.

Theology conceives the emergence of humans in divine agency. We have to conceive the emergence of humans and signs--and of divinity--together. We have to "penser ensemble" notions that our logic conceives separately, serially, or oppositively, such "compact" thinking being the methodological link between Derridean and Gansian paradox.[(6)] It is only the identically mimetic behavior on the part of all on the periphery, the simultaneous repetition of their ostensive gesturing toward the forbidden center, that determines the transcendental difference of the central object. The center's radical, and to its beholders, sacred and founding difference depends on the non-difference of the periphery, every point on the circumference of the circle being held in equidistant tension from its center, which properly speaking is the only point of the structure. The pathos of the sacred, as it issues from the self-organizing system of mimetic desire, is appreciable here.[(7)] The center's reality has to be felt as superior to its beholders, more real than they, antecedent and more powerful than they, though they alone are real living beings. "What

is is what stands before us as the forbidden goal of our (originally appropriative) mimetic behavior. In this standing-before or standing-against our desire, the central being appears to be in-itself" (*Signs* 93). What philosophy poses as fundamental, the interrogation of Being, is in fact a belated and mystifed inquiry into sacred origins.

6

The ontological priority of the referent to representation, of objects to signs, which is the foundation of all rational thinking, of all realisms, is not illusory--except at origin. The repetition of the very same sign at the horizon of the circle generates the transcendental verticality of its center, which takes the name of god for being misrecognized as the origin of the community around it, of the signs that produce it, though it is only the virtual locus of transcendence or ideality that every sign exercises over its referents. Because the ostensive designates its object as inappropriable, it is destined to become an object of contemplation in turn, and available to transformations leading to declarative utterances about language, which thematize their referent in the absence of the object, and ultimately thematize the absence of language to its referents (Mallarmé's "rose," like Plato's, is "l'absente de tous bouquets"), which is the necessary and sufficient condition of abstract thought, of formal reflection, or theory.

We can state this paradox otherwise by observing that what is "perverformative" about the ostensive is its self-referentiality, the attention it necessarily draws to itself by the interdict it hallows around its central referent. The esthetic, as the formal contemplation of signs, be they poetic, pictorial, or musical, is born at the same time and by the same dynamic that generates the ethical in its most rudimentary and abiding form, namely, as community formation and endurance. The epistemological corollary here is to locate in esthetics, in all artistic representations, a "discovery procedure,"--this is a central thesis in *Originary Thinking*--that is unavailable to philosophies and anthropologies for which beauty is a belated cultural consideration, a sort value-added tax on our imagination. Esthetic contemplation, that so appropriately mystified Kant in his lucubrations on the sublime, was there at the beginning, at the origin to which the interrogation of masterpieces necessarily returns our anthropological attention.

For GA, esthetics is defined as the oscillating attention between the referent and its signs (*Signs* 25, 27, 29, 136-39), whose rapt contemplation is the occasion for their embellishment but also for their manipulation and transformation. Ritual is the path to the technical virtuosity that eventually nourishes empirical science. Derrida intuits this originary ambiguity, as evidenced by his near addiction to neologisms, whereby signs themselves are objects of fascination. In "Foi et Savoir," the term "mondialatinisation," which I shall revisit shortly, adds to the stock begun with differance, archetrace (in *Of Grammatology*), and continued through "heterotautology" (in *The Gift of Death*) and, most recently, "hostipitalité" (in *De l'hospitalité*), to name but a few. There is virtually one neologism for every other text published by Derrida (or one for every other page in the "Envois" to *La Carte postale)*, whose very writing activity returns us to the originary scene of language as the birth of the esthetic. This is the inevitable result of the fascination exercised by the sign performing the inaccessibility, or transcendence, of the object it designates. Syntactic and lexical virtuosity is not an accidental effect of Derrida's intellectual inquiry, a stylistic quirk, but its generative principle. Its very brilliance reflects an arrested stage of development for a potential or virtual hypothesis of origins that is dazzled by its own paradoxes (see McKenna, "Deconstruction). It is, moreover, continuous with a philosophical (anti)tradition that, with Nietzsche and Heidegger, promotes esthetic solutions to ethical problems, and where counterintuitive utterances displace logical and/or narrative explanation.

The logical scandal is that properly human interaction is enabled, empowered by the sign, rather than the reverse. We want to think, according to an evolutionary gradualism to which Darwin first accustomed us, that first there were humans, who eventually came to the more and more sophisticated and fancy use of signs, however much such a gradual shift from one level to another, from behavior to its formal representation, is inconceivable. What is fancy is generated by the originary fantasm, or imaginary, deferred possession, by which we define properly and uniquely human desire, which is contagiously mimetic. The gesture of deferral represents the central object, whose fascinating power of attraction and repulsion for its beholders is only possible because each gesture also represents and reenacts all the others. This fascination enables a break, a rupture, in the conduct of animals hitherto linked by instinctual behavior. In this regard, Gans's hypothesis is thoroughly revolutionary, including, in fact requiring, a climate of violence which we always associate with revolution. But violence does not climax this scene at its moment of crisis. On the contrary, the deferral of violence through representation, the unwitting signing behavior of potentially violent rivals, results in a literally staggering and stunning anticlimax, the unwittingly pacifying gesture in which representation originates. If the origin of violence is always already another's violence, its resolution had to be pacific, the substitution of a form for a content, for an appetitive object whose unauthorized consumption could only occasion more violence. It is nonetheless to this substitution that we owe our notion of violent divinity; a sacrificial deity is brought into "being" (like the sign itself, it is the object and indirect agency of formal representation, not a substance of any kind) which indemnifies ritualized violence that is dedicated exclusively to it. It is to this substitution as well that we owe our capacity to substitute signs for things and to exchange things for other things once they are valued as signs of other values. Sacrificial, or metonymic, substitution of one victim for the pacific good of all the community, and eventually the substitution of one sort of victim for another, generates the properly metaphorical process by which goods are exchanged against other goods, and ultimately marketed via monetary tokens, communally accepted symbols of value.(8)

7

ECONOMIES

What is the connection, beyond all ideological posturing, between free markets, open scientific inquiry, and religious faith? This is one of the central questions posed by "Foi et Savoir." Generative anthropology offers a rational hypothesis for what Derrida neologizes as "mondialatinisation." Latinization is a pun on the neo-Roman site of Derrida's discourse at a conference on religion located in Capri in 1994; his neologism refers to the obscure connivance of free market globalization ("mondialization" in French) and Western religious tradition that he describes as "cette alliance étrange du christianisme, comme expérience de la mort de Dieu, et du capitalisme télé-technoscientifique" (21). This compact is what we need to "penser ensemble." As Gans too notes, "the association of modern science with the Christian West cannot be explained away" (*Science and Faith* 119). The association is not haphazard or accidental, but causal; it should give pause to critics of Western epistemic dominance; their denunciation of "hegemony," scientific and economic, can only be performed in the name of a still higher objectivity, of a greater generality, that is authorized by a unique tradition of self-criticism, of demystification that is rooted in turn in the Mosaic "suspicion" of religious figurality, in Israel's critique of idolatrous representation. The death of god as the deconstruction and dissemination of divine centrality is the necessary, if not sufficient, condition of a unanchored and fully dynamic rationality that is destined thereby to a maximal self-understanding in its quest for its own foundations. Our species' first manipulation of signs, our first social organization, begins (in) religion (the a-syntactic parentheses designating the active and passive relation of signs to religious organization).

Let us dwell on this geometrical configuration of the originary scene a bit more, for we need to imagine its psychological structure if we are to understand our own cultural and historical relation to it. The relation is post-religious to the degree that we can analyze it at all, that we can theorize it, which is to subject it to increasingly formal representation, of the kind that we find in geometry and in all such purely formal representations, whose telos is mathematics.(9)

The points we mark on the circumference of this circle are arbitrary, exchangeable; only the center is unique to the structure, its "real" point; howsoever it is marked, it is the reality, however virtual, or in religious terms sacro-sanct, that holds the circle together no less than the god holds the community together in the deference its members pay to it rather than slaughtering one another. This circle remains the invariant structure of all human relations, whose triangular sections consist of rival subjects mediating for one another the desire for central objects. This structure obtains no less today than at our human beginnings, as the advertising industry has clearly intuited: the most conventional way to persuade consumers to desire any product is to represent its possession as a mark of good fortune already enjoyed by the celebrity or any icon of prosperity endorsing it. This is not a trivial example, given the key role of advertising in an ever more globally consumer culture, and, more generally still, given the key role of mediated desire, of mimetic contagion, in the fluctuation of financial markets, where the value of stocks spirals up--or down--according to investors' beliefs in other investors' beliefs (see Dupuy, *Le Sacrifice et l'envie*, ch. 10, and *La Panique*, chs. 3 and 4). Perhaps it is only by assigning to the market's utter precarity, its fundamental instability, the somewhat hieratic and substantializing epithet of a "system" (e.g., Adam Smith's "invisible hand") that we allay the violence that is potential to all modes of internal mediation, in which rival subjects inhabiting the same universe are potential obstacles to one another's desire. An external mediator, ontologized as the law of supply and demand, raises the principle of order over and above its participants, elevating it as precept, canon, and creed, to dogmatic status.

8

Deconstruction has been instructive in showing us the shifts, displacements and crypto-theological or logocentric substitutions of the "god-terms" (Kenneth Burke's handy phrase in his *Rhetoric of Religion*, ch. 1) that our secular thinking has posited as the center of culture and motor of history: "nous," "nomos," mind, nature, race, history, property, labor, etc., have succeeded one another in a parade of historical agencies or engines that today we assign to free markets. The center, being in fact vacant, empty, or virtual, is available to ideological investments that are frequently no less violent than arbitrary. As Gans notes, "The name-of-God is on the one hand infinitely 'proper,' confined to the unique object that occupies the center, but on the other hand, it is infinitely generic, designating a central locus that may ultimately be occupied by anything whatever" (*Signs* 53).

Today the center is globally touted as free market capitalism, which is supposed to make consumer products so abundantly available to human desire as to remove the prospect of violent competition, of conflictual rivalry, from the scene of human interaction--while exploiting mimetic desire to fuel the largely artificial demand for commodities. This is in fact one of the arguments of GA about the relatively benign effects of consumer marketing. But the marketeers are self-promotionally over-optimistic, as Gans has also insisted ("The Unique Source" 64-65). The reason is that free markets are not driven solely by competition for goods, but, concomitantly, for consumers as well. Like all human institutions, religion among them, they are self-organizing systems that seek their own replication and proliferation, however much this dynamic may work--sacrificially--against their potential participants. It is the very the nature

of human institutions to pursue their own perdurance at the expense of some of their membership, as we readily observe in the behavior of military, political and ecclesiastical establishments, but also in that of pedagogical and commercial ones. Capitalist ideologues assume that the ever widening compass of free markets will succeed in absorbing those populations which history has relegated unproductively to its margins. But even assuming that our biosphere could tolerate the waste that such a dynamic requires for its perpetuation, such an expectation ignores the commensurately vast margin for violence on the part of all those whom an increasingly frenetic exchange system exploits or excludes, while depriving them of a religiously sacrificial rationale that would indemnify their privations.

We should find nothing scandalous in the sacrificial character of institutions, once GA enables us to see their origin in the deferral, the economizing, of violence. They are so because they are by definition corporate, conventional, and communal, their ethic being endurance, self-perpetuation. Morality, by which we judge their cruel effects on people, is individual and personal ("The Unique Source" 58-61). Detaching morality from religion, as Kant purposed, and as we so triumphantly do in today's world, is so commonplace as to be regarded as obligatory; the virtual credo of every other intellectual is to abide by no institutional *credo*, to believe in nothing--but unaided, unanchored, venturesome intellect. We understand nothing about this extraordinary attainment if we do not see its roots in religious tradition itself.

For modern secularists, the cultural center is empty, hollow, absent of the divine being worshipped by the periphery. For Gans, this evacuation is, by virtue of yet another paradox, the very work of biblical revelation, which is host to anthropological truths that our human sciences are still trying to catch up with. Where deconstruction shows the origin of philosophical tradition as crypto-theological or theologocentric, GA argues us back to the anthropological origins of theology, but only thereafter to show the properly religious inspiration of anthropological discovery in the key revelations of Judaic and Christian tradition. Its decisive moments are the Mosaic ban on the concrete figuration of the divinity, whereupon a culture is unmoored from any ritual center, and the Pauline revelation of the victim, whose centrality is now potentially shared by all those on the periphery, by every member of the human community (*Science and Faith* chs. 3 and 4). For the question, "Why do you persecute me?" that the resurrected Jesus poses to Paul en route to Damascus signals the omnicentrality of divinity in every human person, as preached by the man whose crucifixion is witness against sacrificial violence. The substitution of one victim for the benefit of all is the sacrificial principle par excellence, as enunciated by Caiphas in John 11:49.[(10)] The inevitable, and for Gans ironic, consequence of this revelation was for Jesus to become the unique focus of the very ritual centrality that much of his preaching aimed to displace.

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This is a consequence that Gans seems to deplore, as perhaps he must if GA is to remain faithful to the methodological incredulity dictating scientific epistemology (see "The Unique Source" 54). In its astringent minimality, it cannot, as we say of justice, be a respecter of persons, only of relations, whose minimal alternatives are love and resentment, as richly explored in the weekly "Chronicles" of *Anthropoetics*. For believing Christians, Jesus is the potential mediator of all human relations precisely to the extent that the love he preaches is the antidote to resentment, as prescribed, for instance, by the discourses surrounding his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and 6. While acknowledging the "extraordinary intellectual strength" of Gans's reading of our religious tradition, James Alison has gone on to show how his originary scene is available, in strictly anthropological terms, to a Christology rooted

in forgiveness, which is analyzed as the practicable means of loosening the mimetic bonds of violent interaction on which theology can reformulate its notion of original sin (*The Joy of Being Wrong* II.4 and II.5).

It would follow from this line of argument that humans can love one another through Christ, the incarnation of divine love, rather than for any substantially lovable merits of our own, since by that measure, as Hamlet quips, "none should escape whipping." Alison's work allows for a properly theological elaboration of Girard's mimetic hypothesis that is strictly loyal to anthropological reasoning, as rigorously pursued by GA. As James Williams points out in his review of Alison's work, what emerges from his "theological anthropology" is "an understanding of the human self and human culture which is supported and explicated in theological terms.... Although a 'secular' analysis of human behavior and theological interpretation may overlap and agree up to a point, it is only from the standpoint of the meaning and significance of the resurrection of Christ that a radical view of the human predicament and human possibilities is gained" (7).

Whatever one's religious belief in the transcendent divinity of Jesus as God's Son, the Mosaic and Pauline revelations are "autoprobatory," as Gans states (*Science and Faith* 50-51); that is, they "took," as we have seen them fulfilled in the ongoing demystification of ritual centrality, and in the moral and cognitive privilege awarded to the victimary position--so much so that this position has itself become the object of mimetic rivalry (*Signs* ch. 12). This decentralization has proceeded apace with the "the disenchantment of the world." This is Max Weber's phrase, revitalized by Marcel Gauchet, and cited ambivalently by Derrida in "Foi et Savoir" (84-85). It designates an irreversible path of intellectual progress, in its increasingly rational manipulation of signs, in its progressively formal mastery. It designates enlightenment, but only, as Derrida himself is quick to remind us, as an ambiguous extension of Christian Reformation, "une *Aufklärung* dont la force critique est profondément enracinée dans la Réforme" ("Foi et Savoir" 41).

BELIEFS

Because the engagement here between GA and Derrida centers on religion, I feel it is important to conclude with attention to a believer's contribution to our understanding of "disenchantment." For James Alison it would translate as "the desacralization of history" (*Joy* 234) accomplished by the resurrection as proof of divine forgiveness. We have here a notion of divinity as forgiveness, with which the Hebrew bible is already fairly saturated, in a way that is totally alien to the violent reciprocity that inevitably requires still more victims. This is the unequivocal line of conduct prescribed by Jesus in the discourses surrounding the Sermon on the Mount as a foundation of exclusively positive human relations, in which Derrida elsewhere notes the "break with exchange, symmetry, or reciprocity:"

> It is a matter of suspending the strict economy of exchange, of payback, of giving and diving back, of the "one lent for every one borrowed," of the hateful form of circulation that involves reprisal, vengeance, returning blow of blow, settling scores. (*The Gift* 102)

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Nobody in his or her right mind, a mind organized by rivalry and expulsion, wants to "turn the other cheek," so for Alison it is left for a divinity to demonstrate its truth when Jesus returns to the "band of semi-traitors" (73) among his followers with a greeting of peace rather than of vindictive reprisal. The gift of love contrasts starkly with the cultural benefits flowing from a sacrificial divinity, whose violent

death affords cultural differentiations, and whose cult requires expiatory or propitiatory victims. Derrida for his part, pursues this "sacrifice of economy," or "aneconomy," as he calls it, through to "the irreducible experience of belief," as formulated by Nietzsche in *The Genealogy of Morals,* in terms of the oscillation "between credit and faith, the *believing* suspended between the credit [*créance*] of the creditor ([*créancier] Glaubiger*) and the credence ([*croyance] Glauben*) of the believer [*croyant*]. How can one *believe* this history of *credence* or *credit*?" (*The Gift* 115). Perhaps neither philosophy nor GA can take us beyond that question. The scriptural prescription for faith makes it a debatable option; it can only by definition be a free choice, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). As Alison remarks about scholarly and exegetical efforts to explain away the gospel account of the resurrection, "either we accept on trust the apostolic witness or we do not" (72).

Of course it is not quite that simple, for the really strange experience of belief in Western religion is very far from being irreducible, the existence of systematic theologies (from Aquinas through Barth) to witness, along with the existence of their asystematic challenges (from Pascal through Kierkegaard--and Barth again, and against himself). Christians and Jews regularly pray to their god for all sorts of benefits, including, ironically, for the faith to believe in him. This is a founding paradox of Western theological reflection in which confidence and doubt alternate generatively in the rational interrogation of what transcends reason; this makes for a uniquely restless, border-collapsing culture. According to Niklas Luhmann, Western reason abandoned paradox when, after the seventeenth century, it abandoned religious thinking as an intellectual resource, accomplishing a net loss to cognitive transparency that is only lately being recuperated by attention to self-referential systems (*Essays on Self-Reference* 16). This is an argument that requires vastly more scrutiny, as it overlaps with Kenneth Burke's more forthright observations about language as always already rhetorical. For, upon reflection, words about the world are also words about words, implying what he calls a "logology" in all our most ambitious conceptualizations. This is what deconstruciton has rebaptized as logocentrism. Deconstruction is self-referential through and through, but its congenital suspicion of generative or originary thinking impedes its capacity for historical--and religious--understanding. It is too soon--for this writer--to say what the combination of Alison's analyses with those of Gans will produce in the way of a more coherent theology, which is an oxymoron to rationalists unless they are willing, as one of Derrida's more recent neologisms seems to urge, to pursue the implications of a "paradoxology" (*The Gift* 83). This is perhaps where our literary tradition is most instructive, as I will venture to show in conclusion.

What GA brings to Western theological tradition as originary analysis is attention to its performative dimensions, to the content of linguistic forms which we can illustrate via Dostoevsky. The wordless kiss that Jesus bestows on his tormentor, the Grand Inquisitor in Ivan Karamazov's scenario, is imagined by Dostoevsky to be definitive of human relations as prescribed by the Gospels, the basis of a perfectly imitable and exclusively positive reciprocity. It is one that is prefigured in an earlier text by the prostitute Liza's embrace of the underground man, who torments her (and himself) with the derisive confession of his own malignity towards her. This gesture is exemplified in turn by the kiss that Alyosha bestows on his brother Ivan, who tempts Alyosha with rebellion as the Grand Inquisitor tempts Jesus with the historical vision of his failure. Jesus' kiss is indeed a performance of love, but it is not a performative in any narrowly linguistic sense, being neither ostensive, nor imperative, nor still less declarative of anything, of any referent outside itself. It wordless simplicity acts in emphatic and thematic contrast to the Inquisitor's fulsome and by Dostoevsky's lights eminently persuasive discourse about the failure of institutional Christianity, about humans' preference for sacrificial mechanisms and idolatrous servitudes, for "Miracle, Mystery, Authority." This preference includes efforts to explain away or denounce human

freedom, efforts which are nonetheless epistemically powerless in the face of forgiving witness against them. Non-mimetic, unreciprocating, aneconomic, asystemic, Jesus' kiss figures as a kind of absolute sign whose meaning coincides totally and unequivocally with its performance as unconditional love. If it has a referent, it is the one named by Jesus as the Kingdom of God. It is absolute in the sense that it imitates and replicates the love of the father for his children, which is expected to spread horizontally, inter- and intragenerationally or fraternally, among them. In the face of its tormentor, it is autoprobatory in its unconditionality, its real transcendence, in a way that the homiletic plea for unconditional love, however "sublime" its imperatives, that the dying elder, Zossima, bequeaths to his readers is not; its give-ness--or grace, for theologians--and forgiveness are one, with no preconditions. Being preemptive and proleptic, it betokens a freedom that no exchange system can rival or dominate, for it is first and foremost a freedom from all rivalry. "Non-contaminé" par excellence, it is examplarily deconstructive in its break with the dualistic antagonism of self vs other as the construct binding humans sacrificially together (and which Alison has redefined as original sin). Rather than imitate the other's desire for the object, it calls for imitation, identification, with the victim(s) whom rivalry inevitably produces. Not least of the benefits of GA is to provide a vocabulary and a scenario by which we may understand in anthropological terms what Christian tradition refers to as the Word Incarnate.

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We don't need to ponder the moral--or pastoral--implications of this scene in order to appreciate its epistemic significance, its anthropological ramifications, as it signals a break with the resentment that provokes it--or, in a different sense, that fails to provoke its own replica. For Alison, forgiveness is the source of "joy in being wrong" since it is only via that recognition that human relations can be set permanently and confidently aright. The Nietzschean conception of every action as a reaction, of moral sentiment as resentment, is broken. With forgiveness as the primordial condition or foundation of human freedom, evil emerges from the dynamics of human interaction as "pure choice," as Girard explains in his early book on Dostoevsky (134, 138). For this is how we are to understand the Inquisitor's rejection, dismissal, and expulsion of his victim.

Dostoevsky used to remarked privately, as his "*Credo*," that even if he knew Christ to be "outside the truth, that *in reality* the truth were outside of Christ," he would still "prefer to remain with Christ rather than with the truth" (Frank 160). This is the antithesis of the Inquisitor's stance, and potentially of Ivan's as well, as he oscillates feverishly between repentant conversion and rebellious madness, which for the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* means to know Jesus as the truth and freely choose not to believe in him, not to remain with him (in all that that verb implies as a stance, a concrete position rather than a theoretical perspective). The strength of this temptation for Dostoevsky himself is born out by the novels in which he explored his own anxieties through his various characters--"I am a child of the century, a child of disbelief and doubt, I am that today and (I know it) will remain so until the grave" (Frank 160)--which has resulted in a monumental discovery procedure concerning human self-destructiveness. For him, the demonic is just this rebellion, originating in the freedom to reject freedom for idolatrous servitudes. This is the vision of history sketched out by the Inquisitor, and prophetically essayed by the novelist in *Demons*, whose sociopolitical scenario of communal degeneration is historically realized in the eminently sacrificial revolutions of our century, where the devastating mass of victims mounts in inverse proportion to the efficacy of scapegoating mechanisms that produce them. They all have an apocalyptic or end-of-history air about them that is already caricatured in Shigalyov's theory, in *Demons*, that absolute freedom is won through absolute slavery. What Alison allows us to see, with the help of GA, is how these murderous scenarios too, in their own perverse way, accomplish the all-too-human

fantasy of religion within the limits of reason alone.

12

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Notes

1. William Hurlbut offers a capacious view of the chain of mimesis from morphogenesis through affective sympathy in "Mimesis and Empathy in Human Biology."(back)

2. See Derrida, " At this very moment in this work here I am" in Bernasconi and Critchley, eds.,

Re-Reading Levinas; and Peperzak, *Before Ethics* for a coherent presentation of Levinas's work which takes human interaction into account.(back)

3. For Derrida's sense of the incorrigible ubiquity of violence, see his "Force of Law."(back)

4. See Blachowicz, *Of Two Minds*, which explores scientific methodology in terms of the structural dynamics of amplificatory correction as it concerns an open-ended epistemology.(back)

5. See *Signs*, ch. 5, for the overlapping inter-reference of paradox and irony.(back)

6. "Nous nous essayons constamment à penser ensemble, mais autrement, le savoir *et* la foi, la technoscience *et* la croyance religieuse, le calcul *et* la sacro-saint" ("Foi et Savoir" 72).(back)

7. On self-organizing systems, more correlation needs to be undertaken that integrates the analyses of Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Paul Dumouchel (*L'Auto-organisation*) with those of Edgar Morin (*La Méthode*), as suggested by Stefano Tomelleri in *René Girard: La matrice sociale della violenza* (ch. 3). The remarkable, because uncontaminated, correlations between the work of Gans and of Niklas Luhmann, as they concern paradoxes of self-reference, fairly beg for an issue of *Anthropoetics* on that topic.(back)

8. These transformations are amply analyzed by Aglietta and Orléan in *La Violence de la monnaie*. Paul de Man's notorious and ubiquitous deconstruction of metaphor as metonymy, of one form of substitution (paradigmatic or vertical) as masking another (syntagmatic, horizontal, serial, contingent), is another case where formal linguistic components are abstracted, and in every sense uprooted from the dynamics of the originary scene of representation, from the event that GA locates at human origins. Cf. *Allegories of Reading*.(back)

9. Notwithstanding, Gödel to witness, the formal incompletion of the mathematics. There is, I think, an epistemic homology here that Paul Davies's discussion of Gödel in *The Mind of God* (100-103) allows us to explore: a system that is only complete at the expense of coherence, and only coherent at the expense of completion, is redolent with all the paradoxes of the sacred (foundation) as propitiatory supplement. It is also emblematic of the foundational incompletion of formal representation as such.(back)

10. "You don't know anything at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, rather than that the whole nation should perish."(back)

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Justice of the Pieces
Deconstruction as a Social Psychology

Douglas Collins

Department of Romance Languages
University of Washington
Seattle WA 98195
dcollins@u.washington.edu

Intra muros/extra muros--the foreign versus domestic value of deconstruction. Beyond anecdotes, some recent numbers. Given over helpfully to a survey of contemporary perspectives on "The Great Questions of Philosophy," is a sweepingly packed special issue of *Le Nouvel observateur*.(1) Profiled are dozens of high personages--there are photos, summaries of positions, drawings inspired by their work, bibliographies, etc.. An odd experience is the leafing through it, though, for the American professional enthusiast, disquieting (hopefully!) to specialists in matters French, for proving to be in the shortest supply are familiar names. A few are recognizable--Ricoeur, Baudrillard--but not so are the vast majority of those found to be of most intense current interest. And hopeless is the search for the mention of "perhaps the world's most famous philosopher--if not the only famous philosopher,"(2) who scores not so much as the lonely bibliographical reference in the entire overview of almost one hundred double-columned pages.

But where are there *not* compensations to be found? Derrida springs to impish life in a cab in Argentina: "The taxi driver in Buenos Aires will raise his eyes to the heavens and say, "Ah France, Derrida. . . . ," reports the same magazine that ostentatiously knew less of him than did an uneducated South American a few months earlier.(3) Maybe not that much France in France, but, sometimes to comical extent, France outside of France. "Translate Jacques Derrida and the D.L.L. will help you," we are puzzled to read in the issue of *Lire* that arrived shortly after the systematic snub. Acronymed is the "Direction du livre et de la lecture," a state agency busy with encouraging the translation of French materials that should be of potential interest outside the country. With its budget of some seven million francs it encourages the translation of, annually, about five hundred books. Typically between fifteen and sixty percent of costs are assumed. Between 1988 and 1997 the largest number of grants awarded for the translation of a given author was won by Derrida (thirty six). (The distant second was Le Clezio, at eighteen.) In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been contributing annually ten million francs for the diffusion of French texts abroad, three million going directly to foreign publishers to cover costs of producing favored books. In the period between 1990 and 1997 the author most frequently supported was Camus, who tallied forty awards. With his thirty-three, and with no one at his heels, Derrida was the strong second. "[L]'auteur de *La Dissémination* s'impose en effet comme le grand champion de l'assistance à auteur exporté," chuckles *Lire* .(4)

"Politics and political economy, to be sure, are implicated in every discourse. . . ."(5) Neither the

exclusion nor the ubiquity have been unmeditated. But what material functions can these actions be described as not innocent of? How do the snickers communicate with the silence? Why is deconstruction considered to be a nationally unhoused virtuosity? What is there in it that is more planetary than French? Why is it the case that "This squandering of signs is American?"(6) How do the taste and distaste interact and in some way work together to constitute a system? And what might be the productivity of this double action of neglect and support?

The specific issue of the Frenchness of the use and/or nonuse must be addressed if we are to begin to understand how generative anthropology runs with deconstruction, how the latter reinforces insights of generative anthropology's objectality that have arisen out of the inadequacies of Girardian intersubjectity, and why, if generative anthropology can efficiently know deconstruction, deconstruction will be reluctant to know it.

2

To answer our questions focus must there be upon Derrida's techniques of compact-group avoidance that can be most economically summarized through reference to his notion of "remaining": "Bewilderment, then, faced with this institution or type of object which allows one to say everything. What is it? What 'remains' when desire has just inscribed something which 'remains' there, like an object at the disposal of others, one that can be repeated? What does 'remaining' mean?"(7) It means deferral for generative anthropology, that shares with deconstruction its location of the life force of individuation not in the absolute difference of the Other, but in something that is unabsorbed between us. "Here it is the object of desire rather than the mediator that is exposed as central to what had appeared to be a one-on-one relationship of behavioral imitation."(8) "So near and yet so far," Gans adds in recognition.(9) Understanding the working together of the two systems' proximity and distance will be my project.

The relation of different groups to deconstruction is settled by its relation to groups. An American enthusiast--one who has had a role in the development of our affection for Derrida--notices that the motivational chains are phobically driven by concerns with social scale. Richard Rorty: "He wants to figure out how to break with the temptation to identify himself with something big. . . ."(10) And: "So I take Derrida's importance to lie in his having had the courage to give up the attempt to unite the private and the public, to stop trying to bring together a quest for private autonomy and an attempt at public resonance and utility. He privatizes the sublime, having learned from the fate of his predecessors that the public can never be more than beautiful."(11) Notice is made here of what is indeed the telling feature. Levinas is praised, for example, for his alarm when "the social will [is] sought in an ideal of fusion. . . the subject losing himself in a collective representation, in a common ideal. . . . It is the collectivity which says 'us,' and which, turned toward the intelligible sun, toward the truth, experience, the other at his side and not face to face with him. . . ."(12)

"The death of the festival"(13)--Derrida's term--is the name for great swaths of French writing since the 1920s. Nostalgic and non-nostalgic depictions of great throngs, here feckless and immobilized, there ecstatic in real or imagined recovery from charismatic loss, communities separated from themselves because they are too much themselves, or effervescently restored to self-love through contact with exotic bonding alternatives, teem through this body of literature. The twentieth-century Jacobin line includes the future-pregnant communities of Malraux, the restorative fantasies of submission to a hypnotic spectacle of Artaud, the focus upon the spent traditions and the conditions of regeneration in young Bataille and Caillois, both the regressive and redeemed groups of Girard, the cold majorities described by

Céline, the young Sartre, the Situationists and Baudrillard. The frustrated collectivism comes to its impossibly opposite conclusions in the depiction of the acephalic swarm of the "group in fusion" in the Sartre of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* and the redeemed Christian empaths of Girard's *summa*. Surviving unconvincingly albeit gamely is this spirit in Pierre Bourdieu's recent bitter words for "neoliberalism's" dissolving impact on collectivities.

Focus on the qualities of the adversity to what is menacingly termed "the assembled people" throughout *Grammatology*(14) proves the most efficient of routes to an understanding of both the role of deconstruction in French intellectual history as well as its relation to the insights of generative anthropology, some of which will be shared, we shall notice, some of which must be fled. But beyond this simple recognition of the unmissable fusion discomfort is the unmet challenge of providing an account of the integrated functioning of the features of the complaint, its solution and the conditions of perceived success. What is at stake will always vary according to the naming of the national anxieties involved.

Before deconstruction was itself born from this same anxiety, critical theory had announced its allergy--the acuteness of which is matched and then bested in Derrida--to the social grandiosity produced by the dangerous luster attached to a certain misuse of language. Adorno noted of dictators that "the famous spell they exercise over their followers seems largely to depend on their orality: language itself, devoid of its rational significance, functions in a magical way and furthers those archaic regressions which reduce individuals to members of crowds."(15) Distrust can be legitimately roused by the most seemingly benign of versions. Praise from Derrida: "Maurice Blanchot speaks of his disagreement with this preeminence of oral discourse, which resembles 'the tranquil humanist and Socratic speech which brings us close to the speaker.'"(16) Quoted with approval is Bataille's criticism of the desire "to want to be a God for the crowd."(17) Generating the most urgently expressed levels of unease is that final form of social inauthenticity, the group that bulges towards its outlandish focus--"the crowd subjected to a demagogic harangue."(18) It is this figure who "binds the good society to itself,"(19) realizing the ideal of "the image of a community immediately present to itself without difference, a community of speech where all the members are within earshot."(20) The tellingly titled *D'un ton apocalyptique* contains passages that are particularly excited:

3

> These people situate themselves outside the ordinary, but they have in common this: they describe themselves as having an immediate and intuitive relation with mystery. And they want to attract, to seduce, and lead others to the mystery, through mystery. This *agogic* function of the leader of men, of the *duce*, of the *Führer*, of the *leader*, places him above the crowd that he manipulates with the aid of a small numbers of adepts joined together in a sect with a secret language, a clique or a small party with its ritualized practices. The mystifiers pretend to have exclusive access to the privilege of a secret mystery. . . . The revelation or the unveiling of the secret is something that they jealously reserve for themselves. Jealousy is here a major characteristic.(21)

Clear then would be the task if the author comes, as he does, to the conclusion that jealousy is the issue in crowd formation, and if he at once accepts Nietzsche's view that the overcoming of revenge is "the bridge to the highest hope." Starving the heteronomous group through the development of a blocking mechanism becomes deconstruction's reason for being. The repertory of its themes and techniques--the

apersonal, the critique of all manner of inside/outside, proper/improper oppostions (frames, the boundaries of genre and discipline, gender polarity, the voice, etc.), focus upon the abject, remains, pieces unattached to the whole, an often unserious tone, etc.--is mobilized in the service of a dethronging, of a scattering of previously, threateningly focused, carnificial identifications. The group is to be deprived of the integral narcissism that is the dream fuel of its unanimity. Sought through the promotion of an unsealed and insignificant objectality will be the minimal unit of detachment, of difference--the quantum unit of distance. Stealthily avoiding a frontal attack upon the group, its metastasis will be frustrated through the deployment of a narcissism that is voiceless and therefore sterile, a narcissism that starves the group by not simply extinguishing, but minimizing the indifference available to it.

Derrida's answer, when recently asked do define deconstruction: "It is impossible to respond. I can only do something which will leave me unsatisfied."(22) But a respectful formulation is nonetheless possible: it is the minimizing of the social solubility of forms for the purpose of minimizing the social transitivities of narcissism. Always about the production of homeopathic effects, deconstruction will focus on scale--what Derrida complains of will be contested, in antagonistic complicity, with the required assistance of the atomized version of what excites the greatest dread.

There may be only narcissism, but it does not follow then that the experience is then indivisible:

> There is not narcissism and non-narcissism; there are narcissisms that are more or less comprehensive, generous, open, extended. What is called non-narcissism is in general but the economy of a much more welcoming, hospitable narcissism, one that is much more open to the experience of the other as other. I believe that without a movement of narcissistic reappropriation, the relation to the other would be absolutely destroyed, it would be destroyed in advance. The relation to the other--even if it remains asymmetrical, open, without reapporpriation--must trace a movement of reappropriation in the image of oneself for love to be possible, for example. Love is narcissistic. Beyond that, there are little narcissisms, there are big narcissisms. . . .(23)

Size counts--there can only be the struggle of the large against the small, and vice versa, a narcissism of infinite good posed against a zero-sum version--and the matter of scale is determined by the character of the production of the auto-affection that makes possible a given narcissism.

The path to these conclusions begins with deconstruction's starting point in the process of auto-affection, that entry into Derrida without grasp of which his thought is quite incomprehensible. Confidently reporting is Rudolph Gasché, one of the most trusted of Derridean exegetes: "Now, what Derrida's deconstruction has in view is precisely the undoing of the idea of self-affection and, consequently, of all forms of self-reflexivity."(24) But on the manifest absurdity of this Derrida could not be more clear, more sweeping:

4

> Auto-affection is a universal structure of experience. All living things are capable of auto-affection. And only a being capable of symbolizing, that is to say of auto- affecting, may let itself be affected by the other in general. Auto-affection is the condition of an experience in general. This possibility--another name for 'life'--is a general structure articulated by this history of life, and leading to complex and hierarchical operations. Auto-affection, the as-for-itself or for-itself--subjectivity-- gains in power and in its mastery

> of the other to the extent that its power of repetition *idealizes itself*. Here idealization is the movement by which sensory exteriority, that which affects me or serves me as signifier, submits itself to my power of repetition, to what thenceforward appears to me as my spontaneity and escapes me less and less.(25)

Self-consciousness appears only in its relation to an object, whose presence it can keep and repeat. Unavoidable is the moment of self-division, it is argued, as Derrida mirrors positions from Hegel to Husserl, Freud and Bataille. The presence one gives oneself in auto-affection is available on condition that there is a prior privation--auto-affection necessarily "admits the world as a third party:"(26)

> Every . . . form of auto-affection must either pass through what is outside the sphere of 'ownness' or forego any claim to universality. When I see myself, either because I gaze upon a limited region of my body or because it is reflected in a mirror, what is outside the sphere of 'my own' has already entered the field of this auto-affection, with the result that it is no longer pure. In the experience of touching and being touched, the same thing happens.(27)

"Utterly irreducible hetero-affection inhabits--intrinsically--the most hermetic auto-affection."(28) A difference must emerge between me and me, and all will hang on the character of that relay exteriority upon which the self-relation is dependent. Distinctions are to be made according to whether the auto-affection--hetero-affection--auto-affection circuit is or is not a blood sport, this hinging upon the cause of the damage done to the mediations involved in the detour. The movement always entails a violence, a liberating disappearance of the strength we earn through attachment to the mediation, a power not separable from a depression because what strength the outside element supplies points to a personal sense of inadequacy that had produced the drive to identify in the first place. Whenever I love "a law *engages* me to the death of the other," we are told.(29) "It is in poetry that the work of mourning, transforming hetero-affection into auto-affection, produces the maximum of disinterested pleasure."(30) And in another text Derrida asks: "How to love anything other than the possibility of ruin?"(31) Like the Bataille, upon whom is in this matter dependent, Derrida sees sacrifice as a differently sized version of this same thing: "[T]he sacrifice recaptures with one hand what it gives with the other, and its account must be kept on a double register."(32) Crucial, we shall see, is the timing and agency of the releasing violence, whether it is visited upon the form from without, whether it "submits to my power of repetition," or is always already contained within its structure.

Only if it can establish that "A work is *at once* order and its ruin"(33) (my italics) can deconstruction undo the social enormity with which it engages in sleepless struggle.

As it is the drive to seek presence that defines the human, the "Jarndyce versus Jarndyce" of the fetish is what deconstruction requires that philosophy must become, if it is to be that redeeming thing that writing is, "the process of the dispersion of the people."(34) If it is to achieve "the death of the festival," writing must be sleeplessly "the fetishism trial."(35) If there is only auto-affection, and there are differently valued varieties of narcissism, then decisive will be the features of the worldly tools of self-reflection. If narcissism must be sawed in two, then of the utmost significance will be "the question of fetishism,"(36) "the problematic of fetishism,"(37) it is floggingly noted. "We should attach the problem of narcissism to that of fetishism and redo everything, *from the beginning*."(38)

5

If there are narcissims and narcissisms, it then follows that there must be fetishes and fetishes. And to distinguish between them is to split identification into sociologically transitive and intransitive closures, those that *remain*, and those that do not. The two fetishes are about differently contagious identifications--one involves a predatory relation, the other--the privileged--involves a passive rapport, making possible *a taking on of weakness*, so that an entire field of group weakening will be produced, a field of barely communicable, insoluble narcissisms. One narcissism can be broken from another by distinguishing between the extent to which it can be metabolized, produce excitement to the assimilation of the other to the self, create or extinguish groups that permit or deny anything to exist outside of themselves, according to the degree to which it is fusible, makes possible an idealization, a process of vaporization, an exclusivization, and finally, a pestilentially focused crowd effect. Required is "a concept of fetish that no longer lets itself be contained in the space of truth,"(39) one that does not cause cognition to deteriorate into tautology, that produces a differentiation that is not rivalrous, that makes possible the sense of one's own agency as not derived, that produces and is allowed to live in a space that remains open between two subjects, rather than imagined to exist within a provocatively sequestrating subject.

"Deconstruction is justice"(40) if it anonymously offers the object as "out-of-body" experience. It is through promiscuous delivery of the take-it or leave-it that theory imagines fusional drives to be most effectively frustrated. If consciousness is modeled on an object, then the chance to not hoard--to block the process of idealization--is necessary for the subject to remain unabsorbed. Adorno: "The more autocratically the I rises above the entity, the greater its imperceptible objectification and ironic retraction of its constitutive role."(41) How would this nonexclusivizing singularization be achieved? Via a justice of the unconvertible pieces: "You can TAKE THEM OR LEAVE THEM"(42) --pieces that are not gatherable into a greatness, not those of a charismatically mediated social enormity. "Isn't there always an element excluded from the system that assures the system's space of possibility?"(43) Derrida enthusiastically quotes Genet to establish that the always already excluded impedes the excluding machine: "I was sure that this puny and most humble object would hold its own against them; by its mere presence it would be able to exasperate all the police in the world."(44) (This logic mirrors that of Adorno: "The slightest remnant of nonidentity sufficed to deny an identity conceived as total."(45)) Deconstruction may well be the death of the festival, but it strives with an equal measure of energy to not be the death of uninstrumentalizable, inalienably privatized fun.

Esthetic modernism found the meaningful whole exhibited in the traditional synthesis involved in the great works of "bourgeois art" to be a finally inauthentic and fictitious unit that, in spite of its role in the history of secularization, appeared to constitute a nostalgic reference to a divinely created order. Critical theory is mostly about the discovery of something violent in the unity of the traditional work, as in the unity of the "bourgeois subject," namely a type of coherence that is only possible at the price of suppressing and excluding what is disparate or cannot be integrated, that which remains unarticulated and repressed. This would be replaced, in what has come to be called the postmodern, with more flexible and open forms of esthetic synthesis that could, through the expansion of the work of art and of esthetic experience, gather the diffuse, the non-identical and the split-off together into its minimally controlling "constellation." (Adorno's term)

At the core of that body of literature called "theory," discussion will usually center upon the double character of the fetish--while one is denounced as the stimulant to the formation of pestilential wholes (the figural illumination, the revelation of which is the first step in the sacrificial process), the other is called upon to break the equation of subjectivization and reification. Here is Adorno's version of

murderous and apotropaic differences, so easily transposable into the split authority of Derrida's pair:

> There is truly no identity without something nonidentical--while in [Hegel's] writings identity, as totality, takes ontological precedence, assisted by the promotion of the indirectness of the nonidentical to the rank of its absolute conceptual Being. Theory, instead of bringing the indissoluble into its own concepts, swallows it by subsumption under its general concept, that of indissolubility.(46)

6

"The subject's nonidentity without sacrifice would be utopian,"(47) but it is nonetheless possible for "the rigidly dichotomical structure disintegrates by virtue of either pole's definition as a moment of its own opposite."(48) That Derrida's position is an orthodox one is again clear from Blanchot's view of the fragment: "It doesn't come together with other fragments to form a thought that is more complete, making possible a knowledge of the whole. The fragmentary does not precede the whole, but declares itself to be outside of it, beyond it."(49) Baudrillard is clear about the political position routinely implied:

> Fragmentary writing is, ultimately, democratic writing. Each fragment enjoys an equal distinction. The most banal one finds its exceptional reader. Each, in its turn, has its hour of glory. Of course, each fragment could become a book. But the point is that it will not do so, for the ellipse is superior to the straight line.(50)

Only if there is this thing is it imagined that esthetic modernism can be recouped for social theory. Derrida's versions of the point are of particular educational value because of the great rigor of the relation he establishes with social psychology, the clarity with which he blurs ethics and esthetics. He enables us to see that the breaking of the authority of one fetish from another both allegorizes and mediates the differentiation of society, the multiplication and autonomization of desires and fields. His distinctions contribute to enabling us to free ourselves from a certain impossibly crude logic of the left, that of Bourdieu, for example, who writes with a sweeping naiveté that is apparently still possible: "The world of art, a sacred island, ostentatiously opposed to the profane, everyday activity in a universe given over to money and self-interest, offers, like theology in a past epoch, an imaginary anthropology obtained by denial of all the negations brought about by the economy."(51)

The police turn out to be indeed the issue. The cop-wise sensibility of deconstruction is at its clearest if we do not ignore Derrida's own insistence that Melanie Klein--translated into French by the philosopher's psychoanalyst wife--is a major reference for his work. Readers have been fervently invited to understand his views in terms proposed by Freud's critic: "Melanie Klein's entire thematic, her analysis of the constitution of good and bad objects, her genealogy of morals could doubtless begin to illuminate, if followed prudently, the entire problem of the archi-trace, not in its essence (it does not have one), but in terms of valuation and devaluation."(52) To follow prudently, we shall see, will involve the tireless insistence upon a decisive caveat.

Brushing aside Freud's gendering of envy and the attached description of its late emergence in the experience of a child, Klein suggests instead that the emotion is known by an infant, regardless of sex, from the very beginning of life. The child fantasizes itself to be sustained by the arbitrarily distributed infinite resources in the exclusive capture of the impossible entity labeled "the self-feeding breast." This form is imagined to contain what are termed "partial objects," translatable as the objects of anobjectality, or narcissistic objects, that is to say the mediations of the absence of mediation. In an effort to control

this unique source of its strength, the child dreams of usurping its place, to be itself this thing that is sufficient to itself in order to have exclusive access to the objects of unmediation supposed to be unshared therein.

There is a recoil in the tendency, for woe if the child were to succeed! Generative anthropology knows the story: ambition to move to residence at the center, with exclusive access to the previously hoarded forms that had been jerked free, is renounced in horror when the child realizes that if it were to forcibly rezone happiness, it would in turn be targeted by the inevitably invidious who would seek the identical goal of undivided access to unmediated relations. This flinching grasp that suffering will be the price installs the agency Klein terms "the envious superego." Gans: "What terrifies us is that resentment--our own resentment--has succeeded."(53) "Man enter into the ethical world not through love but through fear."(54) Bataille is quoted by Derrida: "In sacrifice, the sacrificer identifies with the animal struck by death. Thus he dies while watching himself die, and even, after a fashion, dies of his own volition, as one with the sacrificial arm."(55) One corrects oneself in the correction, as Adorno more clearly understood, describing a backward step in modern music: "In Stravinsky's case, subjectivity assumes the character of sacrifice, but--and this is where he sneers at the tradition of humanistic art--the music does not identify with the victim, but rather with the destructive element. Through the liquidation of the victim it rids itself of all intentions--that is, of its own subjectivity."(56) Sacrifice would thus be a collectivist reiteration of the cautionary revelation, the ritualized exemplary spectacle of a relocation of exclusive access to the mediations of unmediation. If the return of desire to the self is made possible through a rage against the intermediary through which one strikes oneself, the movement to the center will be blocked. The goal of theory--to make possible the return of desire that would be unburdened by this undynamic knowledge. Undynamic, for, as Max Weber recognized, pure charisma is opposed to all systematic economic activities, in fact, it is the strongest anti-economic force. The moral plausibility of markets requires that patterns of wealth be perpetually destabilized. "The social system needs enough turbulence for social distinctions to be blurred as soon as they are formed."(57) If it is the charismatic that is the problem it is because of the manner in which it necessarily metonymizes itself, it is because of what the charismatic is imagined to be edifyingly subject to. Edifyingly subject to the horror involved in the experience of difference, a word so suggestive of leveling sacrifice that it must be replaced, for "Among other confusions, such a word would suggest some organic unity, some primordial and homogeneous unity, that would eventually come to be divided up and take on difference as an event."(58)

7

It may be that "Melanie Klein . . . opens the way,"(59) by giving a name to the mediations of unmediation. But there is frustration attached to her name, for she at once seems to describe the inevitability of an appalling lesson of "difference as an event," as well as the tools for the unlearning of it. As her story of imagined insubordination ends unacceptably, a Kleinean revision is urgently required. *Klein aber mein*. Deleuze notes:

> We have . . . encountered this problem of the indifference of psychoanalysis to the use of the indefinite article or pronoun among children; as early as Freud, but more especially in Melanie Klein (the children she analyzes, in particular, Little Richard, speak in terms of 'a,' 'one,' 'people,' but Klein exerts incredible pressure to turn them into personal and possessive family locutions).(60)

For Derrida, Klein has a role in the gallery of thinkers--Husserl, Lévi-Strauss, Foucault--who don't keep

faith with the disorderly possibilities of their initial instincts, who, rather than simply making available an uncontested access to the mediations of unmediation, release forms from the grip of an oppressing coding tradition only to follow that liberating first step with a deadening fall forward into a newly constituted closed system. This pattern has the look of the dreaded sequence that involves the bloody *transfer* of the objects of unmediation from one contrastively experienced housing to another. For the good Nietzschean, Klein is finally impossible. The vision is pantragic (Gans: "[W]hat is specific to tragedy is that the protagonist's suffering is experienced as the price of worldly centrality."(61)) Avoided must be the stultifying spectacle of the exemplary shift in the location of happiness.

How to avoid the zipper job, the staring daggers at the figure stuffed with bait, daggers that are then turned against one's own drive to be at the center of the attentions of the community? Partial objects, yes, but the possibility of the hoarding of them, and their bloody transfer, i.e. the inevitability of the dominance of the crushing envious superego, no. Thus: "There is something secret. But it does not conceal itself."(62) If thought is to fulfill its destiny of mirroring the successes of the market, the zero-sum objectality that results in the envious superego trade-off must be succeeded by a system of infinite good, the non-violent togetherness of the manifold, a (non)system in which the particular is not sacrificed to the universal and the Other to the autocratic subject.

How, rather than drilling into the whole to wrest from it the exclusive ownership of the object, to create a breast with no interior? Cross-purposed identifications must cease to be recognizable as such. The sequence involved in the movement from impotence to omnipotence experienced over time in sacrifice must be replaced by a collapse into indistinguishability of the moments of the sequence. The Kleinean revisionism that is "critical theory" must contribute to a demobbing of difference via a ritually obstructionist, stealth narcissism. Exemplary process can be frustrated by establishing that unmediations are always already out of the box, that the figural illumination "never already" exists, that access is due not to a needy searching but rather to the unmotivated finding that does not exclusivize whatever poor success may be aleatorically achieved.

There are two forms of auto-affection in Derrida, made possible respectively by differently structured fetish objects: those that excite jealousy, invite a dissolving action, or the nonrecomposing ones that do not.

> Of the remain(s). . . there are, always, overlapping each other, two functions. The first assures, guards, assimilates, interiorizes, idealizes, relieves the fall into the monument. Thus the fall maintains, embalms, and mummifies itself, monumentalizes and names itself--falls (to the tomb(stone). Therefore, but as a fall, it erects itself there. The other--lets the remain(s) fall. [. . .] The remain(s) is indescribable, or almost so.. . . .(63)

The fetish brings desire home, and decisive, as we have noted, is whether this homecoming is imagined to be due to a release from a spell undone because of a resentfully motivated violence--actual or imagined--emerging from without, or undone by forces immanent to the object, forces unrelated to any energies that might derive from any painfully experienced inadequacies provoked in a witness. In one fetish, desire, undisciplined in its homecoming, returns unburdened, but in the other, desire, now become heavy with the envious superego, has returned to the self on restricted, restricting terms.

8

The two fetishes contrast again in Derrida's essay on the artist Adami: "The fetishism generalized by

Adami turns to derision the classical logics of fetishism, the opposition of the fetishized bit and the thing itself, and God, and the original referent, and the transcendental phallus."(64) Made possible with the aid of this redemptive particular is an unassimilating objectality that allows for a parallel achievement of realized desire here spied in the language of philosophy by Adorno: "Cognition of the non-identical is also dialectical in that it itself *identifies*, both *beyond* and *differently* from identifying thought. It wishes to say what something *is*, whereas, identifying thought says what it falls under."(65) Rescue from fusion has this look: "It is an irreducible heterogeneity which cannot be eaten either sensibly or ideally and which--this is the tautology--by never letting itself be swallowed must therefore *cause itself to be vomited*."(66) The process of dissolving is opposed by what cannot be dissolved, because this last is always already marked by dissolution. Narrative incompetence characterizes the inalienable possession, as blocked *out of indifference* is "the effort to take things unlike the subject and make them like the subject."(67) Derrida's readers will be allowed neither paste nor scissors--for deconstruction is about "letting things drop"(68)

Immediately clear is the relation of the split authority of the fetish forms to most key issues in Derrida. For example, the famous distinction:

> I have attempted to distinguish *differance* (whose *a* marks, among other things, its productive and conflictual characteristics) from Hegelian difference, and have done so precisely at the point at which Hegel, in the greater *Logic*, determines difference as contradiction only in order to resolve it, to interiorize it, to lift it up . . . into the self-presence of an onto-theological or onto-teleological synthesis.(69)

The two-part system founds what is perhaps the most familiar of the philosopher's passages:

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretations, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of dechipering a truth or an origin which escapes a play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology--in other words, throughout his entire history--has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play.(70)

Thus the very possibility of Derridian reading is dependent upon the existence of this *insignificantly* insubordinate fetish.(71)

What produces the process of hunting and killing? the sequence of discovery, punishment, and violent incorporation, the making the thing invisible, i.e. bad interpretation? What issues the invitation to the trouble on which the group feeds? The pattern requires the presence of--Derrida calls this "the supplement"--an imagined double of that which imagines itself to be the completion of indifference. The dream of total self-reflection in auto-affection is dependent on a difference, around which the dream of the annihilation of difference can be fantasized--the would-be death to desire demands, *for your intimidating edification*, a provocatively contrastive image of the death to desire. Strategic alienation of affection involves an allowing oneself to be seduced by what is then destroyed for the sake of establishing that what appeared outside was but an illusion of an outside appeal. Confirmed in the return of desire is the sense that the self is what the outside was imagined to be. To be warned against thus is the Jean Rousset who imagines forms made to pay with their lives, when he saw the work as an

"independent, absolute organism that is self-sufficient," and argued that "The work is a totality and always gains from being experienced as such."(72) Terror there is in the estheticizing happy talk, as lurking behind it is Kant's flower, death-worthy, ripe for assimilation by what "pleasurably consumes an absolutely close presence:"(73)

> The beautiful *this* is thus beautiful for itself: it does without everything, it does without you (insofar as you exist), it does without its class. Envy, jealousy, mortification are at work within our affect, which would thus stem from this sort of quasi-narcissistic independence of the beautiful *this*. . . which refers to nothing other than to itself. . . .(74)

9

The beautiful is always imagined to be instructively dead, Derrida here agrees with Klein, its death-worthiness qualifying it as the meat of the envious superego. Absolutely *coupable* is the flower, he says, taking full advantage of the fact that the word means guilty as well as cuttable, and thus candidate to be "a member in which the infinite whole is integrally regrouped, remembered."(75) Required for the occasion of the group's assertion of the omnipotence of its own coercion, making possible "self-equality in infinite reconciliation" is "the whole. . . as morsel"(76) --something like our flower.

The predatory relation with these forms, an addiction to insult, is scarily ingrained. The expulsion of a certain other is said to be humanism's characteristic self-defining gesture: "Man calls himself man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity. The approach to these limits is at once feared as a threat of death, and desired as access to a life without differance."(77) "The whole. . . as morsel" presents a problem for it is not only "metaphysics. . . which is jealous."(78) That what Adorno labeled "identity theory" is a mythological form of thought is clarified when the social stakes are described in this way:

> The city's body *proper* thus reconstitutes its unity, closes around the security of its inner courts, gives back to itself the word that links it with itself within the confines of the agora, by violently excluding from its territory the representat6ive of an external threat or aggression. That representative represents the others of the evil that comes to affect or infect the inside by unpredictably breaking into it. Yet the representative of the outside is nonetheless *constituted*, regularly granted its place by the community, chosen, kept, fed, etc., in the very heart of the inside. These parasites were as a matter of course domesticated by the living organism that housed them at its expense. 'The Athenians regularly maintained a number of degraded and useless beings at the public expense; and when any calamity, such as plague, drought, or famine, befell the city, they sacrificed two of these outcasts as scapegoats.' [Frazer is quoted]
>
> The ceremony of the *pharmakos* is thus played out on the boundary line between inside and outside, which it has as its function ceaselessly to trace and retrace. *Intra muros/extra muros*. The origin and division, the *pharmakos* represents evil both introjected and projected. Beneficial insofar as he cures--and for that, venerated and cared for--harmful insofar as he incarnates the power of evil--and for that, feared and treated with caution. Alarming and calming. Sacred and accursed. The conjunction, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, ceaselessly undoes itself in the passage to decision or crisis.(79)

"The Western metaphysics of presence" appears in terms that permit the recognition, at the core of its depiction, of a complaint concerning the verticalization that is the philosophical realization and abstract sublimation of this sacrificial mechanism. Plato, Rousseau, Husserl and Saussure appear to exclude writing from the fields of philosophy and linguistics. Writing is described as "the hunted beast," chased into an outer darkness and subjected to "magical capture and murder"(80) by the paranoid and would-be self-present voice. "Self-proclaimed language," he writes in *Of Grammatology*, "but actually speech deluded into believing itself completely alive, and violent, for it is not 'capable of protect[ing] or defend[ing] [itself]'. . . except through expelling the other, and especially its own other, throwing it outside and below, under the name of writing."(81) Speech must chase down this other and theatricalize the exclusion of what troubles its always anxiously achieved equanimity if it is to pretend to exist in the full sense of its deluded dreams: "That experience [of the voice] lives and proclaims itself as the exclusion of writing, that is to say of the invoking of an 'exterior,' 'sensible,' 'spatial' signifier interrupting self-presence."(82)

"The operation of 'hearing oneself speak' is an auto-affection of an absolutely unique kind."(83) As it is the charismatic form of auto-affection, the dissolving action that occurs in our experience of the desperate efficiency of the voice has a social psychological aspect that is at the center of Derrida's interests.

> The voice is *heard*. . . closest to the self as the absolute effacement of the signifier: pure auto-affection that necessarily has the form of time and which does not borrow from outside itself, in the world or in 'reality,' any accessory signifier, any substance of expression foreign to its own spontaneity. It is the unique experience of the signified producing itself spontaneously, from within the self, and nevertheless, as signified concept, in the element of ideality or universality. The unwordly character of this substance of expression is constitutive of this ideality.(84)

10

And what is the signifier that the voice seeks to cause to disappear? It is imagined to be what the flower so vulnerable to cutting is supposed to be. The unwordly character of voice is made possible by an exclusion, by the consuming of signs.

This dissolving pattern assumes sublimated forms. "Philosophy in its entirety" is a monstrous example of a sublimation of sacrifice, for it "[gives us] knowledge of the universe as a unique organic totality in itself which develops 'from its own concept .' Without losing anything of what makes it a whole 'which returns to itself,' this 'sole world of truth' is contained, retained, and gathered together in itself."(85) Direct reference to the ghost of sacrificial process is found in a report on Kant's account of what occurs in the relation with the sublime:

> The imagination turns this violence against itself, it mutilates itself, ties itself, binds itself, sacrifices itself and conceals itself, gashes itself and robs itself. This is the place where the notion of sacrifice operates thematically inside the third *Critique*--and we've been constantly on its tracks. But this mutilating and sacrificial violence organizes the expropriation within a calculation, and the exchange which ensues is precisely the law of the sublime as much as the sublimity of the law. The imagination gains by what it loses. It gains by losing. The imagination organizes the theft of its own freedom, it lets itself be commanded by a law

> other than that of the empirical use which determines it with a view to an end. But by this violent renunciation, it gains in extension. . .and in power. . . This potency is greater than what it sacrifices, and although the foundation remains hidden from it, the imagination has the feeling of sacrifice and theft at the same time as that of that of the cause. . . to which it submits.(86)

Related would be the causing-there-to-be-nothing-left in theology: "[T]he spirituality of the Christian Last Supper consum(mat)es its signs, does not let them fall outside, loves without remain(s). The assimilation without leftover [*sans relief*] also satisfies itself."(87) And: "The teleological horizon of the 'true' and unique religion' is the disappearance of the fetish."(88)

But the intimidating dissolving process proves undone by what is always already undone. The success of deconstruction will turn upon the availability of this degeneralizing fetish that does not compose with greatness, the demonstration that there is finally nothing but it. Benjamin, an author upon whom Derrida has written a number of times: "The rag picker prefigures the. . . modern hero, . . . [in] his interest in the trash of the great city."(89) Derrida plunges into the garbage of the *Critique of Judgment* to salvage apotropaic waste that will be the instrument of the rag picker's undoing of the crowd. Against the target-rich field of Kant's main text, his flower, his sublime, and that social horror which it at once stands for and obscures, is posed a form of which Kant was not unaware, but one he banished to a note. But banished to afterthought it could not remain for long, such became the awareness of its powers as a miracle of distribution and multiplication, that is, as a talisman guarantee against sacrifice. It is in a forward-channeling moment of the *Critique* that it makes a shy appearance--in the form of a stone with a hole in the center, unearthed in the course of an archaeological excavation. If Kant's path into the natural sublime appears a regression into the anthropological unaware of itself as such, the route into the trash proves to be the *via salutis* of philosophy.

> [T]here are things in which we see a form suggesting adaptation to an end, without any end being cognized in them--as, for example, the stone implements frequently obtained from sepulchral tumuli and supplied with a hole, as if for [inserting] a handle; and although these by their shape manifestly indicate a finality, the end of which is unknown, they are not on that account described as beautiful. But the very fact of their being regarded as art-products involves an immediate recognition that their shape is attributed to some purpose or other and to a definite end. For this reason there is no immediate delight whatever in their contemplation. A flower, on the other hand, such as a tulip, is regarded as beautiful, because we meet with a certain finality in its perception, which, in our estimate of it, is not referred to any end whatever.(90)

11

The empty socket is a memory hole, and there dwells the ghost of the curse of labor, come and gone, immortalizing alloy of failure. Unqualifying it as beautiful for Kant, the opening suggests a handle's absence, specter of a past and present embarrassment--a relation to need. Not unborn to instrumentality but lagging piteously behind it, falling below rather than transcending production, the form has, invisibly to us, under the pressure of impersonal forces, *decayed* into an indifference rather than being disciplined and spoliated out of it. Reference to an exigency in the socket is feebly present, but plays out at the moment of its appearing. Inability rather than refusal to make, dying out of service, knowing of its suffering, but now finding itself below this suffering because of the injured withdrawal of its humble

worldly claims, the broken tool is indeed workless, but only in a mode of inadequacy. Beyond, because beneath the seriousness of getting results, the object's strength is exhausted rather than held in needless reserve; the rock would like to contribute but no longer can.

But it is not simply the opposite of what Hegel said beauty was--an absence of reaching that suggests desire overcome--for there was a uselessness to draw us in. There was reaching and not reaching, as the "marteau sans maître" stalled between production and its opposite, thus the marbling of trap with release. Its demotion from one condition remaining visible in the promotion to another, it weakens into a narcissism it had never known the sadness of having had to renounce, falls into an afflicted narcissism, one arrived at through a failure to be the opposite of narcissism. Not aloof from work, rather poorly past it, no longer up to it, residually enduring it, there is here a lack of binary decisiveness. In this celibate machine--a tool without extension-- there is not the living up to and away from that now collapse in simultaneity--it is an embarrasser, is embarrassed. A liberating alienation has occurred--the witness is out of work, out of the work of death, as stolen from him is the work of humiliation that has already been accomplished. The suffering is not at the hands of the reader/spectator, but of already effective immanent forces. Before the would-be but now preyless disfiguring eye, the form is prediscredited (because of work's latency), compromised into rather than out of invulnerability--failure is indwelling, it is not an edifying event. As it cannot be reduced either to the curse of labor congealed in it, or the lack thereof, we respond to it as simultaneously rescued from and returned to servitude.

What the form is not is this: "The coin that has been exhumed at an arena, displays, heads, a serene face, tails, the brutality of a universal number." (Mallarmé)(91) In the rock and the coin the same constitutive features interact at different speeds. The coin--the site of a visible unfolding--is a decelerated rock; the rock the imbroglio of the component moments of the coin. Its spin removing it from the precinct of the Roman circus, the rock would be the coin, if the pitiless alternatives of its head/tail difference had not been rushed into near indistinguishability, its tensions unmaddened through the speeding of an oscillation that can have no moral result. While the inner migration of punishment offers refuge from social enormity, sheltering the narcissism of the rock--Freud's ego ideal that has lost its (group) shadow--the coin is not protected from its warring features--revenge follows it into the grave and beyond. Gasché: "Auto-affection has been characterized by its exclusion of difference. This exclusion is essential for auto-affection to be auto-affection, for it to achieve an immediate and spontaneous identity in self-presence."(92) True--but all hangs upon the location of responsibility, upon how and when the violence comes about, whether or not there is resentful agency involved.

"Restitutions" is an essay that contains the clearest of examples of Derrida's privileging of the flawed and therefore minimally provocative uselessness required for unmolesting and unmolestable happiness. With comic dudgeon he breaks into a debate between Heidegger and the art historian Meyer Shapiro on the matter of what finally appears in Van Gogh's famous pictures of old shoes. Pickily responding to Heidegger's casual mention that the shoes appeared to be those of a peasant, Shapiro argued that they had rather the look of the footwear of an urban worker.

Insufficiently trifling are the triflers. Presumptuousness is noticed on both sides, a craving for incorporation and persecution: "This is an investigation that smells of the police."(93) Assignments of ownership lack basis, and even outlandish is the assumption that the two shoes constitute a pair. The Derridian requirement is that they be preserved as useless and unowned: "Their detachment is obvious. Unlaced, abandoned, detached from the subject (wearer, holder or owner, or even author-signatory) and detached/untied in themselves (the laces are untied)."(94) Called for is the release of the forms from

"identifying" thought and its correlate, the autocratic ego: "As soon as these abandoned shoes no longer have any strict relationship with a subject borne or bearing/wearing, they become the anonymous, lightened, voided support (but so much the heavier for being abandoned to its opaque inertia) of an absent subject. . . ."(95) As there can be no legitimate claim: "I leave them. They are, moreover, abandoned, unlaced, take them or leave them."(96) With the aid of the shoe as escape vehicle, the preferred tool because it is not much of a tool, "The center is not the center."(97)

12

Communicating explicitly with this essay is another in *The Truth in Painting*, "Cartouches," dealing with a series of sculptures and drawings of small coffins by the artist Titus Carmel. The works here delighting Derrida had their origin in a passage in Genet who describes a match box that resembles a coffin. The scale and the deformations imposed upon the boxes cause them to be both related to but absent from service--the object "was" a match box; what is labeled a coffin is clearly not functional as such. "And yet I must not attempt to appropriate this series of cenotaphs,"(98) he writes, having learned the lesson of the shoes.

"Do not incite words to serve a politics of the masses," writes Char.(99) There is the opposition we have come to expect: "There is a good and a bad writing: the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart and the soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body."(100) If there is not the word to match the shoe, the mobbing of difference that is product of the voice will flood unobstructedly through all of experience--the group will be a destiny, and revenge will not be overcome. If the voice is about a fear-inspiring evaporation in the sociological sublime ("Within the voice, the presence of the objects. . . disappears."(101)), then good writing is what " remains. . a morsel. . . insofar as it cannot, naturally, bind (band) itself."(102)

A child shows the way, the way to catachresis: "Catachresis. . . . Trope wherein a word is divested from its proper sense and is taken up in common language to designate another thing with some analogy to the object initially expressed."(103) In a long and affectionate footnote, Derrida quotes from an essay by Klein that had been translated by the author's wife, a passage in which the word takes the now familiar form of the useless tool:

> For Fritz, when he was writing, the lines meant roads and the letters ride on motor-bicycles--on the pen--upon them. For instance, 'i' and 'e' ride together on a motor-bicycle that is usually driven by the 'i' and they love one another with a tenderness quite unknown in the real world."
>
> The 'i's are skillful, distinguished and clever, have many pointed weapons, and live in caves, between which, however, there are also mountains, gardens and harbors. [. . .] On the other hand, the 'l's are represented as stupid, clumsy, lazy and dirty. They live in caves under the earth. In 'L'-town dirt and paper gather in the streets, in the little 'filthy' houses they mix with water a dyestuff bought in 'I'-land and drink and sell this as wine. They cannot walk properly and cannot dig because they hold the spade upside down, etc..(104)

Language is a tool, and one that can be held upside down: "Writing would thus have the exteriority that one attributes to utensils; to what is even an imperfect tool and a dangerous, almost maleficient technique."(105) The supplement is said to have a task, but it is "unequal to the task, it lacks

something."(106) Language's availability for happy misuse is owed to the fact that all signifiers have their uncontrollable non-expressive components.(107) "Everything in my speech which is destined to manifest an experience to another must pass by the mediation of its physical side."(108) Words contain features that lose themselves in the opacity of a material body that undo the dreams of proximity-producing transparency. The play of differences that inhabit writing, and by extension all speech, the syntheses and references that constitute the sign, establish that *simples* (Kant's flowers), referring only to themselves, do not exist--there are only remainders. The signifier is never contemporary--there is always present in it the trace of another element. The sign is always already inhabited by the trace of other signs. "The idea of a book is the idea of a totality,"(109) but there is no such thing as "a signifier that does not fall into the world."(110) Not consumable are the graphic elements, for example--they cannot belong to the voice; the voice cannot dissolve them: "As soon as, in a second, the first stroke of a letter divides itself, and must indeed support partition in order to identify itself, there are nothing but . . . anonymous morsels without fixed domicile, without legitimate addressee. . . ."(111) This is the unbounded trace, the obstinacy of difference, "the openness upon exteriority in general, upon the sphere of what is not 'one's own,'"(112) the deference to which rescues philosophy from the animality of the voice that says: "My words are 'alive' because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance; not to cease to belong to me, to be at my disposition. . . ."(113)

13

"The property of the *representamen* is not to be *proper*, that is to say absolutely proximate to itself."(114) It may not be proximate to itself, but because it falls into the world it mediates local narcissisms that cannot be massed, i.e. moralized, and thus signifies "the death of the festival." The breast has no interior, there being no such thing as "a signifier that does not fall into the world,"(115) that is not available as a fetish of the saving sort. The written word, especially, is always Kant's rock and not the flower because there is use, as there is representation, but the uncontrolled features of language "cease. . . to be of any use within 'civil life'. . . ." "The perfection of convention here touches its opposite extreme, it is . . . the perfect alienation of the instrument of civil order."(116) Because writing is use and its absence, it is the synchronization of identification and the release from it, and is hence the unobstructedly available condition of social inauthenticity: "A feared writing must be canceled because it erases the presence of the self-same within speech."(117)

Writing--its constituent features are properly understood--is without the power to unleash sacrificial process. Because it is the supplement it is a candidate for expulsion by "the assembled people," as the voice will expel what appears to be its atomized double. But a true idol, which writing is not, cannot break the thrust of sacrificial mechanisms, because it is enjoyment, self-presence, realized auto-affection. Because it is the shoe, it is the rock, "Writing *represents*. . . enjoyment. It plays enjoyment, renders it present and absent,"(118) and thus it is unreasonable for it to provoke expulsion. It is always involved in a pre-emptive self-demystification, itself continually devastating the sufficiency that "the assembled people" gather to destroy. ("What a strategy, don't you admire it? I neutralize all the risks in advance."(119)) Because the written word does not lose itself in the exclusivizing self-repetitions of speech, it is an unmedation that is infinitely available to build an unexcluded, unexcluding narcissism.

The happiness of writing is additionally due to the scale of the experience. Miniaturization is the threat of death in that it opens the possibility of a realization at a local level, thus the possibility of the seduction that is not the self-seduction that "binds the good society to itself." Writing is the mark of "the seductive

influence of individual wills." It cannot simply be the opposite of self-presence, as there are only mediations of auto-affection. If writing is the impossibility of self-presence on one scale, it offers simultaneously the experience of the *miniaturization* of auto-affection, of its realization in atomized and secret forms. It is associated with asocial forms of closure--"seduced narcissistically," "it was difficult to separate writing from onanism."(120) "Writing reduces the dimension of presence in its sign. The miniature is not reserved to illuminated capitals; it is, understood in its derivative sense, the very form of writing. The history of writing would then follow the continuous and linear progress of the techniques of abbreviation."(121) Derrida quotes Ponge approvingly: "If I prefer La Fontaine--the slightest fable--to Schopenhauer or Hegel, I certainly know why. It seems to me: 1. less tiring, more fun; 2. more proper, less disgusting; (. . .) The trick, then, would be to make only 'small writings' or '*Sapates*,' but ones that hold, satisfy, and at the same time relax, cleanse after reading the grrrand metaphysicolicians."(122) (sic)

Focus on the small, as opposed to the shrinking process, the *becoming small*, is as important to Derrida as it is to all recognizably modern thinkers. Its power is assignable to the fact that mediations of reduced scale are understood to make possible a sealing of the self from the would-be self-sealing group. The voice is associated with the large for it destroys distinctions: "Right at first the sound touches us, interests us, impassions us all the more because it penetrates us. It is the element of interiority because its essence, its own energy, implies that its reception is obligatory."(123) But before the written word, the small, "I can close my eyes, I can avoid being touched by that which I see and that which is perceptible at a distance."(124) With writing "man has thus put out his eyes, he blinds himself."(125) Derrida adds: "One can *more naturally* close one's eyes or distract his glance than avoid listening. Let us not forget that this natural situation is primarily that of the child at the breast."(126)

14

The confirmation in Freud, in the essay on jokes, where it is reported that when a child is asked to describe something, "it may be wagered that he will open his eyes wide when he describes something large and squeeze them shut when he comes to something small."(127) These closed eyes are those of "an infant at the breast when it is satisfied and satiated and lets go of the breast as it falls asleep."(128) If the spoken word is the breast of the group, the written word--putting the reader out of the work of death because in it we meet with what is already small--is the breast of the individual. The small at once relocates indifference--I do not experience it as humiliatingly contrastive, for I am now the indifference myself-- and causes it to be invulnerable. With the small, I now look out at the world from the perspective of indifference, not resentfully at that which is indifferent to me. "Imperfect necessity" is the legal term for this unpunishable crime.

If strength is invulnerability, then writing is strong because it is weak:

> Strong writing is not the invitation to a wasting, as it "resists. . . degradation," because "it is proper to nothing and to no one, reappropiable by nothing and no one not even by the presumed bearer.. It is this singular impropriety that permits it to resist degradation. . . . Enigmatic kinship between waste. . . and the masterpiece.'(129)

Writing is strong, as in Mallarmé, when the signifier has the structure of the found object:

> Uprooted, anonymous, unattached to any house or country, this almost insignificant signifier is at everyone's disposal, can be picked up by both the competent and the incompetent, by

> those who understand and know what to do with it. . . , and by those who are completely unconcerned with it, and who, knowing nothing about it, can inflict all manner of impertinence upon it. At the disposal of each and of all, available on the sidewalks, isn't writing thus essentially democratic?(130)

On this condition, "Writing is the very process of the dispersal of peoples unified as bodies."(131)

"Do not seal, that is to say don't close, but also, do not sign."(132) A bloodless transfer of the mediations of unmediation would be the goal, the absence of a requirement that they be intimidatingly ripped from one nonporous zone into another: "Happiness . . . gives us the inside of objects as something removed from the objects."(133) Always already removed, it would be crucial to add. If it is required that one fetish be split from the other, then there must be the form that does not belong to me, while being always accessible to each and all, simultaneously. If something or somebody need not disappear for this access to be possible, then the idea of the frame becomes an issue. Supporting the characteristic objectality of the postmodern, fellow Kleinean revisionists Deleuze and Guattari write:

> But the picture is also traversed by a deframing power that opens it onto a plane of composition or an infinite field of forces. These processes may be very diverse, even at the level of the external frame: irregular forms, sides that do not meet, Seurat's painted or stippled frames, and Mondrian's squares standing on a corner, all of which give the picture the power to leave the canvas. The painter's action never stays within the frame; it leaves the frame and does not begin with it.(134)

A classical esthetic is also about the hostility to frames. But while here they are offered as invitations to be busted into, Derrida must be "less interested in breaking through certain limits than in putting in doubt the right to posit such limits in the first place."(135) If there is the frame, then there is not the unclassical fetish: "overflowing of the whole by the part which explodes the frame . . . is not produced inside a framing or framed element. . . ."(136)

Abundant are passages such as the following:

> Our purpose is not to prove that "The Purloined Letter" functions within a frame. . . but to prove that the structure of the effects of framing is such that no totalization of the border is even possible. Frames are always framed: therefore, framed by a piece of their content. Pieces without a whole, 'divisions' without totality.(137)

15

From *Glas*:

> Just imagine the havoc of a theft that would deprive you of frames and of every possibility of reframing your valuables or your art objects. And what if mimesis so arranged it that language's internal system did not exist, or that it is never used, or at least it is used only by contaminating it, and that the contamination is inevitable, hence regular and 'normal,' make up a part of the system and its functioning.(138)

And far from unaware of the social stakes is our author: "[We must] not break the circle violently (it would avenge itself). . . . "(139)

The insistence that the text always outruns the limits assigned to it ("In nothing does writing reside."(140)) is also about unkowing revenge in that it is a guarantee of a nonconflictual because passively realized desire. In his own attack on the authority of the frame, Adorno notes that it makes possible a redeeming passivity: "[A] cognition that is to bear fruit will throw itself to the objects à fond perdu."(141) The avoided pestilential predatory sufficiency is achieved through the relation with an object that is mastered, proximate: "Lived experience is immediately self-present in this mode of certitude."(142) And: "We know that the act of meaning, the act that confers *Bedeutung*. . . is always the aim of a relation with an object."(143) The voice is defeated, or at least demystified, by what remains uncircumscribed. The hope would be that expressed by Adorno: "If the thought really yielded to the object, if its attention were on the object, not on its category, the very objects would start talking under the lingering eye."(144) If the object is free, then so is the subject. Adorno again: "The spell cast by the subject becomes equally a spell cast over the subject. Both spells are driven by the Hegelian fury of disappearance. The subject is spent and impoverished in its categorical performance."(145) To preserve the possibility of a masochistically achieved kind of realized desire is to continue to generate banalized levels of seductive power that are now harmless--i.e., unemployable by the group--because so diminished. The mobility sustaining rivalless atomization of happiness is the product of an imagery of desire realized through failure.

"Deconstruction must neither reframe nor dream of the pure and simple absence of the frame."(146) There is always the frame, but the frame is never much of a frame: "There is no natural frame. *There is* frame, but the frame does not exist."(147) Always already undone from within, it has the structure of a ruin as described by Simmel--arrogance is not to be wrung from it, the form having been damaged by immanent pressures. Flinching before the threat of the correction from without is a routine feature: "It is because deconstruction interferes with solid structures, 'material' institutions, and not only with discourses or signifying representations, that it is always distinct from any analysis or a 'critique.'"(148) But the particular interference insisted upon consists, not in a besting, but rather in a rigorous demonstration of the universality of the structure of the ruin. There is nothing but it: "The ruin is not in front of us; it is neither a spectacle nor a love object. It is experience itself; neither the abandoned yet still monumental fragment of a totality, nor, as Benjamin thought, simply a theme of baroque culture. It is precisely not a theme, for it ruins the theme, the position, the presentation or representation of anything and everything."(149) Writing of a 1915 self-portrait by Helene Schjerfbeck:

> The ruin does not supervene like an accident upon a monument that was intact only yesterday. In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face as the memory of itself, what remains or returns as a specter from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed.(150)

The humility of a sponge described by Ponge is the preserving violence that has always already occurred: "Ignoble as it may be, and lacking in natural nobility; poor in its genealogical extraction, and unable to choose between the proper and the improper, the economy of the sponge is nonetheless better able to resist the oppressor--*its ignoble labor enfranchises it.* "(151)

Another *différance* that blocks a *difference*, the theme of circumcision is related, but here the protective impotence is inseparable from an omnipotence:

> By first incising his glans, he defends himself in advance against the infinite threat, castrates in his turn the enemy, elaborates a kind of apotropaic without measure. He exhibits his castration as an erection that defies the other. The logical paradox of the apotropaic: castrating oneself already, always already, in order to be able to castrate and repress the threat of castration, renouncing life and mastery in order to secure them.(152)

This appears within the context of the analysis of the Genet, who, freed through disgrace, is here quoted: "Within his shame, in his own drool, he envelops himself, he weaves a silk which is his pride. [. . .] The culprit has woven it to protect himself, woven it purple to embellish himself."(153) An apotropaic inadequacy that is indistinguishable from an omnipotence.

In a "rattle of scrap-iron" the "miracle. . . blazed forth,"(154) Derrida quotes from *Our Lady of the Flowers.* And what miracle would this be? The remainder that is deconstruction's version of the deferral of generative anthropology, the unproblematic Other, a redesigned Kleinean body, free with its unmediating mediations. Derrida on a protagonist from Genet: "When Leila lets all those objects out from under her skirt in the 'Mother's house,' lamp, lamp shade, 'bits of broken glass. . . or fragments. . . pieces of glass. . . debris. . . splinters. . . ."(155) The object stands in for a subject. Clément Rosset on the askesis: "Without doubt, in order to deceive its hunger, desire can attach itself, accommodate itself to the undesirable, that is to say forget about its undesirable character. In doing so it becomes as derisive as the object that is coveted, just as fragile, just as uninteresting."(156) The remainder produces the miracle of the end of the group's pageantry of burying and digging up, fractures it into a market, and sends it bustling off into its countless directions. The cost of distributing power is always more manageable than the price to be paid for worshipping it.

Attention to the successes of the remainder sharpens understanding of Derrida's toughness with the seemingly safe figure of Levinas. *Totality and Infinity*'s author argued that post-Hellenic philosophy's drive to decisively answer epistemological questions led to an obliviousness to what made possible the ethical: The Other, whose right to exist in a realm that is distinct from our own knowledge-constitutive interests demands the suspension of all preexistent categories. As it is remainderless, the ethics of radical heterogeneity, based upon a raw insistence upon otherness,(157) is burdened by the ghost of Dionysian/Apollonian interdependency, for present here is the last residue of "the solidity and *rondeur* of inviolate form."(158) The possibility of an intersubjective appeal is blocked by the sealed surface: "The other as alter ego signifies the other as other, irreducible to my ego, precisely because it is an ego, because it has the form of an ego. The egoity of the other permits him to say 'ego' as I do. . . ."(159) This "dream of a purely heterological thought, a pure thought of pure difference" ends in exciting philosophy's characteristic gestures of incorporation and/or exclusion. But there is nothing but the ruin, the remainder: "We say the dream because it must vanish at daybreak, as soon as language reawakens."(160) Language as writing, that is, "an orphan," "weakened speech," "the living dead."(161)

Although both deconstruction and Levinas are about not knowing difference to save it, weakening it in order to save it (I am thinking of Levinas's emphatic mention of the vulnerability of the Other), Derrida feels that the buffer object carries the protection project a step further, eliminating as it does some of the dialectic-sparking features that are felt to remain in *Totality and Infinity*. However weakened its dialectical intensity in his writings, Levinas knows only the *difference* that is always associated with the resentfully inspired *event*, always in the grip of the sequence, when only the synchronization of *différance* offers the way out. It is instructive to relate the reservations concerning the subject in Levinas

with those passages in the book on Ponge that can only be described as a Levinas parody:

> Thus the thing would be the other, the other-thing which gives me an order or addresses an impossible, intransigent, insatiable demand to me, without an exchange and without a transaction, without a possible contract. Without a word, without speaking to me, it addresses itself to me, to me alone in my irreplaceable singularity, in my solitude as well. I owe to the thing an absolute respect which no general law would mediate: the law of the thing is singularity and difference as well. An infinite debt ties me to it, a duty without funds or foundation. I shall never acquit myself of it. Thus the thing is not an object; it cannot become one.(162)

17

Replaced here is the Other of Levinas with an object, but not one resembling the world-cleaving flower of Kant. All respect is due the sponge that is "the worthless, or the no-thing or the such-a-little-thing, the no-matter-what of low prices, the nameless or nearly so in the mob of small things. Keep the throwaway. . . "(163) "It has no price, it is priceless because it is so particular, so insignificant, so singular and so reproducible."(164) There is the narcissism in it--Derrida describes it as being "without me," as having "no relation to me, whence the dissymmetry."(165) But there is no division of labor in the proper/improper meltdown--here the object is "executioner and victim at one and the same time."(166) A poem of Ponge is praised in these terms: "What comes back to cut the tree, and then to put it to death, is thus a part of the tree, a branch, a son, a handle, a piece detached from the tree which writes. . . ."(167)

Parody of Jewish thought may be described as a constituve feature in Derrida. Derrida quotes Hegel on the Jews and comments:

> Their ownness, their property remains foreign to them, their secret: separate, cut, infinitely distant, terrifying. 'The secret proper was itself something wholly alien (*Das Geheimnis selbst war etwas durchaus Fremdes*) something into which a man could not be initiated; he could only be dependent on it. And the concealment (*Verborgenheit*) of God in the Holy of Holies had a significance quite different from the secret (*Geheimnis*) of the Eleusinian gods. From the pictures feelings, enthusiasm, and devotion of Eleusis, from these revelations of gods, no one was excluded; but they might not be spoken of since words would have desecrated them. But of their objects and actions, of the laws of their service, the Israelites might well chatter (Deuteronomy XXX, 11), for in these there is nothing holy. The holy was always outside them, unseen and unfelt (*ungesehen und ungefühlt*).

How could one have a secret?

> Absolute expropriation makes the secret of the sacred accessible to that very one holding its privilege. In this absolute alienation, the holder of the inaccessible can just as well peacefully manage its effects or phenomena, can chatter about them, manipulate them. The invisible remains invisible, out of reach; the visible is one the visible. Simultaneously the most familiar, secret, proper, near, the *Heimlich* of the *Geheimnis* presents itself as the most foreign, the most disquieting (*Unheimlich*).(168)

Derrida is placed here between two impossibilities. Unavailable is the theological solution to the challenge posed by the idolatrous group, for "God is . . . the proper name of that which deprives us of our

own nature, of our own birth; consequently he will always have spoken before us, on the sly. He is the difference which insinuates itself between myself and myself as my death."(169) But "How can mediacy and immediacy be transgressed simultaneously?"(170) (In Levinas there is too much of each.) There is solution only in a parody of Judaism--through a pre-degraded absolute difference, proximate and far, there is the falling below the group temptation, rather than the rising above it. The dominance of a "metaphorics of proximity"(171) (involving ideas of "shelter, "guard," "service") is blocked by just junk. The distant object that is at our feet does indeed solicit us, but it is at once renounced out of what *approaches* indifference: "Believing that one can pass to the other side, so as to reach the other, one will attempt to appropriate the other to oneself, while leaving it as it is, and to let it sign for itself while signing in its place. . . ."(172) The banality that is "separate," "cut," "infinitely distant," suspends the object between positions, and as it does so, minimized is the exchange of the now smudged absence-presence energies said by Freud and Bataille to create the group.

Banal mystery results in "a disarmed desire."(173) Disarmed and disarming because unprovocatively atomized:

> Thus the thing would be the other, the other-thing which gives me an order or addresses an impossible, intransigent, insatiable demand to me, without an exchange and without a transaction, without a possible contract. Without a word, without speaking to me, it addresses itself to me, to me alone in my irreplaceable singularity, in my solitude as well.(174)

18

Levinas would be part of a larger problem. Unsleeping vigilance is required, as the most seemingly innocuous remainderless thought continuously threatens to bind the hunter and the hunted.

> [A notion of subjectivity] reigns over the majority of discourses, which today and for a long time to come, state their opposition to racism, to totalitarianism, to nazism, to fascism, etc., and do this in the name of the spirit, in the name of an axiomatic--for example that of democracy or human rights--which directly or not, comes back to this metaphysics of *subjectivity*. All the pitfalls of the strategy of establishing demarcations belong to this program, whatever place one occupies in it.(175)

The subject sweeps us back into sacrifice--it is a flower, an insufficient caution, *coupable*. The positions not knowing the remainder will be doomed to discipline their group--exciting features with crude techniques of repression that will always fold one back into the problem. In Kant, for example, there is no escape: "We know that the sacrifice and the sacrificial offering are at the heart of Kantian morality."(176)

The subject would be a form of the precarious *proper*. Raw assertion of alterity cannot finalize sacrificial immunity achievable only, for Derrida, in the proper/improper collapse, the perfection of the oscillation of impotence and omnipotence shown to occur within each figure, and not distributed over different, and thus dialectically combustible entities. The remainder's absence has as its consequence the appearance of the experiences of lack and adequacy over different, spaced individuals and the hungry chase can be the only result.

In an essay written on Barthes on the occasion of the critic's death: "I sought, like him, as him, . . . a

certain kind of mimicry that is at the same time one's duty (to take him into myself, to identify with him so as to allow his word to be itself, to make it present and to represent it faithfully) and the worst of all temptations, the most indecent, the most murderous. The gift and the withholding of the gift--the choice is impossible."(177) It is with the mediation of the remains that the goal of the perfection of the oscillation is approached, for example, in the case of Mallarmé:

> We are faced then with mimicry imitating nothing. . . . There is no simple reference. It is in this that the mime's operation does allude, but alludes to nothing. . . . Mallarmé thus preserves the differential structure of mimicry or mimesis, but without its Platonic or metaphysical interpretation, which implies that somewhere the being of something that *is*, is being imitated.(178)

Gans writes that "The time of separation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, between form and its dissolution, is the time of deferral of violence--the time of culture itself."(179) Derrida might be described as seeking to bring to a conclusion an oppositely achieved version of deferral.

The process concluding in the *destorying* of difference (i.e. in *différance*), the final collapse into a single moment of what had been the distinguishable episodes of the onset of identification with an impressive other and its conclusion exfoliating in time, was set in motion by the birth of the neoclassical, "the result of the integration of Christian ethical values into the classical esthetic."(180) Approximately aware of his role in this tradition is Derrida: "Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? [. . .] We live in and of the difference, that is in *hypocrisy*. . . ."(181) A constitutive allergy to charismatically focused resentment tipping into sacrifice has its issue in the neoclassical project of the development of oppositely divaricating strategies of tension mitigation, in two-directioned flight from the solution of the compact group. The neoclassical is the name of a double loss of tension. If "the notion of sacrifice is indeed a category of thought of yesterday,"(182) this is due to the use of polarized depersonalizing effects of scale. By supersizing and downsizing that with which identification is encouraged, the neoclassical works towards Aristotle avoidance, the unlearning of the lesson of the dead or the imagined dead.

19

As Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is the first integral expression of this position, it merits Derrida's particular attention. Flinching before the interpersonal struggle that was the exclusive focus of the poetics of an Aristotle, Kant rehabilitated the natural world, finding the beautiful in flowers and birds on the one hand, and the sublime in a species-sized empathy mediated by inhumanly vast landscapes on the other. Tension mitigation was achieved through a two-directioned move outside the social, through a straining from within the esthetic as cultural production to at once rise above and fall below it, through a hollowing out of a place of respite from the *agon*, between beautiful and the sublime, that now-evacuated space within which had been learned the lessons of tragic discipline.

"The esthetic of market society thrives on its hostility to market exchange,"(183) it has been noted. To be added is that the market requires reflexes that are contradictory in their expression of hostility to envious superego overdevelopment. In order to protect itself from itself, from the various forces that might emerge to variously calm the turbulence that is its vitality, the market invites down upon itself friendly fire summoned from two directions. Required are two tension mitigations, two kinds of relief from the pressure to adore, and each warning as well of the dangers posed by its oppositely pressing Other. Welcomed on the one hand are the insults and eccentricities, the stimulating, self-limitingly

lawlessnesses that constitute permissions to always changing, always controlled percentages of the population to undauntedly release insubordinate thoughts and deeds into the system that turns the irritants to account; for needful it is of ever greater levels of differentiation, of deritualized, i.e. unpredictably emerging, atomized renewals. On the other hand, imbalances in wealth and levels of recognition hasten the market to proactively calm dysfunctionalizing struggles and block thus the perhaps even more dysfunctionalizing solutions to them by dosing itself with a variety of empathic moralities. (Sartre: "I suffer in all bodies.") The promotion of irreducible difference cannot go unaccompanied. The one autocritique requires the other, as each sentinel is charged with warning of the consequences of the other's unlimited success.

Contrast mitigation that results in the drive to equate the beautiful with the entirety of experience characteristic of both Kant's downsizing and supersizing can urge towards pantheist enthusiasms. Zizek: "And it seems as if today we love in an age of new Spinozism: the ideology of late capitalism is, at least in some of its fundamental features, 'Spinozist.'"(184) For, although the charismatic features present in the Judeo-Christian tradition can be argued to function ironically, that is deployed against themselves, the neoclassical is sensitive to the danger that the irony can be missed, that these religions can fold too easily back into the sacrificial.

"Art produces the effect of making the market disappear"(185) (Bourdieu). Putting the matter with more precision, the market protects itself by causing itself to disappear in two directions simultaneously. In infinite autocritique it takes flight from itself, both towards the forms of identification associated with the remainder, and towards the empathic, both of which patterns are "not meant for the market" (Gans), both of which involve a flight from the esthetic because of its residual relations with sacrifice and the market. In his distance between the beautiful and the sublime, Kant establishes the model that will not cease to be ever more rigorously submitted to a spreading that is a trumping from within its assumptions.

With a rigor always impressive, Derrida finds in Kant a Gothic author. Careful listening--there were the moans of the victims emanating from beneath the floorboards--resulted in the terrible conclusion that *The Critique of Judgment* was a haunted house. The ghost of the invitation to tragedy made a deceitfully decorous appearance in the beautiful, as we have seen, and Derrida was able to track the attempt to camouflage in the sublime the murderous sequential organization of the ritual process. Derrida wants out, and he turns to the talisman guarantee negligently made available by Kant to those lucid enough to sense the horror that the text had sought to protect from full view. The attachment to the remainder rock casts light backwards, clarifying that developments since Kant constitute a twofold besting of his efforts at charismatic mitigation, to push ever further in the directions of each of his two flights, flights from the sanguinary gravity of the center to which the author of the third *Critique* was perceived to remain still too closely, albeit invisibly tethered. Adorno on the options that must be transcended: "Spellbound, the living have a choice between involuntary ataraxy--an esthetic life due to weakness--and the bestiality of involvement."(186) The lesson of Derrida is that the alternatives are not opposites, as in either option adoring has not come to an end. The contrastively posed buttresses, exerting opposing tensions, are effective only as they are ever more spaced from one another and distinguishable from what it is they have been invented to support.

20

The ambiguous figure of the modern democratic subject--master of himself but disincarnated element of a national totality--has its specific French history. A richly overdetermined allergy to the market has

resulted in an ingrained skepticism regarding the possibility that a system of exchange can offer a source of ethical truth. As Voltaire already knew in his "Letter on Commerce," France was and would be a reluctant participant. More richly developed here than elsewhere were the grounds for our double, uncompromising critique. What specifically appeared to block French economic development to Voltaire was what sociologist Michel Crozier terms "a culture of prowess," an ideal of lonely, useless defiance associated with the values of the ancient *noblesse d'épée*, involving an unproductive form of prestige, a focus upon an atomized sense of its honor, often hostile to centralizing projects of royal authority. At once contrasting and improbably blending with this were the Jacobin tradition of universalism and the related phenomenon Crozier terms "*l'horreur du face-à-face*."(187) Causing the extremes to appear relatively unchecked except by one another is the fact of the domination of France's modern history by a middle class far more institutional than entrepreneurial in its orientation. The lack of affection for the market characterizing this national middle class caused it to be less than likely to exert any moderating pressure upon the double Kant-topping temptations of critique.

French thought thus often came to establish unbuffered residence at the extreme destinations of neoclassical flight and to know there its only comfort. Maddened, on two sides, are the tensions between market and what is not the market. And it is just for this reason it becomes a particularly attractive import. Integrally neoclassical was the Sartre who praised at once the headless mob that was his "group-in-fusion" and the subversions of a Genet, laughably unemployable by any mass movement. Artaud and Bataille provide the clearest of examples, as does Foucault, whose attentions were so often focused upon the lonely, hopefully invulnerable difference, and who also praised the mobs of Tehran of 1980. Thinkers who fly in but one of Kant's directions can drop from our comfort zone. Girard describes an "apocalypse of peace" (Gans), but the downsizing move is clearly absent from his books. (Hence the fading of the powers of his model when it meets with the classics of the school of Derrida's "remainder.") While Girard's system has its relation to Kant's sublime, Derrida might be described as adopting the anti-sacrificial strategy located on the beauty side of Kant's continuum that has its end point in the rock. Thus, as I have sought to show, Derrida--because of the distrust of fusion--is closer to the Frankfurt School than he is to some other French thinkers. And this is what must be sensed in France where he is often thought of as more of an international than a specifically French figure.

Promiscuous production of unmolestable difference involves collateral damage--the undoing of the collective that one can find Derrida, more recently, seeking to correct. From the book on Marx, where he speaks of the present "[as] a time when a new world disorder attempts to install its neocapitalism and neoliberalism."(188) What is the meaning of neoliberalism for Derrida? It is a system that has as its goal "the questioning of all collective structures capable of placing obstacles in the path of the logic of the pure market."(189) Has Derrida infused the group with a volatility he is not completely prepared to accept? Perhaps the emergence in France, especially since 1980, of a variety of decomposing factors, such as very high unemployment, debates over immigration and nationality, ruptures between social classes and parties (what has been called the desociologization of politics), the decline of the ideological Left and the rise of the National Front, anxieties about penetrations of American values, and so on, has contributed to leading Derrida to make appearances also at the empathic pole of critique.

What at once distances and brings together the deferrals of deconstruction and generative anthropology can be clarified with reference to a debate that Alexandre Kojève had with himself over the look of the future. With what consequences have now become famously clear, Kojève distinguished between two objectalities: while animal desire was for things, human desire desired other desires. In the language of

the Hegel he described himself as glossing, the human goal was to be "recognized," that is to say, imagined by surrounding others to have a relation with the world that was not mediated. Through the eyes of desiring others, one impossibly hoped to see oneself as no longer desiring. The dialectic would come to an end, Kojève first suggested, with the conclusion of the struggle for recognition, when material conditions permitted an entire society to return to the asocial desiring of the animal. This situation had been achieved in the United States, it was argued.

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But a 1959 visit to the East suggested that this tawdry verdict was to be replaced by another. The future, instead of being shaped by the sated Americans, would know only the pattern encountered in contemporary Japan.(190) There continued here the search for recognition that had seemed to conclude in our animal utopia, but the extreme estheticization of culture in this Japan had led to the replacement of the negations with historical effects by cautious, barely perceptible, barely one-upping displays of difference, expressed through attachments to insignificant objects. The negation of the real as risk of life had been replaced by the negation of the real as a discrete snobbery, historically if not economically insignificant. The utopia of no socially significant object had been replaced by the utopia of the almost socially insignificant object.

"Remainder" objectality, an attempt to achieve, in Kojève's terms, a human desire that was as close to the animal version as possible, is an objectal anobjectality. "The text excludes dialectics,"(191) Derrida writes at one point. On the apotropaic dimension of circumcision, he says: "This . . . is not dialectical, but plays with the dialectical. The feint consists in pretending to lose, to castrate oneself, to kill oneself in order to cut death off."(192) Benjamin: "Happiness of the collector. . . . the lonely happiness of being in a *tête-à-tête* with things. [. . .] We are then alone with things as they silently order themselves about us, and even the humans who emerge, complicitous, adapt themselves to the confident silence of things. The collector thus 'appeases' his destiny."(193) Not knowing whether the hapless diffrerence that is the remainder simply stopped the dialectic or kept it minimally alive, Derrida could make use of Benjamin's expression "dialectics at a standstill."

As there is naught but that movement from auto-affection to hetero-affection and back of which Derrida speaks, the deferral of the market and that of the remainder (that is not the market) can differ only in the relative degrees to which an externally generated violence is or is not encouraged by each to have a role in the process of the movement from identification to its end. Although one deferral is about market participation and the other its avoidance, each is about the dialectic tightening that frustrates the charismatically-focused group (Zizek on the fear: "The more the logic of Capital becomes universal, the more its opposite will assume features of 'irrational fundamentalism.'"(194)) The two degrees of mitigation are about a division of labor supporting the global task of allowing numberless specificities. While the remainder is about the infinite availability of difference, about not allowing difference a chance to die violently, the market is about putting this difference to work in the form of the *new* itself, the antisocial that is always already extinguished as such. The extreme points of shrinkage are achieved when the life force of individuation is located not in the absolute difference of the Other, but in something that remains between us, unabsorbed, that which serves "propriation better in that it is proper to no one"(195) Then "the noncenter [is experienced] otherwise than as loss of the center."(196) The justice of each involves seeking a tightening of the dialectic by establishing a center of gravity that is outside the self, in what we each have access to. In its embrace of the market, generative anthropology stands

between the two neoclassical lines of flight; it may not be what they are, but it is what causes them to be. Posed between the two fleeing movements that would be blurred in the impossible figure of the Nietzschean empath is the generative anthropology that it is difficult for this moral oxymoron to sympathetically know. The market can feel comfort in neither anesthetic position, yet requires their sleepless haunting. While one deferral is the market, the other, while not being *not* the market, is the duty of its self-contempt. Despite the mutual aversion there is the shared knowledge of the impossibility of the center as well as the complicity in the shared, elated question: "And where are *not* the compensations to be found?"

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Notes

1. Hors-série No. 32 (February 1998).(back)
2. According to journalist Dinitia Smith, in "Philosopher Gamely in Defence of his Ideas," *The New York Times* of May 30, 1998, p. A 13.(back)
3. At least great European, if not a major philosopher. On April 30, the magazine published a list of "les 101 Champions de l'Europe." His place is explained in revealingly unFrench terms: "'Le chauffeur de taxi à Buenos Aires, lève les yeux au ciel: "Ah la France! Derrida. . . .' Les philosophes modernes français s'exportent bien, et parmi eux Jacques Derrida, 68 ans occupe une place à part: depuis de début des années 70, notre déconstructioniste national partage son temps entre la France et les Etats-Unis où il est une véritable star. Il a enseigné à Johns Hopkins, Yale, Irvine, et a obtenu un diplôme honoraire de Cambridge University en 1992. . . évidemment très controversé!" (*Le Nouvel observateur*, No. 1747, April 30-May 6, 1998; p. 10).(back)
4. "A Qui vont les aides à la traduction?" *Lire*, No. 265 (May 1998), p. 45. The anonymous author sports with the language attached to the French "good Samaritan law." "Nonassistance à personne en danger" is the crime of neglecting an endangered person.(back)
5. Derrida, "Economimesis," trans. Richard Klein, *Diacritics*, 11 (1981), p. 3.(back)
6. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 284.(back)
7. "This Strange Institution Called Literature," trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 36-37.(back)
8. *Signs of Paradox; Irony, Resentment and Other Mimetic Structures* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 22.(back)
9. *Signs of Paradox*, p. 148.(back)
10. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 122.(back)
11. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. 125.(back)
12. Quoted in "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 90.(back)
13. *Of Grammatology*, p. 306.(back)

14. p. 292, for example.(back)
15. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 222.(back)
16. Quoted in "Violence and Metaphysics," *Writing and Difference*, p. 102.(back)
17. "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 266.(back)
18. *Of Grammatology*, p. 137.(back)
19. *Of Grammatology*, p. 113.(back)
20. *Of Grammatology*, p. 136.(back)
21. *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1983), pp. 27-28.(back)
22. *The New York Times*, May 30, 1998, p. A 15.(back)
23. "There is No One Narcissism," *Points. . . ; Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 199.(back)
24. *Inventions of Difference. On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 35.(back)
25. *Of Grammatology*, p. 165-166.(back)
26. *Of Grammatology*, p. 165.(back)
27. *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 78-79.(back)
28. *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 56.(back)
29. "Aphorism Countertime," trans. Nicholas Royle, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 420.(back)

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30. "Economimesis," trans. R. Klein, *Diacritics*, 11, no. 2 (Summer 1981),p. 18.(back)
31. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 68.(back)
32. *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 259. (back)
33. *Memoirs of the Blind*, p. 122.(back)
34. *Of Grammatology*, p. 222.(back)
35. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 327.(back)
36. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 267.(back)
37. "White Mythology," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 216.(back)
38. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 380. (translation modified)(back)
39. *Glas*, p. 209.(back)

40. "The Force of Law," in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. D. Cornell et al. (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 15.(back)
41. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p. 177.(back)
42. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 242.(back)
43. *Glas*, p. 162.(back)
44. *Glas*, p. 160.(back)
45. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 22.(back)
46. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 120.(back)
47. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 281.(back)
48. *Negaative Dialectics*, p. 139.(back)
49. *L'Entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 229.(back)
50. *Fragments. Cool Memories III, 1990-1995*, trans. Emily Agar (New York: Verso, 1997), p. 9.(back)
51. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 197. (back)
52. "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 231.(back)
53. *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 140. (back)
54. Ricoeur, in *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 30.(back)
55. "Hegel, la mort et le sacrifice," quoted in "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 257.(back)
56. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 143.(back)
57. Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) p. 179. (back)
58. "Différance," in *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 143.(back)
59. "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 230.(back)
60. *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 264. Klein is also complained of when he writes:"We have remarked. . . the extent to which children use the indefinite not as something indeterminate but, on the contrary, as an individuating function within a collectivity. That is why we are dumbfounded by the efforts of psychoanalysis, which desperately wants there to be something definite hidden behind the indefinite, a possessive, a person. When the child says '*a* belly, '*a* horse,' the psychoanalyst hears 'my belly. . . . " p. 58. And:"The psychoanalyst wants there to be, at all costs, a definite, a possessive, a personal, hidden behind the indefinite. When M. Klein's children say 'a tummy' or ask 'How do people grow up?' MK hears 'my mummy's tummy' or 'Will I be big like my daddy?'" p. 106.(back)
61. *Originary Thinking*, p. 137.(back)

62. "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering,'" trans. David Wood, in *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Wood (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992), p. 21.(back)
63. *Glas*, pp.1-2.(back)

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64. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 179.(back)
65. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 152.(back)
66. "Economimesis," p. 21.(back)
67. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 244.(back)
68. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 328.(back)
69. *Positions*, p. 44.(back)
70. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 292.(back)
71. That each fetish has the potential to function contrastively is noticed in Derrida's view of metaphor: Metaphor, therefore, is determined by philosophy as a provisional loss of meaning, an economy of the proper without irreparable damage, a certainly inevitable detour, but also a history with its sights set on, and within the horizon of, the circular reappropriation of literal, proper meaning. This is why the philosophical evaluation of metaphor always has been ambiguous: metaphor is dangerous and foreign as concerns *intuition* (vision or contact), concept (the grasping or proper presence of the signified), and consciousness (proximity or self-presence); but it is in complicity with what it endangers, is necessary to it to the extent to which the de-tour is a re-turn guided by the function of resemblance (*mimesis* or *homoiosis*), under the law of the same. "White Mythology," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 270. Metaphor can be the classical fetish or the unclassical, "the wandering of the semantic," making possible "a nonmasterable dissemination." "White Mythology," pp. 241, 248.(back)
72. *Writing and Difference*, p. 13.(back)
73. "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 273.(back)
74. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 94.(back)
75. *Glas*, p. 72.(back)
76. *Glas*, p. 72.(back)
77. *Of Grammatology*, p. 243.(back)
78. *Glas*, p. 134.(back)
79. "Plato's Pharmacy," *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 132.(back)
80. *Of Grammatology*, p. 292.(back)
81. *Of Grammatology*, p. 39.(back)
82. *Of Grammatology*, p. ?(back)

83. *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 78.(back)
84. *Of Grammatology*, p. 20.(back)
85. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 28.(back)
86. *The Truth in Painting*, pp. 130-31.(back)
87. *Glas*, p. 71.(back)
88. *Glas*, p. 207.(back)
89. *Paris, capitale du XIXe siècle*, trans. Jean Lacoste (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1997), p. 385.(back)
90. *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952). p. 80.(back)
91. *Oeuvres*, ed. Y.-A. Favre (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1992), p. 349. The French: "La pièce de monnaie, exhumée aux arènes, présente, face, une figure sereine et, pile, le chiffre brutal universel."(back)
92. *The Tain of the Mirror; Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 232.(back)
93. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 363.(back)
94. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 260.(back)
95. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 265.(back)
96. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 31.(back)
97. "Structure, Sign, and Play," p. 279.(back)
98. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 190.(back)
99. René Char, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 579. (N'incitez pas les mots à faire une politique de masse.")(back)

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100. *Of Grammatology*, p. 17.(back)
101. *Of Grammatology*, p. 240.(back)
102. *Glas*, p. 118.(back)
103. *Glas*, p. 2.(back)
104. Quoted in *Of Grammatology*, p. 333. The anti-Fritz is Rousseau: According to Rousseau, the child is the name of that which should not relate in any way to a separated signifier, loved in some way for itself, like a fetish. This perverse use of the signifier is in a certain way at once forbidden and tolerated by the structure of imitation. As soon as a signifier is no longer imitative, undoubtedly the threat of perversion becomes acute. But already within imitation, the gap between the thing and its double, that is to say between the sense and its image, assures a lodging for falsehood, falsification and vice. *Of Grammatology*, p. 204-5. (back)
105. *Of Grammatology*, p. 34.(back)
106. *Of Grammatology*, p. 226.(back)

107. The "trans-sense" features of language was famously insisted upon by the Russian Formalists, praised by Derrida in *Positions*.(back)
108. *Voice and Phenomena*, p. 38.(back)
109. G, p. 18.(back)
110. *Positions*, p. 22.(back)
111. *The Post Card; From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Universwity of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 53.(back)
112. *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 86.(back)
113. *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 76.(back)
114. *Of Grammatology*, p. 50.(back)
115. *Positions*, p. 22.(back)
116. *Of Grammatology*, p. ?(back)
117. *Of Grammatology*, p. 270.(back)
118. *Of Grammatology*, p. 312.(back)
119. "Telepathy," trans. Nicholas Royle, *Oxford Literary Review*, 10 (1988), p. 23.(back)
120. *Of Grammatology*, p. 165.(back)
121. *Of Grammatology*, p. 281.(back)
122. *Signé/Ponge*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 32.(back)
123. *Of Grammatology*, p. 39.(back)
124. *Of Grammatology*, p. 240.(back)
125. *Of Grammatology*, p. 148.(back)
126. *Of Grammatology*, p. 235-36.(back)
127. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 193.(back)
128. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, p. 146.(back)
129. "Biodegradables," trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry*, 15:4 (1989), p. 845.(back)
130. "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, p. 144.(back)
131. *Grammatology*, p. 170.(back)
132. *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie*, p. 98. ("Ne scelle pas, c'est-à-dire ne ferme pas mais aussi ne signe pas.")(back)
133. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 374.(back)
134. *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 188.(back)
135. "Plato's Pharmacy," p. 144.(back)
136. *The Truth in Painiting*, p. 344.(back)

137. "The Purveyer of Truth," p. 99(back)

138. *Glas*, p. 94. The importance of this passage to Derrida is clear in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), on p. 18. where he quotes himself. There are many such formulations, e.g. from "The Law of Genre": "What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law [of genre] itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the a priori of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order and reason?" p.22.(back)

139. *The Truth in Painting*, p. 33.(back)

140. "Plato's Pharmacy," p. 124.(back)

141. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 33.(back)

142. *Grammatology*, p. 222.(back)

143. *Grammatology*, p. 59.(back)

144. *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 27-28. Another example from this text: "[I]n philosophy we. . . seek to immerse ourselves in things that are heterogeneous to it, without placing those things in prefabricated categories. We want to adhere as closely to the heterogeneous as the programs of phenomenology and of Simmel tried in vain to do; our aim is total self-relinquishment." (p. 13)(back)

145. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 139.(back)

146. *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: Universityof Chicago Press, 1987), p. 73.(back)

147. *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: Universityof Chicago Press, 1987), p. 81.(back)

148. *Truth in Painting*, p. 19.(back)

149. *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 69.(back)

150. *Memoirs of the Blind*, p. 68.(back)

151. *SignéPonge*, p. 66.(back)

152. *Glas*, p. 46.(back)

153. *Glas*, p. 67. The protecting power of a violence that has already occurred is also a theme of De Man. In his analysis of Shelley's "The Triumph of Life," De Man refers to the illustrations and figures on the blank pages that follow the unfinished manuscript: The poem is sheltered from the performance of disfiguration by the power of its negative knowledge. But this knowledge is powerless to prevent what now functions as the decisive textual articulation: its reduction to the status of a fragment brought about by the actual death and subsequent disfigurement of Shelley's body, burned after his boat capsized and he drowned off the coast of Lerici. This defaced body is present in the margin of the last manuscript page and has become an inseparable part of the poem. At this point, figuration and cognition are actually interrupted by an event which shapes the text

but which is not present in its represented or articulated meaning. It may seem a freak of chance to have a text thus molded by an actual occurrence, yet the reading of "The Triumph of Life" establishes that this mutilated textual model exposes the wound of a fracture that lies hidden in all texts.
In "Shelley Disfigured," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Continuum, 1979), pp. 66-67.(back)

154. *Glas*, p. 138.(back)
155. *Glas*, p. 121.(back)
156. *L'Objet singulier* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), p. 97.(back)
157. "Raising bafflement to a high point of moral principle," very aptly reports Christopher Norris, in "Textuality, Difference, and Cutlural Otherness: Deconstruction versus Postmodernism," *Common Knowledge* Vol. 3, No. 3 (Winter 1994) , p. 50.(back)
158. *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 141. (back)
159. "Violence and Metaphysics," p. 125.(back)
160. "Violence and Metaphysics," p. 151. The use of the expression "heterological thought" involves reference to Bataille, for whom the heterological produced the sacrificial.(back)
161. "Plato's Pharmacy," p. 143.(back)
162. *Signé/Ponge*, p. 14.(back)
163. *Singé/Ponge*, p. 88.(back)
164. *Signé/Ponge*, p. 88.(back)
165. *Singé/Ponge*, p. 136.(back)
166. *Singé/Ponge*, p. 60.(back)
167. *Signé/Ponge*, p. 60.(back)
168. *Glas*, p. 51.(back)
169. "La Parole souflée," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 181.(back)
170. "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 273.(back)

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171. *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 130.(back)
172. *Signé/Ponge*, p. 138.(back)
173. "The Time of a Thesis: Punctuations," in *Philosophy in France Today*, ed. Alan Montefiore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 50.(back)
174. *Signé/Ponge*, p. 14.(back)
175. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 39.(back)
176. *Passions* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), pp. 39-40.(back)

177. "Les Morts de Roland Barthes," in *Psyché; Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), p. 277.(back)
178. "The Double Session," in *Dissemination*, p. 206.(back)
179. *Originary Thinking*, p. 141.(back)
180. *Originary Thinking*, p. 150.(back)
181. "Violence and Metaphysics," p. 153.(back)
182. Marcel Detienne, "Culinary Prctices and the Spirit of Sacrifice," in Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, eds., *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 20.(back)
183. *Originary Thinking*, p. 165.(back)
184. *Tarrying with the Negative*, p. 218. Zizek is no enthusiast: "Where, then are we to look for the way out of this vicious circle of late-capitalist Spinozism?" p. 219.(back)
185. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 81.(back)
186. *Negative Dialectic*s, p. 364.(back)
187. For a summary of Crozier's invaluable analyses of French social patterns, see Stanley Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking, 1974).(back)
188. *Specters of Marx*, trans. P. Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 37.(back)
189. "L'essence du néoliberalisme," *Le Monde diplomatique* (March 1998), p. 3.(back)
190. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968 [1947]), p. 437.(back)
191. "Plato's Pharmacy," p. 122.(back)
192. *Glas*, p. 210.(back)
193. *Paris, capitale du XIXe siècle*, trans. from the German by Jean Lacoste (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1997), p. 861.(back)
194. *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 220.(back)
195. *The Post Card; From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 358.(back)
196. *Writing and Difference*, p. 292.(back)

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Intentionality, Originarity, and the "Always Already"

In Derrida and Gans

Tobias Foshay

Department of English
University of Victoria
Victoria, BC
Canada V8W 3P4
tfoshay@sol.uvic.ca
Temporary: taf21@hermes.cam.ac.uk

Jacques Derrida's practice of deconstruction and Eric Gans's genealogy of culture known as Generative Anthropology likewise approach, from their respective viewpoints, the question of "the origin of language." Derrida's critique of metaphysics and Gans's anthropological model of culture are similarly theoretical, non-empirical, and non-empiricist attempts to generate a post-philosophical "human science" (assuming the Heideggerian erasures that such a non-philosophical thinking would require of both terms of this characterization). Gans's and Derrida's perspectives on language are certainly divergent in proportion to their respective modes of discursive engagement with the tasks, on the one hand, of a Derridean "double science" of grammatology or, on the other, of a Gansian originary thinking about a generative scene of culture in the emergence of representation. Yet, despite such opposing structures of thought about language's definitive status, in Gans's most recent book, *Signs of Paradox*, Derrida emerges as the most frequent and significant interlocutor for GA. Indeed, deconstruction is cast in *Signs of Paradox* as "GA unrealized." Toward, the end of the "Introduction," Gans asserts:

> If indeed language from the very first is a trace supplementary to a lost presence, so that the event it pretends to commemorate does not precede it but is in effect coeval with it, . . .--I think this a fair summary of Derrida's position in *De la grammatologie*--then all the theory of writing, of the supplement, of deferral, is in effect a theory of the originary event. (7)

The emphasis by Derrida on the mutually generating relation of language and consciousness sustains the enclosure of thought within an internal, disseminating, infinitely deferred relation between human beings and their object(s). In being "always already" within the horizon of a language through which we come to know ourselves as definitive over against other species (at least immanently) by our very use of language, then we cannot know ourselves "objectively," in accordance with the canons of a logic defined by the principles of noncontradiction and adequation.

Gans goes on to say in the above passage:

> It suffices to understand the always-already not as an abstract model formulated in the framework of metaphysics, but as a concrete one realized in an ostensive context among beings who only learn about their death because thinking is a life-and-death operation. (7)

Gans sets the co-implication of language and specifically human consciousness within an hypothetical originary narrative that can give concrete form to our thinking about the human and cultural objective, thus enabling a representation of the contradictory and paradoxical character of experience and a constructively heuristic model of culture. Gans presents the latter as an alternative to deconstruction, insofar, he says, as it is open and generative of understanding rather than infinitely regressive and disseminative:

2

> When [theorists of the "always already"] have deconstructed the categories of human thought down to their founding paradox, they think they have found our thinking's fatal weakness, when in fact they have arrived at the source of its strength. Thought acquires new degrees of freedom not by expelling paradox, but reproducing its pattern of supplementation. (7-8)

I propose to explore Gans's assertions here regarding the deconstruction of "the categories . . . down to their founding paradox" and also his alternative reproduction of the "pattern of supplementation" of paradox. I will use Gans's and Derrida's respective analyses of Plato in the former's chapter in *Signs of Paradox*, titled "Plato and the Birth of Conceptual Thought," and the latter's "Plato's Pharmacy" (1972).

I

In "Plato's Pharmacy" Derrida locates a "founding paradox" of Platonism in the permutations undergone by the term *pharmakon* across Plato's work. Derrida focuses on the *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates debates the nature both of erotic love and of rhetoric with his friend Phaedrus, a passionate lover of oratory. Early in the dialogue, Socrates refers to the manuscript of a speech by the sophist Lysias, which Phaedrus has on his person, as a drug (*pharmakon*) by which he is drawn to leave his habitual abode within the city walls. Liddell and Scott tells us that, as drug, *pharmakon* is either "healing or noxious"; it is also "an enchanted poison, philtre: hence, charm, spell"; and also a "medicine" or "poison." The at least bivalent, ambiguous reference of *pharmakon* serves Derrida well as a "founding paradox":

> This *pharmakon,* this "medicine," this philter, which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence. This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination, can be--alternatively or simultaneously--beneficent or maleficent. The *pharmakon* would be a *substance*--with all that that word can connote in terms of matter with occult virtues, cryptic depths refusing to submit their ambivalence to analysis, already paving the way for alchemy--if we didn't have eventually to come to recognize it as antisubstance itself: that which resists any philosopheme, indefinitely exceeding its bounds as nonidentity, nonessence, nonsubstance; granting philosophy by that very fact the inexhaustible adversity of what funds it and the infinite abyss of what founds it. (70)

Derrida finds, in the ambivalence of *pharmakon* and in its association with the written text of a speech (in this case a sophistic, and, thus, *ghostwritten* speech [69]), the locus of a founding instability in Plato's discourse between rhetoric and dialectic, persuasion and reason, dead and living knowledge, falsehood and truth, *mythos* and *logos*. That such an ambivalent term should arise early in the text of the *Phaedrus* in reference to so ambiguous an entity as a written speech speaks volumes to Derrida in that it initiates a relation between speech and writing which is threaded throughout the dialogue and which emerges in the concluding lines as capstone of its themes and arguments. The association of *pharmakon* with the relation between speech and writing becomes Derrida's principal concern in "Plato's Pharmacy," a text which traces the argumentation on the status of writing begun in *Of Grammatology* (1967) in relation to Saussure and Rousseau to its earlier emergence:

> . . . to the permanence of a Platonic schema that assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position. Not that this happens especially and exclusively in Plato. . . . But the fact that "Platonism," which sets up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality, should not escape the generality of this structural constraint, and even illustrates it with incomparable subtlety and force, stands out as all the more significant. (76)

Note here that Derrida is apparently concerned not to locate either the priority of the father, of speech over writing, or of the "whole of Western metaphysics" in "Plato" or even in "his" texts, but rather in the entity "Platonism." What the relation is between Plato and Platonism is not here explored. The rhetoric of the passage is odd. Why would one expect Platonism to escape "the generality of this structural constraint" of paternal originarity? The inconsequence of the assumption might be argued to inversely suggest that Plato is indeed the origin of a "schema" that pervades Western metaphysics "in its conceptuality," a schema that is designated by the concept "Platonism," however mediate its filial relation to Plato's works. Plato's authorship and paternity of those interests of Derrida's here in a schema distributing historic and structural relation between speech and writing is internally and necessarily very much at issue.

3

In the passage previously cited in which Derrida observes the emergence of the signifier *pharmakon* in the text of the *Phaedrus*, with its inherent instability, we should again pay close attention to his rhetoric: "This *pharmakon*, . . . which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of the discourse with all its ambivalence" (70). *Pharmakon* "acts," as it were independently, and "already introduces itself" as if prior to any design or paternity of Socrates the speaker or, indeed, of Plato, the dramatist. Indeed, it is not until the very end of the dialogue, with Socrates' account of writing in the myth of Theuth, that Derrida is prepared to attribute any intentional connection on Plato's part of *pharmakon* with writing:

> Up to this point in the dialogue, one can say that the *pharmakon* and the grapheme have been beckoning to each other from afar . . . with an effectiveness that is quite discrete and after all unintentional. (73)

This until "the last phase of the dialogue": "This time it is without indirection, without hidden mediation, without secret argumentation, that writing is proposed, presented, and asserted as a *pharmakon* (274e)" (73). Plato, then, is not directing the plot of such a convergence in the closing lines of his dialogue, but responding belatedly to *pharmakon* and grapheme "beckoning to each other from afar," their "hidden

mediation," their "secret argumentation" (who is "arguing" here?), the agency of a discursivity of which he as author is not author, master, or father in some not fully specified sense, a discursivity which is always already beyond a containment in the "structural constraint" of a "Platonic schema."

Derrida has earlier reminded us that the dialogue contains "the only ‘rigorously original Platonic myths: the fable of the cicadas in the *Phaedrus*, and the story of Theuth in the same dialogue'" (67; citing Frutiger). The latter tell of the god Theuth (or Thoth) "who first discovered number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and, above all else, writing" (274 c-d). Theuth comes to Ammon, king of Thebes, to persuade him of the benefits of all his arts for the city. Of writing, Theuth asserts: "O King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory" (274e). Ammon, however, accuses Theuth of partiality toward the art he has invented:

> [Your] affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. . . . You have not discovered a potion (*pharmakon*) for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality. Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught . . . they will merely appear to be wise instead of really being so. (275a-b).

Derrida glosses this passage and the role in it of writing as *pharmakon*, contrasting the *lethe* of writing with the *aletheia* of "living speech":

> If one takes the king's word for it, then, it is this life of the memory that the *pharmakon* of writing would come to hypnotize . . . it will sink down into *lethe*, overcome by non-knowledge and forgetfulness. Memory and truth cannot be separated. The movement of *aletheia* is a deployment of *mneme* through and through. (105)

Mneme as living *anamnesis*, a recollection that makes present, is contrasted with *hypomnesis*, a mere recalling of signs through the mediate, monumental and dead letter of writing. But Derrida points to the dialectical interimplication of these distinctions, their inability to sustain strict autonomy or the stability of their semantic frontier:

> The boundary (between inside and outside, living and nonliving) separates not only speech from writing but also memory as an unveiling (re-) producing a presence from rememoration as the mere repetition of a monument. . . . The space of writing, space *as* writing, is opened up in the violent movement of this surrogation, in the difference between *mneme* and *hypomnesis*. The outside is already *within* the work of memory. . . . A limitless memory would in any event be not memory but infinite self-presence. Memory always therefore already needs signs in order to recall the non-present, with which it is necessarily in relation. The movement of dialectics bears witness to this. (109)

The *pharmakon*, as an undecidable medicine/poison, represents for Derrida, then, the fund of differences not yet stabilized into substances, entities, identities. The introduction of this space, the difference between writing and speech, is an expulsion of space and difference from speech as an interior, self-present immediacy, projecting all delay and mediation into an externality of sign and inscriptions in the world. Dialectics is the art by which the crucial distinctions and connections are made, but it is conditioned, Derrida argues, by a founding "antidote" to the unstable difference of the *pharmakon*; dialectics is the *pharmakon* (medicine) against the *pharmakon* (poison):

> In order to cure the [*logos-zoon*] of the *pharmakon* and rid it of the parasite, it is thus necessary to put the outside in its place. To keep the outside out. this is the inaugural gesture of "logic" itself, of good "sense" insofar as it accords with the self-identity of *that which is*. (128)

Dialectics as antidote, then, is a differentiation of self and other, a marking off of those differences which are extraneous and alien to each other from those capable of an interweaving (*sumploke*) and uniting in a noble tension capable of the "divine bond," as between moderation and courage in the *Statesman* (310a). "Dialectics," as Derrida observes, "an art of weaving, a science of the *sumploke*" (122), which unites those elements which are in a tension with one another capable of sublation, excluding those which are merely heteronomous, endlessly proliferating and disseminating. Between those differences which can be dialectically reconciled and those that are merely alien to one another, between a symploke (a weaving, hence unifying) and a chiasmus (a mere intersection without blending) what is the identity/difference? Is there a Platonic and Hegelian identity of identity and difference or a Heideggerian and Derridean difference of identity and difference (Gasche 87)?

II

While Derrida, in "Plato's Pharmacy," argues that Plato achieves the stability of the conceptual signified by means of a repressive expulsion of difference and of the materiality of the signifier, Gans, in "Plato and the Birth of Conceptual Thought," argues that it is the avoidance of the rich ostensivity of the originary scene that constitutes the founding gesture of a metaphysics overtaken by a historicity of culture that it felt the need to foreclose. Both arguments confront metaphysics with ethical-analytic criticisms: "conceptual reason" has failed by reason of a residual violence or violation in its self-constitution. In Derrida, this violence is an arbitrariness that haunts and equivocates the internal structure of reason itself, while in Gans reason forecloses on the historical and experiential rootedness of thinking as a concrete project of human culture: the openendedness of human life is defined by the avoidance of a violence which constantly conditions and threatens that quintessential freedom.

As with Derrida, metaphysics emerges for Gans with Plato, and it does so as a forgetting of the concrete, temporal and experiential relation between language and the textured world of empirical and virtual objects that it represents, objects which appear to constitute for Gans the authenticity of human action and aspiration. Whereas metaphysics dissolves the relation between sign and referent, "fetishizing the work in its difference from the thing" (79), GA returns us, through its minimal hypothesis of the originary scene of culture, to a *real* rather than a reified "transtemporal guarantee of communal peace" (91). Gans recognizes common purpose with Plato against romantic liberalism in the necessity to achieve an articulate solution to cultural conflict:

> When Plato attempts to constrain the tyrannical excesses of individual desire, it is to avert crisis in a barely postritual society, not to put a phallocratic brake on the pristine appetites of originary humanity. . . . The Sophists are dangerous because their rhetoric restores to language its originary power of creating meaning, but in a context where the speaker is no

> longer subject to the transcendent communal order incarnated in ritual. (91)

However, Gans's description of the postritual crisis to which Plato responds is qualified by sympathy with the greater proximity of ritual culture to the ostensive potency of reference lost in philosophical investment in the logic of the declarative sentence:

> The deferred, discursive presence that presides over metaphysics is not the real presence that the rite claims to realize. The ostensive is banished by the linguistics of the philosophers, who replace faith in the divine presence it designates by confidence in the self-presence of philosophical language. (80-81)

5

But Gans is in at least practical agreement with Heidegger in the latter's characterization of the Western tradition as uniformly onto-theological. Greek metaphysics and Hebrew monotheism, as determined by the latter's declarative, supraworldly self-definition, form the "founding homology of Western culture" which performs an occultation of the ostensive dimension and its "originary function of designating the sacred center of the communal circle" (80).

It is, not surprisingly, then to Gans's constitution of the ostensive richness of this originary scene that we must look for the specificity of his theoretical model. For Gans the "vertical" structure of distinctively human relations emerge from the "horizontal" indifference of animal appetites in response to an inevitable crisis in animal behaviour: the stasis produced by the mimetic modeling driving all behaviour and the conflict over objects of desire which it inherently produces. Within animal communities such conflicts are avoided by clear hierarchies and pecking orders established by tests of strength and prowess, i.e., by unreflective master/slave dynamics. The "internal contradiction in the (mimetic) mode of behaviour" (20) produces a moment of crisis in which conflict with the model over the object of desire will either be pursued or avoided by submission. Gans argues that the distinctively human response emerges as a choice neither to appropriate (and so to fight) nor to submit but rather to represent, to produce a purely formal gesture that constitutes the object as sign--as the original word or gesture and the originary act of a distinctively human relation between subject, model, and object. The originary sign, then, "is the conversion of a gesture begun in imitation of the model's appropriative gesture into the ‘imitation' of the object that was the aim of this gesture" (23). Gans affirms that the birth of a second order imitation, one that initiates a liberation from imitation itself, therefore, by imitation, illustrates the inherent paradoxically of the human-as-such, a formulation which "guarantees the inexhaustibility of originary thinking" (24). In this second order mimesis of the object, "the subject is not copying another's gesture, but representing the object itself" (25). It is a "conscious thematization"; rather than an imitative act of appropriation, it is a reflective act of representation, "an intention to recall [the object] into being, to double it using only my own resources" (26). But such doubling is complex, since it re-presents the object not only to oneself but to the model (and implicitly to others):

> The aim of the action now having shifted to communicating a representation of the object to the other, the beginning and end of this action . . . are ultimately determined by the internal or formal coherence of the gesture itself, since it is this coherence that makes *it* an object of perception and thereby communicates to the other the intention to represent the object. (28)

The richness of the ostensive, then, resides in this minimal narrative construction of "the formality of the gesture," its "objective" stature as "an autonomous object of perception or *Gestalt* in itself" (28-29).

The richness, of course, of this founding sign is multi-dimensional: it encompasses at once the emergence of the object of desire as this new entity, a *sign* (over against its renounced *referent*); it constitutes the *subject* in a reflective act of secondary mimesis that creates a new sphere of relation to itself and to the other, one in which the subject-to-be steps out of strict submission and initiates a recognition of the referent-to-be-renounced-as-object-by-being-indicated-as-referent, in which the subject asserts a symbolic, purely formal and mediate appropriation of the object. However, this "subjective" appropriation can only function if reciprocally acknowledged in its formal autonomy by the model. This formal coherence of the sign in its complexity instantiates the multi-dimensionality just mentioned, in which the specifically human community emerges as a society of *subjects* of a formal gesture of renunciation. The "objective" and "formal" status of the founding gesture, as a *Gestalt*, initiates a necessarily dialogical and dialectical differentiation of such an originary scene. Gans's discussion and explication of his model in *Signs of Paradox*, its most recent formulation, seem to me to thematize the objectivity and formality of the founding gesture to the neglect of its necessary and correlative subjectivity. The sign would not only formalize the referent as representation of renounced desire, but also as complex sign of its non-renunciation in mere submission to an Alpha, of its appropriation as formal object, and of the assertion that there is more than appetite at stake in the newly emergent relations of the "subject," "model," and "object" (quotation marks indicating that each of these entities are precisely at stake in the very contextuality and ostensivity of this founding sign).

Gans addresses this transition in which the object as referent of the founding sign--prior to which there is, strictly speaking, no "object," since there is no self-determining subject--is constructed in a turning away from simple mimesis of the model:

> This movement reflects an internalization of the model's motivation, the self's closer assimilation to the other's own reality. The more closely I imitate my model's goal-directed action the more I share the goal of this action, which is not located in the action itself but precisely in its external object. (23)

6

The crucial moment, the turn from appropriation of the object to thematization of it as referent, entails the mentioned complexity of recognition, not merely in the subject since it calls forth the intersubjective communication that shifts the object to the vertical axis of reference, representing simultaneously the renunciation of simple mimesis. The formal coherence of the gesture of reference/renunciation must also captivate the model:

> Within the practical realm the goal is no longer to appropriate the object in imitation of the human mediator but to imitate the object to the latter's satisfaction, that is, well enough to make him understand the new sense--which can already be called the meaning--of the gesture. . . . This closure is not perceived within the practical world but on the other's imaginary scene of representation. (28)

One question that arises is this: how can the model/mediator be said to be motivated by possession of the object, if he too is still acting out of simple mimesis? Further, and implicitly, what is the "satisfaction," the desire that the subject finds captivating in the model, when not only is the model not itself a subject, but is not "originarily" motivated to become one through the generative and renunciative sign? That is, what is the model's motivation to recognize such an imaginary scene? Gans appears to have constructed an "originary" model whose motivation is autonomous and yet pre-human, committing as it were the

cardinal sin of all arguments from origin as viewed by deconstruction.

III

Gans's critique of Plato and of metaphysics as a "fetishizing of the word in its difference from the thing" (79), then, is qualified in the light of a tendency in his own model of concrete ostensivity to reify the object, to render it originary in the absolute, unmediated sense. The object becomes such in his narrative prior to the emergence of any sign that would make it distinguishable in the horizontal plane of appetite, since it mysteriously captured the intention of a mediator who has himself somehow therefore removed it from its mimetic relation to his own model. Rather than a transtemporal guarantee of communal peace," precisely what Plato was after all striving for as "justice" in the *Republic*, Gans's originary sign hovers in that equivocal realm between sign and referent, subject and object of desire/knowledge.

Derrida reproaches Plato with a similar charge of reification to Gans's of fetishization, but from the other side of the equation. It is the equivocity of the sign rather than the instability inherent to representation of the object that is Derrida's focus in "Plato's Pharmacy." But it is significant that here, too, it is the problem of "intentionality" that is the crux of Derrida's, as it was central to Gans's, argument. As argued earlier, Derrida's attribution of a certain signifying agency resident in the polyvalence of "*pharmakon*" depends upon a reading of Plato's authorial intentions in the *Phaedrus*. Not only is the appearance of any connection between *pharmakon* and grapheme in the dialogue, before its explicit linking in the final passage, "perhaps after all unintentional":

> But in order to lift this doubt and on the supposition that the categories of the voluntary and the involuntary still have some absolute pertinence in a reading--which we don't for a minute believe, at least not on the textual level on which we are now advancing--let us proceed. . . . (73)

Does the absence, then, of an "absolute pertinence" render the notion of intentionality utterly irrelevant and unviable? Is there either absolute intentionality and authorial agency or else none at all . . . no qualified or negotiated interaction between author and language system? Derrida's hermeneutic choice to read Plato's construction of writing as *pharmakon* as a closed rather than an open and qualified one attributes to Plato a tolerance for self-contradiction at the authorial level in direct contrast to the relentless critique of such within his texts themselves. One would think it incumbent upon a deconstructive reading to take an open stance tolerant of polyvalence rather than a closed and monovalent one on such a question of authorial intention, in the presence of both textual and contextual evidence that Plato was capable of condemning writing as poison when used in one way and qualifiedly allowing it to function as medicine when used in another (Ferrari [220-22] persuasively argues the textual evidence for such a reading).

7

To reiterate Gans's critique of both metaphysics and deconstruction:

> It suffices to understand the always-already not as an abstract model formulated in the framework of metaphysics, but as a concrete one realized in an ostensive context among

> beings who only learn about their death because thinking is a life-and-death operation. (7)

That we are precisely always already within the horizon of the "always already" is surely the point of the modern/late modern/postmodern concern with immanence and the attempt to think from within. Whether we consider ourselves to be thinking from within "thinking from within" itself or thinking from within our "experience" or "language" remains a serious question for readers of both Gans and Derrida.

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Christian Mystery and Responsibility

Gnosticism in Derrida's *The Gift of Death*

Peter Goldman

Department of English and Comparative Literature
University of California at Irvine
Irvine, CA 92697
pgoldman@uci.edu

> "In place of the clear and rigid ancient law, You made man decide about good and evil for himself, with no other guidance than Your example."
>
> ("The Grand Inquisitor," *The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky, p. 307)

In response to criticisms that deconstruction is ethically "relativist" and "nihilist," Jacques Derrida in his recent book *The Gift of Death* skeptically questions the very intelligibility of the notion of responsibility (85). Derrida polemically attacks and seeks to undermine what he calls the "good conscience" (85) of modernity, the illusory confidence that we can ever justify our actions rationally. Responsibility, for Derrida, can never actually be responsible, for it preserves "within itself a nucleus of irresponsibility or absolute unconsciousness" (20). Furthermore, any particular instance of responsibility necessarily involves the scandalous "betrayal" and "absolute sacrifice" of all other possible responsibilities (68-69). In the hyperbolic language of deconstruction, the exercise of responsibility is "absolute treachery" (68), an incomprehensible and monstrous "gift of death" (96).

Derrida approaches the idea of responsibility historically, proposing nothing less than a history of responsibility and the self from Platonism to Christianity to the modern world. The "irresponsibility" of modernity can be traced to Christianity, specifically, Christianity's unacknowledged and repressed core of the demonic sacred (24-26). Derrida understands Christian responsibility and selfhood as a response to the Christian *mysterium tremendum*, which he defines as the experience of being transfixed or possessed by the unseen gaze of a mysterious and inaccessible "wholly other" (31).

The most obvious problem with Derrida's argument in *The Gift of Death* is his misconception of Christianity. In his description of Christian mystery, the crucified figure of Jesus is strikingly absent, having been replaced by a mysterious "infinite other" (32). In this respect, Derrida's understanding of Christianity is essentially gnostic; the humanity of Jesus is displaced by gnostic mystery. Although Derrida claims to describe historical Christianity, in fact, his argument is based on a serious distortion of Christian practice and theology. Although the title might seem an obvious reference to Christ's atoning death, Derrida's book can only be characterized as an overt and unacknowledged displacement of the Crucifixion and its central place in Christian worship.

Derrida's displacement of the Cross is symptomatic of a larger displacement of the anthropological or specifically human basis of religion and responsibility. The primitive or sacrificial sacred has traditionally fallen within the domain of the history of religion and/or anthropology, disciplines which, unlike Platonic metaphysics, are essentially historical. Derrida, as is well known, operates within a metaphysical framework (there is no "outside" to metaphysics) in order to deconstruct metaphysics. At the same time, he connects responsibility to the sacred and the history of religion in order to demonstrate the incoherence and, thus, the "irresponsibility" of responsibility (25). The sacred, because of its inherent ambivalence and ambiguity, is a perfect tool for deconstructing metaphysical concepts such as responsibility. But if, as Derrida claims, responsibility can never actually be responsible, then how can he account for the existence of responsibility at all? This question, the anthropological question, is displaced by Derrida's metaphysical framework. The resistance of the sacred (and hence of responsibility) to stable conceptualization does indeed suggest the limitations of traditional metaphysical thought; on this point I agree with Derrida. The sacred and responsibility have no timeless essence apart from human history.

2

The solution to this problem, however, is not to declare that the concept of responsibility is incoherent--in effect, abandoning responsibility--but rather to abandon Platonic metaphysics and seek to understand responsibility in relation to its (pre)historical origin--this is the method of generative anthropology.(1) The argument of generative anthropology is that human culture began in a collective revelatory event, and that the essential elements of the human--including the sacred, responsibility, and language itself--can only be fully understood in relation to this "originary event." The heritage of responsibility in this revelatory event includes an *ostensive* element which Platonic metaphysics fails to recognize.(2)

The emergence of the human is not fortuitous; the dangers of mimetic violence made the the birth of representation and responsibility necessary for the survival of the human group. The validity and coherence of responsibility lies in its original and continued ethical function within human culture. Although the originary event, by definition, is a one-time occurrence, religious revelations are in effect re-enactments of the originary event; they give us essential insights into our origin, the minimal conditions of our cultural existence. A major religious revelation comes as the result of a historical crisis such as the Hebrew revolt against the Egyptians or the threat which Roman rule posed to the Jews. Revelation points to a new stage of cultural evolution, a "transvaluation of all values," and inaugurates a new sense of community. For this reason, Christian responsibility can only be understood in relation to the "originary event" of the Christian revelation, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus. In contrast to Derrida, I will argue that Christian mystery is fundamentally ethical and non-sacrificial. The persistence of sacrificial violence in modernity is not due to any repressed core of the demonic sacred within Christianity but rather the constant temptation of the sacrificial which is posed by mimeticism or conflictual desire, our anthropological condition. We can and must distinguish Derrida's gnosticism from historical Christianity.

René Girard vs. Derrida

René Girard's anthropology begins with Aristotle's observation that "Man differs from the other animals in his greater aptitude for imitation" (THSFW 1). Girard's theory of mimesis goes much further than Aristotle's, however, in that Girard sees desire itself as fundamentally mimetic and therefore conflictual (GR 9-44). The conflictual tendencies of humankind find expression in the "scapegoat mechanism," the

collective murder of an arbitrarily chosen human victim, an event which inaugurates the human community and which is memorialized in myth and ritual (THSFW 3-47). The sacred, as expressed in myth and sacrificial ritual, is essentially a mystification of mimetically-inspired violence. In direct opposition to myth, Christianity is the revelation of the truth of the scapegoat mechanism, the human violence which hides behind the sacred (THSFW 141-223). The Gospel narratives reveal that sacrality is created through victimization.

In *The Scapegoat*, Girard distinguishes two basic hermeneutic modes. On the one hand is the mythic mode, which begins by demonizing the other as the prelude to sacrificial violence, and which ends by sacralizing or deifying the scapegoat victim. The mythic mode displaces human responsibility for violence onto the demonic or divine other. On the other hand is the hermeneutic mode which finds its most distinctive expression in Christianity but is not limited to Christianity, since the interpretative method here is essentially anthropological and does not depend on faith. The Christian revelation demystifies sacrificial violence by revealing that the scapegoat is only a scapegoat, an innocent victim rather than the hated and feared other. The Cross reveals our inherent violence so that we can no longer so easily project our violence onto the other. Thus the Cross confronts individuals with their shared human guilt and asks for the same radical renunciation of violence that Jesus made in passively accepting his Crucifixion.

The Christian identification with the victim begins in the Hebrew scriptures, for example in Isaiah's identification of Israel as the suffering servant who will redeem the world (Girard, *Scapegoat* 103-105). The ancient Hebrews found meaning in their sufferings by identifying with the role of the sacrificial victim. Their historical situation as a small tribal nation surrounded by much larger empires is interpreted as a sign of election through a narrative of testing, punishment, and redemption: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Judeo-Christian identification with the victim is historically based and thus distinct from the Athenian spectator's identification with the tragic hero-victim. Rather than repressing the orgiastic, the Hebrews were able to *live through* the drama of victimization, exposing it for what it is, while retaining and appropriating the power of transcendence produced by the sacrificial.

3

In view of the central and unique role of the sacrificial victim in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Derrida's assertion that the "secret" of Christianity is the demonic sacred is rather surprising. Rather than repressing the demonic, Christianity reveals the hidden truth of demonic violence. The Gospel narratives are fundamentally demystifying, precisely in regard to violence and the sacred (THSFW 158-223). The demystifying power of the Christian revelation makes possible the evolution of the modern secular world. While Derrida is correct in asserting that sacrificial violence continues, "even in the space of the *Aufklärung* and of secularization in general" (21), the Gospel message both opposes and unmasks the sacrificial. The ethical core of the Christian religion is the unconditional refusal of violence, as exemplified in Jesus' passive acceptance of the Cross. The Cross inaugurates a new sense of individual responsibility based on a recognition of shared human guilt for sacrificial violence.

Secrecy and Irresponsibility

Derrida's analysis of responsibility in *The Gift of Death* is twofold and contradictory. On the one hand, the concept of responsibility is incoherent (25-26), an "ordeal of the undecidable" (5). Supposedly responsible ethical decisions are all ultimately arbitrary, ungrounded, and even "sacrificial" (68). On the other hand, however, he recognizes the cultural necessity of responsibility. The polemical thrust of his

book, surprisingly enough, is a condemnation of the irresponsibility of modern technological civilization. He calls for "a religion [and thus an ethic] without religion," a "logic" which "has no need of *the event of a revelation or the revelation of an event*" (49). In order to criticize Derrida's attempted reformulation of the ethical, we will need to review his argument in more detail.

In classic post-structuralist fashion, Derrida begins with a binary opposition--the demonic sacred and responsibility--which he then proceeds to destabilize. This opposition is taken over from an essay by the Czech philosopher Jan Patocka (Patocka 95-118). According to Patocka, responsibility develops in opposition to the orgiastic or sacrificial violence (101). Patocka's understanding of the human is phenomenological. The basic polarities of human existence are (1) authenticity and inauthenticity, and (2) the orgiastic and the everyday or work (97-99). Patocka's essay is a critique of the decadence of modern technological civilization, and he tells a narrative which derives our current historical situation from Platonism and Christianity, which he sees as the two most important efforts to overcome the orgiastic and establish responsibility. Patocka contrasts Platonic mystery (the mythology of the soul's journey towards a transcendent Good) with the Christian mysterium tremendum (106-7). While Platonism attempts to establish responsibility rationally (thus disciplining the orgiastic), Christianity sees responsibility as a relationship or duty to the person of God (107). The mystery of Christianity, for Patocka, lies in the absolute incommensurability between God and man (108). This incommensurability sets up a sense of never-ending striving towards an inaccessible ethical goal; the humility (and dynamic power) of this never-ending striving constitutes the superiority of Christian responsibility over Platonism. For Patocka, the decadence of modernity can be traced mainly to the hubris of Platonic rationalism (110-12), while Christianity remains the preeminent way of overcoming the orgiastic (108). Patocka clearly distinguishes Platonism from Christianity (107-8), although he sees both as significant influences for modernity.

Derrida complicates or rewrites Patocka's argument in several ways, in a frankly speculative manner. First of all, Derrida adds a Freudian psychology to Patocka's phenomenology; the orgiastic is understood in terms of sexual desire (3). Next, Derrida views the Christian mysterium tremendum as a repression or conversion of Platonic mystery. Conversion, for Derrida, is understood in psychoanalytic terms as a form of Freudian repression, in which the repressed element is incorporated as the unconscious (9). Since Platonic mystery is a repression of orgiastic violence, and Christian mystery incorporates Platonic mystery, then it follows that Christian mystery incorporates orgiastic violence (9). Christian responsibility and selfhood are based in Christian mystery and therefore also incorporate demonic and irresponsible violence. But Christianity is wholly unconscious of this internal violence: Christian selfhood is actually "incapable" of reflecting on "orgiastic mystery" (24). Derrida's description of Christian mystery implies this hidden demonic and violent dimension:

> The gift made to me by God as he holds me in his gaze and in his hand while remaining inaccessible to me, the terribly dissymmetrical gift of the mysterium tremendum only allows me to respond and only rouses me to the responsibility it gives me by making a gift of death, giving the secret of death, a new experience of death. (33)

4

The mysterium tremendum is "the terrifying mystery, the dread, fear, and trembling of the Christian in the experience of the sacrificial gift, . . . being paralyzed . . . by the gaze of God" (6), "a gaze that I don't see and that remains secret from me although it commands me" (27). Although the historical-textual

basis for this description remains obscure (in both Patocka and Derrida), the emphasis on secrecy, terror, and death strongly suggests the demonic sacred.

According to Derrida, since modernity incorporates Christianity as part of its historical evolution, then modernity also incorporates the secret of the demonic sacred. The result of this repression and denial, broadly speaking, is the "decadence" or "decline" of modern technological civilization (35). This decadence manifests itself above all in a return of the orgiastic --spontaneous and/or organized outbreaks of violence (35-6, 85-6). Technological modernity produces first of all boredom, which then allows the demonic sacred to re-emerge: "The domination of technology encourages demonic irresponsibility" (35-6). Following Heidegger, Derrida believes we have become enslaved to technology and are in danger of losing our souls, the "unique self" behind every social role or mask (36). We have lost our relation to primordial Being and now worship inhuman force (37).

The logic of Derrida's argument works by focusing on the ambiguity inherent in the notion of the sacred. Patocka postulates two forms of sacrality, which he seeks to distinguish absolutely as opposites: the demonic sacred and Christian mystery (Patocka 106-108). Derrida then plays with this ambiguity in Patocka's argument to show how each of the two forms of the sacred is infected by the other (8-9). Since responsibility and irresponsibility are the corollary opposition for Patocka, we have the rhetorical figure known as a chiasmus, a repetition and reversal which fatally undermines the stability of the terms. If Christian mystery incorporates the orgiastic, then it follows that responsibility incorporates irresponsibility.

Derrida argues that Christianity incorporates both Platonism and the orgiastic, but he fails to provide any specific historical evidence for this claim. In Derrida's argument, Christianity tends to be reified as a metaphysical or discursive structure rather than considered as a historical religion. But religion, unlike metaphysics, is based in historical events. And Christianity is the supremely historical religion because it is based on a strictly *human* event: the Crucifixion. Derrida speaks of Platonism and Christianity as metaphysical systems which are more or less independent of their historical manifestations in thought and practice. Near the beginning of his book, he makes an anti-essentializing gesture, declaring that he wants to historcize responsibility (5). He argues against a Platonic metaphysics which would try to bring out the timeless essence of the concept and relegate its historicity as something "extrinsic" (5). This gesture towards strict historicity suggests that he will focus exclusively on historical manifestations of Christian responsibility, either in theology or actual practice. But as we read, it becomes apparent that Derrida is not especially interested in history. The prime example here is his central claim that Christian mystery is a conversion of Platonic mystery (9). His description of Christian mystery is itself unhistorical, and the crucial connection between Platonic mystery and Christian mystery is left completely unsupported. His use of Patocka as an authority here does not make up for his lack of historical evidence because Patocka simply does not make the claim that Christian mystery is derived from Platonic mystery. For Patocka, Christianity and Platonism are two different responses to the problem of the orgiastic, and he is more concerned to distinguish Christianity from Platonism than to conflate the two: "In the Christian conception of the soul, there is a fundamental, profound difference" from Platonism (Patocka 107).

So while Derrida begins with an anti-essentializing gesture that suggests that he will refrain from any generalizations, he goes on to make many vast statements about responsibility. For example, "The secret of responsibility would consist of keeping secret, or 'incorporated,' the secret of the demonic and thus of preserving within itself a nucleus of irresponsibility or absolute unconsciousness" (20). Responsibility

here is connected to Christianity and thus, at least superficially, "historicized." But because Christianity remains an ahistorical metaphysical structure, responsibility also stays within the ahistorical realm of metaphysics. Responsibility remains primarily a "concept" with only the most superficial connection to history. Derrida's gesture towards historicity is to a large extent a red herring; he still operates under the presupposition that the concept has a life independent of historical practice and thought. The process of history remains "extrinsic" just as in the Platonic metaphysics which he criticizes, but within which he finally remains. Tracing out an abstract lineage of a concept is no substitute for historical, textual scholarship. This is not to deny the validity of intellectual history, but such a history must be solidly based in historical texts.

5

Christian Mystery and Responsibility

The strongest argument against Derrida's claim that the Christian mysterium tremendum derives from Platonism is the historical connection between Christian mystery and the great prophetic revelations of the Old Testament. The Mosaic law is given in fear and trembling: "there were thunder and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16). The mysterium tremendum serves to effectively impress the law upon the memory and thus to internalize the law as conscience, an internal law. A law which is given with the power of fire and earthquakes is easily remembered. The experience of the awful power of the holy gives the law an emotional affect which ensures its memory. The dangerous proximity of violence (i.e., the Hebrew revolt against the Egyptians) generates the event of the Mount Sinai revelation, a law which reflects the ethical needs of the community. The ambivalence of love and fear in the mysterium tremendum is generated by human resentment; the power and majesty of God reflects the danger of human violence. The Hebrew reverence for the law makes the law into an internal force which guides individuals and preserves the community, deferring violence.

With the prophets following Moses the law is further internalized and integrated into the life of the individual and the community. The prophets also repudiated the economy of sacrifice and ritual (Girard, THSFW 141-179). Isaiah questions the traditional sacrificial practices: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord. . . . I delight not in the blood of Bullocks. . . . Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:11, 17). In a similar vein, the author of Psalms writes, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (51: 17). We see here a turn away from the sacrificial towards a more spiritual or internal form of worship accessible to everyone and not controlled by the priestly hierarchy. While not every Israelite is able to enter "the Holy of Holies" and stand in the awesome presence of the Lord, a broken and contrite heart is the common result of sincere devotion and worship. The prophets demand a radical interiorization of the law in place of external rituals and sacrifice. The revelations of the great prophets, received in fear and trembling, are directed toward reviving and deepening the ethical insights given on Mount Sinai. The Old Testament makes clear that the experience of the mysterium tremendum is directly connected with the ethical standards of the community--ethical standards, moreover, which are explicitly non-sacrificial, directed toward the protection of the weak and helpless: "oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood" (Jer. 7:6).

After the Mosaic revelation, the second great locus of the mysterium tremendum is the Crucifixion of Jesus. The figurality of the Cross--the crucified body of Jesus--is an important difference from the

Mosaic revelation. The figurality of the Cross reveals the humanity of Christ and thus our brotherhood with him. No longer do we confront a non-figural presence which cannot be visualized or represented; but rather, we come face to face with God, staring into the eyes of one who suffers and forgives with infinite love. The typical worship experience in Christianity is the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, a spiritual or symbolic re-enactment of the Crucifixion. The figurality of the Cross is first and foremost the revelation of the scapegoat mechanism in the disfigured body of the victim. The body of the scapegoat victim is not outwardly sacred but rather human. The essential difference between the bruised and bloody body of the scapegoat victim and the resurrected Christ performs and thus reveals "the operation of divinization as it occurred in the originary event" (Gans, SF 106).

The figurality of the Cross as retained in the memory is the realization of the Old Testament promise: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33). The morality of the Sermon on the Mount is implied by the Cross. The event of the Crucifixion produces the ineradicable memory of our guilt and demands the radical interiorization of the law. We have to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, in full awareness of our guilt. The ethical implications of the Cross are thus a deconstruction of sacrificial ritual and a radical simplifying and profound deepening of the law. Jesus proposes a minimal ethic based only on the principle of reciprocity: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

6

The fear and trembling of the Cross goes beyond the experience of the holy in the Old Testament. The Christian mysterium tremendum passes through the violence of the Crucifixion and therefore includes guilt as its basic feature--an inherent human complicity in the sacrificial which transcends any particular transgression. We fear and tremble not because God is absolutely different, but precisely because he is identical to myself. No longer can we project our violence onto the other; we are confronted with our own violence and modern self-consciousness begins, a consciousness and responsibility founded in guilt. Absolute otherness is recognized as internal to the self qua the shared human capacity for violence. At the same time, the human capacity for violence is the other side of the human potential for transcendent love through faith in God, as the triumph of the Resurrection suggests.

The historical success of the Christian religion, however, has not meant the end of conflict and sacrificial violence. And many of the worst offenses, the Spanish Inquisition for example, have been carried out in the name of Christianity. The sacrificial is a constant temptation within human culture because of our inherent propensity to mimetic rivalry and conflict, and Christianity is by no means immune to the temptation of the sacrificial. The Cross in particular presents individuals with the temptation of a sacrificial interpretation, which is the idea that if I had lived in the time of Jesus, I would not have acquiesced in his sacrifice (Girard, THSFW 182-185, 224-262). In other words, it was the evil Jews who crucified Jesus, not ones such as I. The sacrificial interpretation of the Cross has had catastrophic consequences in terms of the historical persecution of the Jews. Arguing against the sacrificial interpretation, René Girard stresses quite rightly that when Jesus faced Crucifixion he was abandoned by *everyone* including his own disciples (*Scapegoat* 149-164). Any interpretation of the Crucifixion which would limit blame to one particular individual or group is sacrificial and essentially anti-Christian. While the sacrificial reading is historically consequential, it is not essential to the moral implications of the Crucifixion as preserved for us in the Gospel narratives. Without this realization of shared human guilt, the story of the Crucifixion becomes only another sentimental narrative. Derrida's argument that Christian mystery incorporates orgiastic violence implies that the Cross is simply an instance of sacrificial violence like any other. But as Girard has argued, the only way that Christ could undermine

the mystifying power of the scapegoat mechanism was by deconstructing it from the inside, by living through the drama of the victim, revealing it for what it is, while appropriating its power of transcendence for his followers (*Scapegoat* 100-124).

While Christianity has not produced the kingdom of heaven on earth, its historical consequences have been profound. A consideration of the historical impact of Christianity is beyond the scope of this essay, but the debt of modern individualism to Christianity is generally recognized. The demystifying power of the Christian revelation allows for the liberation of the individual from the authority of ecclesiastical hierarchy and thus the development of modern democracy and a market economy. When the Second Coming of Christ did not materialize, it became apparent that God will not intervene in human affairs. We are left to work out our own destiny. This is our historical burden, that God will not resolve our problems for us. Whether the modern world is getting better or worse, whether modernity is "decadent" is a question that I leave to others. But the yearning for ancient, more stable forms of society is now only a form of nostalgia. We refuse to tolerate any form of absolute sacred authority (at least in the absence of acute crisis), and this is a probably a good thing. With no rigid divine law to guide our actions, ethics becomes a matter for debate and reasoned consideration. We face real political and ethical problems today--war, poverty, pollution, environmental degradation, and so on. The question for us here is whether Derrida offers us any substantive contribution to the current debate over these issues or rather a romantic nostalgia for secrecy and mystery in the guise of primordial Being.

Gnosticism in *The Gift of Death*

Gnosticism is one of those terms, like Puritanism or Romanticism, that means so many different things to so many different people that it threatens to mean nothing at all. Gnosticism refers, first of all, to a diverse group of religious sects of the early Christian period (first through fourth centuries) and the metaphysical systems of Marcion, Valentinus, and their followers during the same period. Despite the diversity of gnostic cultic practices and thought, gnosticism has some broad common features which I will outline in this section. My claim here is that what Derrida describes in *The Gift of Death* is not Christianity but rather a gnosticism which shares certain essential features with these early sects. Furthermore, although the influence of gnosticism upon Christianity is well known, gnosticism is essentially opposed to Christianity, especially in the crucial area of responsibility.

7

First, gnosticism is a form of mysticism, involving a "special, transrational knowledge, limited to a select few, and largely incommunicable once acquired" (Jones 61). Derrida's emphasis on secrecy and mystery is more gnostic than Christian; the esoteric nature of gnosticism is directly opposed to the universal call to discipleship and evangelism which pervades the New Testament teachings. Second, gnostics typically read the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, symbolically and allegorically. They denied the historicity of scripture and the humanity of Jesus. While Christ is usually understood to be the Savior, he "merely seemed to be human" (Grant 17). The gnostics, like Derrida in *The Gift of Death*, ignore or minimize the humanity of Jesus and the historical dimension of scripture. Unlike Christianity, gnosticism is unbiblical and unhistorical. Finally, in gnosticism the world was created by angelic powers in rebellion against the supreme God. As a result, the material creation is fundamentally evil, the work of the evil demiurge (or fallen angelic power) who governs this world. The radical dualism or manicheism of gnosticism is very different from Judeo-Christian monotheism. For the purposes of this essay, the key feature of gnosticism is that the responsibility for evil tends to be displaced away from humanity onto

various demonic forces. In place of the call to individual repentance and reform in Christianity, gnosticism places the blame for evil on the evil demiurge. Gnosticism is thus mythic in the Girardian sense; human responsibility is displaced onto the demonic other. The fundamental ethical dimension of Christianity is missing.

When Derrida charges Christianity with incorporating Platonism and the demonic sacred, he is confusing Christianity with gnosticism. Gnosticism is Platonic in the tendency to metaphysical speculation and the incorporation of mythic elements. Gnostic thinkers such as Saturninus and Basilides were influenced by the tradition of Platonism in late antiquity (Grant 107, 143). Gnostic cults made the demonic a fundamental part of their religious mythology. Gnosticism, not Christianity, incorporates Platonism and the demonic.

Yet we cannot deny that gnosticism (and Platonism) have exercised a powerful influence of upon Christianity. It is not difficult to find elements of gnosticism within orthodox Christianity during every step of its history. Even as the early church fathers battled against the gnostic heresy, elements of gnosticism crept into Christian theology. One might even argue that gnosticism simply emphasizes features already present in Christianity. For these reasons, the refutation of Derrida's analysis demands more than simply showing that his conception of Christianity is gnostic. It is necessary to demonstrate that the gnostic and Platonic influences do not undermine the fundamental core of responsibility within Christianity. Augustine is a key figure in this regard since he was both a gnostic and a Platonist before he became a Christian, and he formulated his theology in opposition to the gnostic heresy.

Augustine's solution to the problem of evil was to insist on the fundamental guilt of mankind in his doctrine of hereditary or original sin (Blumenberg 133). Humans are both fundamentally responsible and at the same time completely dependent on divine grace. Augustine refused to compromise the element of human responsibility, and this refusal distinguishes Christianity from the various gnostic sects. Augustine saw quite clearly that gnosticism tends to undermine individual responsibility. The Manichees taught Augustine that "it is not we who sin but some other nature that sins within us" (Augustine 103). Augustine turned from the Manichees to the Platonists to help him understand the problem of evil, but the problem with both Platonists and Manichees was that they lacked "the tears of confession" (156), the imperative for repentance which alone can generate the experience of redemption. The influence of classical philosophy on Christianity can be seen here in the need Augustine felt to construct a system of theology that could reconcile the existence of evil and an omnipotent God.(3)

In *The Gift of Death*, Christianity is represented as a mystery religion, a religion of secrecy and sacrifice. Dostoevsky criticizes this strain of Christianity with devastating irony in "The Grand Inquisitor" chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov* (297-319). The Grand Inquisitor presents Christianity as a priestly religion of "miracle, mystery, and authority" which the ordinary people supposedly desire in place of the burden of freedom placed on them by Christ (309). Dostoevsky juxtaposes this false demonic form of Christianity with the true Christianity of Alyosha, which consists in faith and charity. The Grand Inquisitor's religion is based on a repression and denial of the historical Jesus, and, as such, is hardly representative of Christianity as a whole. While "miracle, mystery, and authority" play a not inconsequential role in Christianity, they constitute a retrograde movement within its overall history.

8

The gnostic basis of Derrida's understanding of Christian mystery can be demonstrated through a close reading of his text. The experience of the mysterium tremendum involves the unseen gaze of "an absolute

being who transfixes me, takes possession of me, holds me in its hand and in its gaze (even though through this dissymmetry I don't see it; it is essential that I don't see it)" (32). The main problem with this definition is that it ignores the Cross, the human figure of the crucified Jesus. Historically, the locus of the Christian mysterium tremendum is in fact the Crucifixion. The mystery of the Cross is traditionally articulated in a variety of ways: God's unmotivated forgiveness, his human suffering, and so on. Generative anthropology would minimize but not eliminate the mystery by extracting from the Cross the central paradox of all human culture: the emergence of transcendence from immanence. Girard's "fundamental anthropology," on the other hand, would see the miraculous generation of transcendent love from collective violence through the revelation of the scapegoat mechanism. But no adequate understanding of Christian mystery can forget (1) the humanity of Jesus, and (2) his preternatural forgiveness. Without the combined humanity and divinity of Jesus, we have regressed into the demonic sacred. Derrida's description of Christian mystery blurs the distinction between the demonic sacred and the transcendent love of Jesus. In Derrida's description, the one who looks into my soul without being seen, who controls me from the inside against my will is in actuality the demonic other of mimetic desire (i.e., the demonized mimetic rival). When God begins to irrationally haunt me, spying on me unseen, paralyzing me with his hypnotic gaze, we are no longer in the Judaic or Christian universe, but rather the gnostic universe of the evil demiurge. Derrida's misreading is instrumental to his assertion that Christian mystery incorporates Platonism and the demonic sacred, but it is based on a serious distortion of Christianity.

The rhetoric of Derrida's description of Christian mystery and responsibility offers us an important clue to the presuppositions that underlie his argument. Derrida's description emphasizes (1) the incommensurability of God and (2) the non-figurality of God. In both these respects, Derrida is typical of a certain anti-humanist and academic (rather than pastoral or devotional) strain of post-modern theology that foregrounds the absolute difference of God, while the humanity of Jesus is ignored or minimized. The popularity of this interpretation in academic circles can be attributed to the modern suspicion of fixed (i.e., figural) centers of mimetic fascination. We resist the attempt to fill the mimetic center, the locus of sacrality, with any defined figure. It becomes imperative in modernity to keep the center open-ended and fluid in terms of the figures which inhabit it. This imperative is a function of our instinctive resentment towards any source of authority. We resist the attempt to fix authority in any one figure, including, and especially, the crucified Jesus. But we should recognize that this scepticism about the mimetic center is made possible largely through the demystifying power of the Cross itself; it is highly ironic, and yet strangely appropriate, that this scepticism should now be directed towards the attraction of the Crucifixion itself, its ultimate source.

In the final analysis, the iconoclasm of post-modern theology is political: if God, the ultimate authority, is absolutely incommensurable and non-figurable, then my allegiance does not lie with any earthly source of authority. Iconoclasm is a declaration of political and, in this case, individual independence. The problem is that this form of iconoclasm tends to distort and thus trivialize historical Christianity. While iconoclasm is a crucially important element of our Judeo-Christian heritage, in the case of Derrida it becomes simply another rhetorical posture in the hyper-mimetic atmosphere of post-modern theory.

While Derrida iconoclastically refuses any figuration of the sacred, he still insists on the incommensurability, the absolute difference of God. As a reaction against the fear that we have lost or forgotten the sacred (or Being), and thus the source for all significance, academics have brought back the sacred with a vengeance. But as a result of iconoclasm, the sacred now takes the abstract form of absolute difference or alterity, and any attempt to understand or even discuss rationally the

incommensurable is abandoned. Derrida's incantatory language--the poetical cadences of his prose, the long and rapturous repetitions--reveals an aestheticism which is at heart rooted in a deep nostalgia for the sacred. His hostility towards modern technological civilization reflects the fear that the modern forgetting of the sacred will allow for unrestrained violence. The so-called primitive ambivalence of the sacred continues then, even in modern academia. On the one hand we resent any defined figuration of the sacred for presuming to colonize the space which is essentially spiritual and thus (for modernity) individual. But on the other hand, we still long for a sense of sacred difference, an absolute sacred immune to the corrosive power of resentment.

9

Derrida's interpretation of Christian mystery is on the one hand directed towards deconstructing responsibility, but also, on the other hand, towards the articulation of a new "more radical form of responsibility" (27). On what, then, will Derrida found this "more radical" form of responsibility? He proposes the "experience of singularity" in the individual's "apprehensive approach to death," a Heideggerian "being-towards-death" (43). What is missing in "being-towards-death," however, is the recognition that "The real power of death is *sacrifice*," the death of the *other* (Girard, TE 241). The sacrifice of the other, specifically Jesus, is precisely what Derrida's metaphysical framework tends to displace. Whereas the death of Jesus on the Cross has ineluctable ethical implications, the "being-towards-death" does not suggest any overt ethical dimension.

This new "more radical form of responsibility" emerges as the result of his critique of the orthodox notion of responsibility. Derrida considers the idea that our responsibility exists in our relation to the other or, rather, every other--"an infinite number of them" (69). The "other" is defined here as "wholly other": "every other is every bit other" (68). Responsibility consists in responding to singularities, and thus every possible duty is absolute and non-negotiable. Since we are absolutely responsible to every other there is no way to negotiate conflicts of duty. By fulfilling one's duty to one singularity,

> I am sacrificing and betraying at every moment all my other obligations: my obligations to the other others whom I know or don't know, the billions of my fellows (without even mentioning the animals who are even more other others than my fellows) . . . my family, my son, each of whom is the only son I sacrifice to the other, every one being sacrificed to every one else in this land of Moriah that is our habitat every second of every day. (69)

So this ordinary form of responsibility proves to be contradictory and incoherent (27, 68-69). If every other is completely and irrevocably other, as Derrida argues, then ultimately he is left alone with only the alterity of an inner secrecy (108-9). As a result, his only real and true responsibility is to himself and the event of his death: "My first and last responsibility, my first and last desire, is that responsibility of responsibility that relates me to what no one else can do in my place" (44). Derrida ends with a purely secret or private idea of responsibility. This is not only a "religion without religion," it is an ethics without ethics. If responsibility does not relate us to other human beings, then it seems fair to say we are not dealing with ethics at all, but a private aestheticism. The idea that one could have a purely private or personal sacred unmediated by any other(s) is the romantic myth of the autonomous subject of desire, the one who creates himself (as God) out of nothing. But this very desire for autonomy is itself mimetic, a function of social relations. There is really nothing "radical" about Derrida's concept of the self as an "irreducibly different singularity" which is threatened by modern technological civilization. This imperative for individual differentiation is the basis, after all, for consumer society, precisely because

this imperative finds expression in consumption (cf. Gans, OT 166).

The scandal of Christian teaching is that it threatens this self-differentiation by revealing its source in the arbitrary death of the scapegoat victim. Everyone becomes equal, and equally guilty before the Cross. But this very realization of guilt can form the basis for the experience of redemption and regeneration. The Christian self is born out of the recognition of humility and brotherhood. The radically leveling power of the Cross allows for the liberation of the individual from ecclesiastical hierarchy and thus for the development of the romantic modern self. In this respect, Derrida's "more radical form of responsibility" is neither new or radical, but rather the familiar *mensonge romantique* which we as moderns seem unable to do without.

For Derrida, ethics is precisely *not* the universal, but rather the private, the singular, the unjustifiable. For this reason, ethics is ungrounded, metaphysically and rationally. Derrida's understanding of ethics is exactly the opposite of Kant's. An ethical decision is that which can never be communicated or justified in universal terms. This point depends, of course, upon his assertion that "every other is completely or wholly other." Why is every other so completely other? Because, for Derrida, every other is secret and mysterious. The problem with this "more radical form of responsibility" is the denial and refusal of our anthropological condition. We do not exist in some kind of metaphysical or existential vacuum, but only and essentially in relationship to other human beings; this relationship is what makes us human. The question then is, what are the essential conditions of our relationship with other humans? Derrida's metaphysical framework displaces the facts of mimeticism (i.e., conflictual desire), the possibility of human conflict, and language itself--"the deferral of violence through representation" (Gans, EC 301). Ethical decisions are played out against the possibility of human violence. This possibility is what makes ethics necessary. Ethics is not something extra or added onto our cultural existence, it is essential to culture, and it can only be adequately defined in relation to our social condition, which Derrida does not do.

10

Derrida not only begs the question of how and why the individual is "wholly other," he also ignores the full implications of this gesture towards singularity. It is very significant that he insists, " *every* other is every bit other" (emphasis added, 68). This is a leveling gesture, a refusal to privilege any one sacred. Each individual is equally and absolutely valuable. But in contrast to the traditional humanist value of the individual, this equality is founded on the incommensurability of individuals. The anthropological basis for this intuition of fundamental human equality is, of course, the reciprocal exchange of the sign (Gans, OT 47). And in this anthropological basis exists the means for overcoming the apparent challenge to ethics which Derrida presents. Humans are singular in that each has a private and "secret" interior scene of representation (the memory or imagination), but humans are also similar for exactly the same reason. We all share equally in the scene of representation, which is both public and private. The use of a sign, even within the imagination, always implies the real or virtual presence of an other or others. And the signs we use are fundamentally public and available to all. Our singularity is thus also our similarity and equality, and this underlying similarity forms the basis for a dialogue about ethics and thus the possibility of justifying one's ethical decision. Derrida's argument has the disturbing implication of simply leveling all ethical distinctions. Feeding his cat becomes equivalent to Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac in the Old Testament (71). Derrida represents the "post-modern triumph of the victimary" (Gans, "Moral Contradiction") taken to its logical and absurd conclusion. The assertion that sacrifice is everywhere and always amounts, pragmatically, to a justification of the sacrificial. If there is nothing we can do to avoid

the sacrificial, then obviously this is not a problem we need to worry ourselves about.

Acknowledging the role of the sacrificial in human culture does not have to mean simply accepting violence as inevitable, or denying the distinction between the sacrificial and the non-sacrificial. Considered as simply another act of sacrificial violence, there is nothing mysterious about the event of the Crucifixion. Such acts of scapegoating are all too common within human history. The miracle and mystery of Christianity can be found pre-eminently in the unconditional refusal of violence and the supremely human potential for love.

11

Notes

[1] Generative anthropology builds on the pioneering work of René Girard while also offering an independent theory of human culture. See Eric Gans, *The End of Culture: Toward a Generative Anthropology* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985), *Science and Faith: The Anthropology of Revelation* (Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990), *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993), and *Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment, and Other Mimetic Structures* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997).(back)

[2] See Eric Gans on Platonic metaphysics and the ostensive, "Plato and the Birth of Conceptual Thought," *Anthropoetics* , II, 2.(back)

[3] Revelation recognizes the problem of evil but deals with it in a completely different manner. See for example The Book of Job, and especially the "voice from out of the whirlwind," chapter 38.(back)

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Email: anthro@humnet.ucla.edu

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About our Contributors

Andrew J. McKenna, Ph.D. Johns Hopkins, is professor of French at Loyola University Chicago and a member of the **Anthropoetics** editorial board. He is the author of *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida, and Deconstruction* (U of Illinois P, 1992), as well as of numerous articles on Moliere, Pascal, Racine, Baudelaire, Flaubert, and critical theory. Since 1996, he has been editor in chief of *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture.*

Douglas Collins, also a member of the **Anthropoetics** editorial board, teaches French and Comparative Literature at the University of Washington. He is the author of **Sartre as Biographer,** as well as articles on nineteenth and twentieth-century French literature.

Toby Foshay, another member of the editorial board making his first contribution to **Anthropoetics**, teaches literary theory and modern literature in the Department of English, University of Victoria, Canada. He has published on Derrida, Levinas, Heidegger, and Adorno, as well as on modernist writers, including Joyce, Yeats, and Wyndham Lewis. He is especially interested in the relations between theology, philosophy, and literary theory, and is presently working on negative theology in the work of Adorno and Derrida.

Peter Goldman attended the Spring 1997 **Generative Anthropology** seminar with Eric Gans and has also studied cultural theory and hermeneutics with Wolfgang Iser at UC Irvine. He has recently presented papers on John Bunyan at various conferences, and his publications include an article on John Bunyan's spiritual autobiography for *Anthropoetics*. In addition, he was a contributing editor for *The Student Guide to Writing at UCI*, 3rd edition, 1995. He is currently at work on his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Puritan Hermeneutics and the Conversion Narrative," which examines the hermeneutic dimension of seventeenth century Puritan conversion narratives from the perspective of generative anthropology.

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Eric Gans / anthro@humnet.ucla.edu
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