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**Cartesian Deconstruction:
Self-reflexivity in Descartes and Derrida**

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Cartesian Deconstruction: Self-reflexivity in Descartes and Derrida

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Summary

In this study, I propose a reading of Derrida as a Cartesian thinker. The mode of reading is closely textual and not historical; and the analysis focuses on the methodological or dispositional affinities between a sceptical Descartes in cogitation and a deconstructive Derrida, to the exclusion of the onto-theological aspects of their arguments. I locate the source of such epistemological affinities between them in the self-reflexivity of philosophical self-doubt or self-criticism, and highlight, in the course of analysis, the formatively self-referential aspects of both Cartesian scepticism and Derridian deconstruction; The point of contention is that, in both cases, the starting point of thinking is the self that self-reflects.

Standard interpretations tend to view Derrida as an anti-Cartesian thinker; Against this reading, I advance the following two points of contention. Firstly, I argue that Derrida can be read as a Cartesian thinker in that his reflexive tendency is indicative of his implicit commitment to the methodological or epistemological Cartesianism, i.e. the reflexive mode of cogitation. The claim here, limited to such an extent, is that there is a structural resemblance between the reflexive form of Descartes's *cogito* and that of Derrida's deconstructive move in that both thinkers follow performatively reflexive, and reflexively repeated moves; The Derridian move is only one "step" beyond, and in this sense derivative from, the Cartesian. Secondly, I argue further that Derrida can be read as a radical Cartesian. For this, I present a reading of Derrida's reflexive hauntology as a sceptical radicalisation of Descartes's reflective ontology. By bringing to the fore a structurally Cartesian dimension which underlies the Derridian economy of writing and thinking, I argue, against Derrida's self-understanding of his (non-)project, that deconstruction is to be read as a conservative intra-metaphysical trajectory rather than as a transgressive endeavour to go beyond metaphysics. In highlighting the traditional aspects of deconstruction as opposed to the revolutionary sides of it, my aim is both to explicate the significance of Derrida's deconstructive project and, at the same time, to expose its constitutive limits, deconstruction taken as a meta-critical, reflexive endeavour to transcend the limits of philosophy by philosophy. The critical point I raise against Derrida is the following: Insofar as the logic or strategy of his deconstruction remains structurally locked in, and at the same time exploitative of, the implicit binarism of Cartesian scepticism, i.e. the logic of either-or, the deconstructive gesture that attempts to think "the Other" by reflecting critically upon its own condition of thinking, is bound to be self-reflexive or self-referential, therefore, self-corrosively ineffectual.

Part I sets out to articulate the aforementioned two contentions of thesis. It aims to discover the recursively self-reflexive movements in the writings of Derrida. For this, chapter 2 offers an analysis of some of Derrida's central terms of hauntology that are descriptive of the movements and moments of meta-reflection, viz. double, mark, fold, interest, and law. Although Part I deals mainly with Derrida, the reflexive dimension of Descartes's *cogito* argument is also analysed in an early stage [1.31] to the extent that it can set the terms for the subsequent reading of Derrida as a Cartesian [1.32 -2.3]. Part II elaborates the key points made in Part I, first by providing a detailed account of the Cartesian economy of self-reflexivity [Chapter 4], and second, by closely reading selected passages from Derrida's essay on Descartes, '*Cogito et histoire de la folie*' [Chapter 5]. Derrida's defensive and sympathetic reading of Descartes's madmen against Foucault's, the last chapter argues, exemplifies a case of Derrida as a committed Cartesian with a mind bent on methodic meta-reflection.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the text and notes for frequently cited works by Descartes and Derrida. Full publication information for these works is given in **References**. Citations of both original and English translations take the form of [DG 90/61]; refer to **Note on Notations and Quotations** for details.

<Works by Descartes>

[Disc] *Discours de la méthode/ Discourse on the Method*

[Med] *Meditationes/ Meditations*

[Op] *De la dioptrique/ Optics*

[Pri] *Principia Philosophiae/ Principles of Philosophy*

[R] *Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii/ Rules for the Direction of the Mind*

[Rch] *La recherche de la vérité/ The Search for Truth*

<Works by Derrida>

[Adieu] 'Adieu'

[Alt] *Alterités*

[Apo] *Apories/ Aporias*

[C] *Feu la cendre/ Cinders*

[D] 'Desistance'/ 'Desistance'

[DG] *De la grammatologie/ Of Grammatology*

[Diss] *La dissémination/ Dissemination*

[ED] *Ecriture et différence/ Writing and Difference*

[FM] 'By Force of Mourning'

[Four] 'Fourmis'

[Glas] *Glas/ Glas*

[LJ] 'Lettre à un ami japonais'/ 'Letter to a Japanese Friend'

[MA] *Mémoires d'aveugle/ Memoir of the Blind*

[MP] *Marges de la philosophie/ Margins of Philosophy*

[MPM] *Mémoires pour Paul de Man/ Memories of Paul de Man*

[Pass] 'Passions'/ 'Passions: an Oblique Offering'

[Po] *Points de suspension/ Points*

[Pos] *Positions/ Positions*

[PR] 'Les pupilles de l'université: le principe de raison et l'idée de l'université'/
'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupil'

[Problèm] *Le problèm de la genèsis dans la philosophie de Husserl*

[SN] 'Sauf le nom'/ 'Sauf le mom'

[SpecM] *Spectres de Marx/Spectres of Marx*

[Sur] 'Survivre'/ 'Living On'

[TOJ] 'The Time is Out of Joint'

[TT] 'Pontuations:le temps de thèse'/ 'Punctuations: the Time of a Thesis'

[VP] *La voix et le phénomène/ Speech and Phenomena*

[VPT] *La vérité en peinture/ The Truth in Painting*

Notes on Notations and Quotations

1. For primary sources, both original texts (Latin and French) and translations (where available) have been used. Accordingly, all page numbers noted are those appearing in original and translations; for example, [VPT 14/8] refers to page 14 of *La vérité en peinture*, and page 8 of *The Truth in Painting*, respectively. When a translation is either not available for the text in quotation at the time of writing, or not used, I provide my English translation and refer only to the page number(s) appearing in original; for example, [Alt 82] refers to page 82 of *Alterités* [Derrida 1986a].
2. For secondary sources, when the use of original word(s) is of critical importance, both the original and the translation (where available) have been used; the format used for quotation of the primary sources also applies to this case. When only the translation is used, that is, when the quotation of the word(s) appearing in original is of a secondary concern, I indicate it either by noting “trans.” (e.g., [Merleau-Ponty, 1945: 371, trans.]) or by providing the English title of the original (e.g., [Husserl, *Ideas* I, §1]).
3. Also note the difference appearing in the main text between *emphases in original* and my *emphases added*; when a need arises to put an extra stress on the words or phrases that have already been emphasised in the original, I indicate it by underlining them.

0. Introduction

0.1 Doing Without Descartes? : A Starting Point

Anti-Cartesians cannot be against Descartes without themselves being, in a sense, Cartesian. In ‘The relevance of Cartesianism [Carraud 1987: 69-81],’ Vincent Carraud makes an interesting point. He begins his essay by saying:

A philosophy need not be afraid of being out-of-date. Any true philosophy, ultimately as soon as it is published, necessarily remains so, thus necessarily remains relevant. This is the case of Descartes’s philosophy. [...] if the relevance of Cartesianism *does* exist, it is the true one, the original one. So, even nowadays, we cannot philosophise *without* Descartes (even though some people would like to philosophise *against* Descartes). [69]

We cannot philosophise *without* Descartes, *even when* we do so *against* Descartes. His claim is that we the 20th century post-Cartesians, we Heideggerians, and we Levinasians, for example, are “required to think *from* Descartes [76]” every time we attempt at a radical beginning, at a radical break with Descartes.

Amongst several contemporary examples Carraud introduced here, perhaps the most illuminating and specific is his discussion of the way in which “Emmanuel Levinas’s reflection on the infinite transcendence of God is organised [75, see 75-6].” Carraud’s contention is that Levinas’s version of God appearing in *Totalité et Infini* can be read as a sequel to Descartes’s drafted in *Meditationes*. Seen from this point of view, Levinas’s point of departure can be said to lie precisely in “the paradoxical nexus” around the concept of the infinite Descartes has originally formulated and left unresolved in the third *Meditatione*¹.

¹ Derrida makes the same point in [ED 154-7/104-6].

The fundamental aporia of the *cogito* troubling the *res cogitans* of the infinite, which Descartes has articulated, is that the idea of the infinite exceeds the *cogitatio* (thought) itself. As Derrida says in the same vein,

Descartes, in his reflexion (*la réflexion*) on the *cogito*, becomes aware that the infinity not only cannot be constituted as a (dubitable) object, but has *already* made infinity *possible* as a *cogito* overflowing the object [ED 156-7/106, translation revised].

Namely, the Cartesian aporia of thinking infinity² is this: when thinking (of) the infinite, I think *more than* I think (of it), therefore, I think an un-thought, an unlimited thought of excess. Facing this paradox, as Carraud rightly observes, Descartes uses it as a means by which to prove that “therefore, God exists.” The point to be noted is that, for Descartes, it is the very experience of the limit, i.e. the thinking ego’s inability to capture infinity by the *cogito*, that “proves” the existence of God; according to him, God exists because the infinite being, God, must be the cause of the very *cogitatio* of the infinite that is present in the *cogito*. What becomes conspicuous in this picture of thinking infinity or God is the locus of the cogitational subject, the “I” that attempts to think such an un-thought. Attention is drawn to the very experience of failure. Descartes focuses upon the act of thinking, the *cogito*, and the subject of thinking, *res cogitans*, thereby, deduces from the self-presence of this act the existence of that which is thought in that present tense, *cogitatum*, i.e. God.

Levinas follows this Cartesian line of thinking God, but at the same time, attempts to think otherwise, i.e. to think the same (non-)thought from the other point of view. What Levinas does, as Carraud points it out, is to shift the focus, to re-direct

²The notion of infinity referred to here, characterised as an “aporetic” one, is the kind that the sceptical Descartes conceives in a narrowly methodological or strictly epistemological manner, that is to say, without any preconceptions of the idea of God; the philosophical recuperation and subsequent consolidation of Descartes’s faith in God takes place later, after this philosophical experience of aporia, in the form of his proving the existence of God on the basis of the notion of infinity discovered as such within his cogitational self.

the phenomenological attention, from the *cogito* or the *res cogitans* to the *cogitatum*. He turns to the other side of the same matter and does so without disturbing the very Cartesian form of thinking.

[...] What Levinas is interested in here is not that God should be proved: it is rather the fact that the idea of the infinite cannot start from myself; that in it, *the movement should start from what is thought* and not from the thinker, *from the cogitatum* and not from the *res cogitans*. [...] Of thinking the infinite, Levinas says, “it is doing more or better than thinking.” [1987: 75-6]

According to this reading, Levinas’s reflection is viewed to take place within the milieu of Cartesian problematic. Two points comprise this thought: first, Levinas’s point of departure cannot be posited outside the path of the *cogito* Descartes has opened up; second, even when Levinas’s reflection moves against the direction Descartes has chosen to follow, precisely by virtue of following the other direction, the untrodden path deserted within the incomplete tradition of thinking (of) God, of reflecting (upon) God, the very transgressive gesture towards the absolute transcendence of God remains, in this sense, caught up in the Cartesian tradition.

Again, the lesson exemplified here is the following: we *cannot* philosophise *without* making a certain Cartesian commitment to philosophy, *even when* we do so *against* Descartes. This point should become clearer, particularly when we understand the meaning of “Cartesianism” in a broad methodological sense in which it is loosely defined as a philosophical orientation of the mind, as Jean-Marie Beyssade is quoted as saying [Carraud 1987: 73], which “allows after following the movement which reminds the spirit, to *turn* towards thing, to take on an exact attitude in the temporal action.” Carraud’s open-ended conclusion is instructive in this regard: “perhaps Descartes’s philosophy is more interesting through the breaking-up, the contradictions, the aporias it originates in Cartesian’s Cartesianism [75].” Cartesian thinkers, characterised in the broadest terms, are those who think by

relying on reflective “turns” of the mind. As long as we “allow” our minds to “follow” the deeply aporetic Cartesian “movement” of the *cogito*, we the post-Cartesians, as Carraud argues, are perhaps more Cartesian than un-Cartesian, even when we decide to become anti-Cartesian. At a fundamental level, we remain committed to Cartesianism even when turning against Descartes precisely because we are *bound* to be anti-Cartesian, as long as we allow the reflective model of thinking to be taken as the norm. Any critical meta-reflection upon Descartes’s *cogito* is bound to resemble that which it reflects, namely, the *cogito*, in so far as the critical force of metalogical movement originates from the reflexive rationality of Cartesian cogitation. One is bound to “turn” towards Descartes even when turning “against” Descartes, as long as the mode of “turning”, i.e. the mode of reflection, whether it be faithful (turning-towards) or transgressive (turning-against), is predetermined by, and locked in, the Cartesian structure of double-thinking. This is the phenomenon one can observe in Levinas’s reflection on Descartes’s God; and in what follows, we shall use this insight as a starting point in our reading of Derrida in relation to Descartes.

0.2 Derrida with Descartes : A Stage Set-up

If Levinas resembles the onto-theological Descartes in and after the third *Meditatione*, Derrida, by contrast, resembles the sceptical-rationalist Descartes that comes before it, i.e. the Descartes of the first *Meditatione* (entitled, ‘What can be called into doubt’) and the second (entitled, ‘The nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body’). In the sense that both the philosophy of Levinas and that of Derrida can be interpreted from such a Cartesian point of view either as a “sequel” to *Meditationes* (the case of Levinas) or as a derivative from them (the case of Derrida, as the thesis will argue), it can be said broadly that both thinkers think within the tradition of Cartesianism. Within such constitutive or originary Cartesianism discoverable both in Levinas and in Derrida, there is, however, a notable difference between the way Levinas’s pathos of thinking reflects Descartes’s

and the way Derrida's does. If the philosophy of Levinas can be said to be a version of onto-theological Cartesianism, that of Derrida, by contrast, can be characterised as a version of sceptical Cartesianism.

To expand on the aforementioned difference only briefly, Levinas, the thinker of the radical Other, follows the onto-theological Descartes; Descartes in good faith; the Descartes after the second *Meditatione* [Med II, AT VII 25/CSM II 17³] in which the first conclusion of *sum* is reached, who then moves on to the third round of meditation in order to solidify the grounds of his first discovery of *sum* on the basis of "the existence of God," which is the title of the third *Meditatione*. A thematic link between Descartes and Levinas can be found more explicitly later, for example, in the fifth *Meditatione*, where "the existence of God" is "considered *second* time," particularly towards the end of that final meditation: "Thus I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends uniquely on my awareness of the true God, *to such an extent* that I was *incapable* of perfect knowledge about anything else *until* I became aware of him [Med V, AT VII 71/CSM II 49]." An instructive point to note is that the whole of Descartes's meditations conclude with a thought on the radical alterity of God, God the absolute other, with regard to whom the thinking ego remains inadequate and insufficient. Interesting to see further, in this context, is a textual effect of what may be described as a God-centric, as opposed to an ego-centric, mode of cogitation, adopted therein: the de-centralisation of the epistemological status of the *ego* of *ego sum*. What it signifies is that a shift of focus takes place within *Meditationes*: the shift of a perspective from a thinking ego that thinks of itself, to another thinking ego that attempts to think the other. In this regard, it can be said that the first two *Meditationes* draw on the self-generative reflexivity of the cogitational self, and that of the rest of *Meditationes*, on the self-effacing non-reflexivity of the non-cogitational self. The self that appears in, and governs the production of, the writings of Derrida resembles the ego-centric,

³"So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind."

reflexive self of the first and second *Meditatione*. One aspect of Derrida's Cartesianism which this study attempts to bring to the fore is the Derrida who, against the Levinasian Descartes, follows and re-stages, in his text, the sceptical and rationalistic Descartes of the first two *Meditationes*: the Descartes *before* the third *Meditatione*: the pre-onto-theological and, in this narrowed sense, epistemological Descartes: the Descartes in the metaphysical predicaments of reflexive egocentrism: the Descartes in bad faith.

Derrida's epistemological Cartesianism is implicit in his general "undecidability" thesis that underlies most of his philosophical "aporias". His undecidability thesis, which argues for the impossibility of knowledge by destabilising the referential security of language and the self (particularly, the language *of* the self), can be read as a form of scepticism, and specifically as a kind of radical and yet paradoxical scepticism that ends up putting in question the epistemo-ontological validity of everything conceivable in the world *except* for the implied epistemological supremacy of the sceptic himself. Descartes stages this paradox at the beginning of the second *Meditatione*, rather cautiously and implicitly: "I will suppose then, that everything I see is spurious. [...] So what remains true? Perhaps just the one fact that nothing is certain. [Med II AT VII 24/CSM II 16]"; The paradox here, of which Descartes seems to be aware albeit vaguely (the word "perhaps" is a hint of such awareness), is that such a self-involving sceptic must be at least "certain" of "just the one (very) fact that nothing is certain" in order even to make sense of his own scepticism, not to mention the validation of it. Observable here, to say in an anticipation of the key contention of the thesis, is a structural similarity between the sceptical Descartes's meta-reflective move, illustrated in the quoted passage, and Derrida's meta-certainty about his "undecidability" or "indeterminacy" thesis, indicated by the excessive degree of repetitive persistence and tenacious consistency with which such thesis is proposed in his texts. Not surprising, in this regard, is that some commentators characterise Derrida who

ceaselessly invents meta-words - e.g. *différance*,⁴ with which he creates a meta-world of hyper-reflection - as a “linguistic” kind of “*malin génie* (evil genius) [McKenna [1992:54ff].⁵”

It is with such a specifically delineated, and narrowly defined, frame of reference in mind that I will pursue a Cartesian reading of Derrida. Accordingly, when the word “Cartesian” is used hereafter in relation to Derrida, its specific meanings and restricted range of references are to be noted: It refers specifically and narrowly to Descartes the ego-centric thinker appearing in the first two *Meditationes*, i.e. the epistemological or methodological Descartes in the sceptical phase of thinking; It excludes, therefore, Descartes the God-centric metaphysician appearing in the rest of *Meditationes*, i.e. the ontological or theological Descartes in a restored good faith.

Within this framework of reading thus delimited, the thesis sets about disclosing Derrida’s reflexive formalism, which I identify as characteristically proto-Cartesian and ultimately pro-Cartesian. By reflexive formalism, I mean the methodological normalisation of the Cartesian form of thinking, i.e. the self-referential form of reflexive cogitation as a pre-given, and in this sense insurmountable, historical condition of thinking. David wood also points out a “formalist” dimension of Derrida’s de-constructive philosophy by saying

Deconstruction is essentially a kind of *formalism* because it interprets as *symptoms* of a metaphysical syndrome [...] what are actually the internal reflections of the other historical conditions of a text’s production. [1988: 63]

⁴The question of in what sense *différance* can be read as a meta-word or meta-concept will be addressed later towards the end of the introduction [0.3], where its meaning is explained briefly in the context of discussing the economised dimension of Derrida’s meta-reflection.

⁵ John Caputo [1997], in a theological context, characterises Derrida as a “Jewish Augustine [1997: 27],” as a potential “devil” lurking in the eyes of the prayer; for this reason, he prays for Derrida, for deconstruction, for the destiny of Derrida’s deconstruction to come, by opening his ‘*Short Concluding Amen* [1996: 201-2]’ with the following blessing: “we cannot deny that the devil is in Derrida’s eye, [...] and deconstruction is hanging on by a prayer [201].”

To explain, by means of explaining the words of Wood, what is meant by reflexive formalism in this context, to which, the thesis argues, Derrida is committed: An example of what Wood refers to as “the other historical conditions of a text’s production” is the Cartesian mode of reflexive cogitation; An example of “the internal reflection” of such historical conditions, which the current study intends to show, is Derrida’s further reflection on, i.e. his reflexive doubling of, the Cartesian condition of reflexive predicament; An example of “interpreting as metaphysical symptoms” such reflexive doubling of the historically given condition of thinking is Derrida’s self-diagnosis of his implicit and exclusive commitment to the Cartesian mode of self-reflexion as a metaphysical illness that cannot be cured by any intra-metaphysical means. Such a reflexive movement of self-delimitation, a move towards the philosophical awareness of the historical “necessity,” to which Derrida “submits” his discourse, effects the philosophical “rigour” and “sophistication” of his de-constructive project, which renders “unreflective” and “naive” all other possible philosophical forms lacking the reflexive awareness of their pre-given conditions of thinking. The formalisation of a form of thinking in this case means therefore the absolute legitimisation of an inherited form of thinking as an indestructible, pre-given milieu of thinking; Derrida the formalist thinker sees himself caught up in such bounds of the philosophical tradition of the West, from which he cannot extricate himself.

The particular point my study highlights, in taking note of the formalist dimension of deconstruction, is regarding Derrida’s implicit absolutisation of, in other words, his refusal to let go of, the reflexive mode of thinking. Hence, Derrida’s “reflexive” formalism. The thesis as a whole shall argue that Derrida’s deconstruction can be viewed as a “symptom” of Cartesian “syndrome”; If deconstruction is, as Wood argues, a kind of meta-philosophical diagnostics that interprets all historical philosophical discourses as that which simply “reflects,” without having a cognitive mastery over, the more fundamental, un-bendable laws of thinking (e.g. a traditional, philosophical desire for self-presence viewed as inevitable

“symptoms” of logocentrism), Derrida’s deconstructive trajectory itself, I shall argue, is to be also diagnosed as a metaphysical “symptom” (e.g. as a manifestation of the cogitational self-reflexivity of the self), insofar as it is also operative within a certain framework of thinking to which it remains implicated and yet blind. On this note, the task of the thesis can be further articulated in both general terms and specific terms.

At a general level, the thesis seeks to provide a critical reading of Derrida’s texts in light of Descartes’s. And the approach here will be closely textual, in other words, not specifically historical; the task of analysis is not to trace a certain historical or genealogical link between Descartes and Derrida, but to explore a methodological affinity between them. The general concern of the thesis is to show Derrida, first, as a Cartesian thinker, and second, as a radical Cartesian. The thesis shall argue this case by closely analysing the strategic ways in which Derrida appropriates and radicalises what I see as the proto-Cartesian force of the *cogito*; What Derrida “appropriates” in a methodological manner, as I will argue hereafter, is the dual structure of phenomenological self-reflection - the structuralised state of the split-self - which the Descartes of the first two *Meditationes* creates reflexively, and from which he also suffers intellectually; What Derrida “radicalises”, as I will show further in this regard, is the transgressive force of such self-reflection personified by Descartes’s evil genius, his alter-ego in bad faith. The line of thinking that Derrida pursues is this type of “other”wordly world of “what is to come” (what is unknown or unintelligible) as opposed to the world of “what is” (what is, or rather appears to be, known or intelligible). In this context-specific sense, Derrida’s meta-reflective move is hyperbolic and hypothetical. Put the same point differently, the way Derrida’s transgressive self-reflection unfolds⁶ resembles the way Descartes’s evil genius is employed repeatedly in the inaugural parts of his meditations [Med I, AT VII 23/CSM II 15, and Med II, AT VII 25/CSM II 17] in that both are self-reflexively creative; By self-reflexive creation in this context, I mean a kind of textual

⁶Various examples of it will be introduced and analysed in Chapter 2 and 3.

fabrication or invention in which posited is the hypothesis of the radical other - the hypothesis of the other-worldly world or other possible worlds, for instance - which ends up reinforcing the epistemological centrality of such inventive, meta-reflective self. Both Descartes's hyper-reflective self-reflection and Derrida's are, in this sense, methodologically economised, in other words, calculated. What is to be read accordingly in the writings of both Descartes and Derrida is the "economy" of such self-reflexive performances of the philosophical intellect: the key question the thesis will pursue in a closely investigative manner is how such a staging of philosophical reflections effects the centralisation of the discursive locus of the cogitational subject. The economy of writing found in the texts of both writers shall be analysed from a rhetorical or tropological point of view. The rationale for such a reading is twofold: Although the element of self-reflexivity constituting the Cartesian form of the *cogito* has been well recognised and studied as such,⁷ a detailed analysis of the Cartesian self-reflexivity with a particular attention paid to its "performative" dimension and its consequential rhetorical effects, is still needed; Also, although the "performative" aspects of the writings of Derrida have been well discussed⁸, an immanent reading - a closely textual analysis - of their tropological effects is still in demand, let alone the close relevance of Derrida's textual performativity to methodological or rhetorical Cartesianism.

At a more specific level, the thesis seeks to create a textual link between Descartes and Derrida by using, as a thread, the element of self-reflexivity commonly found in their writings: a link between Descartes's reflective ontology and Derrida's

⁷ To name a few: Jaako Hintikka [1962] on performativity in Descartes's reflexion; Dalia Judovitz [1989] on Descartes's reflexive self and its relation to the constitution of modern subjectivity; Genevieve Lloyd [1993: 43-61, 'the self: unity and fragmentation'] on literary narrativity and its relevance to the constitution of philosophical discourse of the self; Jean-Luc Marion [1982, 1985] on Descartes's reflective "onto-theology," Jean-Luc Nancy [1979: 63-94, '*Larvatus Pro Deo*'] on the theatrical aspects of Cartesian reflexivity; Barry Stroud [1984: 2-38, the problem of the external world]; Bernard Williams [1978: 72-101, '*Cogito and Sum*'] on the introspective-reflective dimension in the methodological scepticism of Descartes; also most recently, there is David Weissman's psychoanalytic analysis of the reflexive mind of Descartes [1996: 330-46, 'Psychoanalysis'].

⁸ see literature review in Chapter 3 [3.3]

reflexive hauntology. The rest of this current section [0.2], which concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis, will be largely devoted to a sketchy explanation of what is meant by Descartes's reflective ontology, Derrida's reflexive hauntology and the thematic relationship between the two.

By "reflective ontology [Marion 1982:80]", what is meant is a kind of ontology that is constituted in the course of discursive reason's reflective endeavour; the *sum* of *ego-sum* appearing in the second *Meditatione* [see AT VII 25-29/CSM II 17-19, in particular] is discovered after, and on the basis of the possibility of, in other words, via, the *ego-cogito*. Reflective ontology can be, accordingly, contrasted with a kind of ontology that renders possible, therefore, comes prior to, such reflective philosophical endeavour, i.e. a pre-reflective or non-reflective ontology. The point to be noted is that, in the case of Descartes, being is discovered not directly, but reflectively in the sense that he recognises his being or existence in the course of coming to identify himself with a thing, an entity, at least "something"⁹ that can be identified as such, e.g. a thing that is deceived. A discursive function Descartes's hypothetical devil serves is to make Descartes see himself as an object, as a thing that exists, to be more specific, as the object of deception, which is a logical prerequisite for the very possibility of deception; subsequently, Descartes attempts to define, in a more constructive and concrete manner, what this "something," definable as such, could be: "I know that I exist; the question is, what is this "I" that I know? [AT VII 27/CSM II 18]" - "a thing that thinks"¹⁰.

⁹If I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. [AT VII 25/CSM II 17] - this passage will be introduced again and discussed in detail later in 1.3: Descartes's Self-reflexion.

¹⁰Thinking? At last I have discovered it - thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist - that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason - words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. But for all that I am a thing which is real and which truly exists. But

The question pertinent to our current concern, in the context of showing how reflective ontology is different from the non-reflective or pre-reflective kind, is not “what” Descartes defines himself as, i.e. what Descartes specifically means by “a thinking thing,” but how he comes to “know,” before setting out to define what the “I” is, that such I, thus definable, exists: the question that concerns us is, in other words, in what specific way Descartes introduces, in the first place, a reflective model of thinking to a thinking of being, which he then solidifies in the course of defining himself as a self-conscious¹¹ thing. What is reflective about Descartes’s hypothesis of evil genius - which he introduces before setting about to demarcate the specific mode of his being on the basis of the conclusion drawn from this thought-experiment - is that the hypothesis, conjectured as such, puts him in the position of both the deceiver and the deceived; to put it in more abstract terms, there occurs a reflective split of the thinking self into an “I” that reflects upon a possibility of global deception in a hyper-reflective, hyperbolic manner and an “I” that is thus reflected back as the object of deception, of inspection, trapped within the philosophical space of the possible world thus imagined. Accordingly, with this self-splitting, reflective move thus made, there comes to be established the subject-pole of self-reflection, on the one hand, and the corresponding object-pole, on the other. When Descartes says, “I am (nevertheless) something, even if the evil genius is deceiving me,” the “I” that appears in that sentence corresponds to the I located on the object-pole. The topological character of this move towards a “hyper”bolic hypothesis, i.e. the element of the “hyper” - the excessive or exceeding, above and beyond - suggests further that Descartes’s mode of thinking is specifically meta-reflective or hyper-reflective in the sense that Descartes the reflective thinker places himself “above” the totality of objects thus put in doubt which includes

what kind of a thing? As I have just said - a thinking thing. [AT VII 27/CSM II 18]

¹¹ But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions. [AT VII 28/CSM II 19]

himself as an object of reflection. The very ability of the reflective self to objectify itself - to project itself into an object - reinforces the epistemological centrality of the subject-pole of self-reflection. When Jean-Luc Marion says, regarding Descartes's reflective ontology, and specifically regarding the Descartes of the first and second *Meditatione*, that "ontology envisages being as such qua *cogitata*, curvature of thought [1982: 80]," the image Marion uses here, quite effectively, is bending or folding, the act of bending back ("re-flecting"); Hence, a reflected being as "curvature of thought".

Marion's point, put simply, is that reflective ontology sees being as an object of inspection, a thing upon which the cogitation subject reflects. Then, the way in which such object becomes visible to the reflective subject, I emphasise, is reflexive: Descartes thinks *of* himself as that which thinks, envisages *himself* as a thing that reflects - the instances of such self-reflection include doubting and imagining;

Is it not one and the same "I" who is now doubting almost everything, who *nonetheless understands some things*, who affirms that this one thing is true, denies everything else, desires to know more, is unwilling to be deceived, imagines many things even involuntarily, and is aware of many things which apparently come from the senses? [...] The fact that it is I who am doubting and understanding and willing is so evident that I see no way of making it any clearer. [...] (T)he 'I' who imagines is the same 'I'. [AT VII 28-9/CSM II 19]

What I would like to highlight here is the reflexive subjectivity of Descartes' I: the I, "the" I that, if not necessarily definable in any clear-cut, categorical manner, can "nevertheless" be referred to as "something" in a certain indexical manner, the I that remains "the same," i.e. self-identical, in the course of various attempts at self-differentiation, is the reflexive I, i.e. the I that returns to itself. That is to say, the mode in which all different aspects of the reflective I are gathered into one "I" - into

a definable, phenomenological object of self-inspection - is reflexive. The minimal idea of identity Descartes thus proposes after conducting his thought-experiment, referred to in the passage quoted above again¹² as “some things” that cannot be negated further even in the most radical case of self-doubt, I suggest in this regard, is a reflexive thought of I or, put more precisely, an effect of the reflective subject’s reflexive fixation on itself. It is on the basis of the possibility of the reflexive identification of the I that Descartes’s reflective ontology unfolds.

The framework of reference thus given, the thesis explores the possibility to read Derrida’s reflexive “hauntology” as a hyperbolic appropriation of Descartes’s reflexive I. To show here, only very quickly, a way in which Derrida’s reflexive hauntology can be related to, and contrasted with, the aforementioned reflective ontology, reflexive hauntology is that which haunts a reflective thinker, meta-reflexively, who, on the one hand, desires to grasp or reach a certain pre-reflective level of ontology, and on the other hand, recognises or acknowledges the impossibility to break out of the reflexive mould of thinking. Accordingly, “reflexivity” here, meta-reflexivity, to be more specific, characterises the way in which such recognition of logical impossibility returns to the reflective subject. And such meta-reflexivity is “haunting” in the sense that the desire to transcend the order of reflection or reflexion conflicts constantly -recursively - with the need to stay on the logical line of successive reflections, with the philosophical need to make sense of such desire itself. The conflict at issue is that between an impossibility and a necessity, an impossible dream of non-reflexion and a necessary reality of reflexion. In this regard, one can say that reflexive hauntology lies in between *pre*-reflective ontology and reflexive epistemology; the regressive movement of the “pre-” signifies that which “haunts” the reflective subject caught up between the impossibility of non-reflective and by implication non-reflexive ontology, and the inevitability of

¹²Recall the following sentence from a passage quoted earlier: “[...] let him (the evil genius) deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am *something*. [AT VII 25/CSM II 17]”

reflective and by implication reflexive epistemology. Derrida's milieu of thinking is thereby *a priori* constrained by such constitutive "double bind" that imposes a structure of dilemma on it. Such kind of apriorism in which pre-reflective ontology is deemed *a priori* impossible (*albeit* desirable), and similarly, reflective epistemology, *a priori* necessary (*albeit* inadequate), underlies the process of the unfolding of Derrida's aporetic, philosophical reflections. The epistemological origin of such philosophical predicament is locatable, the thesis argues, in the kind of self-reflexivity systematically built in the cogitational model of thinking. The source of Derrida's aporia, the thesis seeks to show further, lies in the fact that he takes for granted, i.e. implicitly presupposes, a reflective model of philosophising as not only one possible mode of philosophical thinking amongst many others, but *the* condition of thinking under which his philosophy unfolds.

In order to explore such epistemological or logical link between Descartes's reflective ontology and Derrida's reflexively hauntology, this study, when analysing Descartes, focuses on the strategic, methodological, and technical aspects of his *cogito* argument to the exclusion of the ontological side of the argument. The key concern here, restricted in such a way, is neither to offer a closely textual and comprehensive reading of how Descartes reaches the thought of *sum* nor to ask whether he succeeded in proving the *sum*, let alone the existence of God; It is to see in what specific and strategic way the constitutive reflexivity of the *cogito* can be, and in fact has been by Descartes himself, used as a means to gain access to ontology - a reflective ontology, in this case. The object of analysis here, in other words, is what may be isolated methodologically as a technique of reflexive thinking which, as I shall seek to show, Derrida adopts in his deconstructive reflection problematically.

To articulate the focus of the thesis more conclusively and polemically, what I aim to problematise in this study, by way of explication, is Derrida's implicit philosophical commitment to the reflexive form of cogitation, which Descartes the self-doubter or auto-critic also used in early stages of *Meditationes*. The central

concern of the thesis is to show that the “preferential¹³” structure of Derrida’s economy of thinking is Cartesian in its methodological orientation. I will therefore demonstrate that the Cartesian norms of self-reflexive thinking are not only operative in the self-referential scenes of Derrida’s deconstruction, but, more significantly, vital to the very viability of his economy of writing. In pursuing a reading of Derrida in light of Descartes, I will therefore highlight the reflexive framework of thinking as a given “preference” in Derrida’s deconstructive trajectory, “in the milieu of which” he seems to desire, whether consciously or unconsciously, to be caught up rather than not to. The internal administration operative in the Derridian economy of reflexion, I will argue, is deeply and structurally Cartesian. The critical point this study raises against Derrida, in pursuing an epistemological or methodological reading of his deconstructive trajectory, is that the logical structure of his hyper-reflection is originarily Cartesian in view of its internal and irreducible duality - the irrecuperable gap between a self that reflects on itself in a hyper-active mode and the self thus reflected back passively, i.e. consequently; his hyper-reflective move, seen from its methodological orientation, is thereby “always already” constrained to such an extent. Insofar as the philosophy of Derrida draws, albeit implicitly, on the self-centred mode of Cartesian cogitation that tightly dualises the self-other relationship at the deepest structural and constitutive level, his putatively “de-constructive” move to articulate the irreducible locus of the other within the cogitational self is considered to be rather deceptive than effective, or at best, only gestural.

¹³I prefer to speak of *experience*, this word that means at the same time traversal, voyage, ordeal, both *mediated* [...] and *singular* [...]. It is *not* a preference that I prefer *but* the preference *in which* I find myself *inscribed* [...] I was *born* [...] *in the European preference*, in the preference of the French language, nation, citizenship [...]. [Poi 373/362-3]

Everything is “drawn” for me from the (living, daily, naïve or reflective, always thrown against the impossible) *experience of* this “preference” that *I have at the same time to affirm and sacrifice*. [Poi 374/363].

Part I, which focuses mostly on Derrida, aims to show that Derrida can be read as a radical Cartesian, which is the key contention of the thesis as a whole. And this case will be argued from a methodological or epistemological, and not from an ontological or theological, point of view; the key point of contention I will highlight in the course of argument is that the element of self-reflexivity systematically built in the texts of Derrida is indicative of his implicit, philosophical commitment to methodological Cartesianism, i.e. the method of self-doubt, which Descartes uses for his *cogito* argument. To this end, an immanent, textual reading of Derrida will be offered, in which I seek to disclose a hidden - hidden, in the sense of not being explicitly articulated or acknowledged - presence of Descartes, the sceptical Descartes to be more specific, in the texts of Derrida. Part II aims to strengthen the case that part I argues by analysing more closely selected texts of Descartes and Derrida, directly relevant to the key contention of the thesis. Chapter 4, which focuses exclusively on Descartes, will offer a detailed account of the reflexive dimension of Descartes's epistemology, i.e. the inaugural inwardness of his turn to the cogitational mode of thinking. Chapter 5 then traces closely the process in which the reflexive inwardness of methodological Cartesianism becomes reinforced by Derrida's meta-reflective (as opposed to un-reflective), sceptical move, by using, as a telling example, Derrida's argument against Foucault regarding the philosophical status of Descartes's madmen. For this, analysed will be some part of Derrida's essay, '*Cogito et histoire de la folie* [ED 51-97/31-63],' in which he disputes Foucault's contention that Descartes's system of thinking, narrowly rationalistic in itself, has generic inability to understand madness per se; Derrida problematises Foucault's narrow understanding of the Cartesian rationality by proposing an alternative and wider framework of reading Descartes, in which Descartes's hyperbolic, meta-reflective move made in his *cogito* argument is seen as a manifestation of the generic madness of metaphysical thinking. Derrida's positive evaluation of what he perceives as a "philosophical" kind of madness, i.e. an element of hyperbolism internal to metaphysical thought, as I will go on to show, reinforces the case of

Derrida as a Cartesian thinker, who believes in the philosophical value of meta-reflection, and as a radical Cartesian, whose commitment to methodological Cartesianism is exclusive. Derrida's philosophical loyalty to Descartes, the hyperbolic sceptic, is exclusive to such an extent that, in the essay at issue, he makes a properly Cartesian move by rationalising madness, i.e. by locating the moment of madness in the meta-reflective structure of Cartesian cogitation, in the name of methodological self-doubt; in his other writings, he stages his inability to extricate himself from the maddening - maddening, in the sense that he himself describes in terms of hyper-reflection - force of internalised Cartesianism.

Insufficient study, to the best of my knowledge, has been made of Derrida as a Cartesian¹⁴. If there does occur a study on Descartes and Derrida, a discussion of the latter in light of the former, as can be found in such a typical article by Susan Bordo and Mario Moussa [1993], Derrida tends to be categorised as an anti-Cartesian thinker whose force of thinking drives the Cartesian cogitational subjectivity to "disappear amid the corridors of language [117]." The question I am led to raise again is this: Has the Cartesian figure of a thinker "disappeared amid the corridors of language?," and similarly, amid the corridors of Derrida's language which he brings to the forefront of philosophical thinking? I think not; I would rather argue that it is precisely Derrida's *inability* to operate *except* in the corridors of Cartesianism, in other words, his failure to eradicate the image of a Cartesian thinker out of his mind that makes him a contemporary neo-Cartesian. The point to note, again, is that Derrida thinks like and with Descartes, even when doing so against him.

0.3 Preliminary Considerations: Notes on Some Central Terms

This final section of the introductory part of the thesis will provide some minimal definitions of the following set of central terms that will recur throughout

¹⁴Refer to Literature Review [3.3]

the text: “self-reflexivity,” “logocentrism,” and “economy (of reflexion).” In addition, the centrality of these notions to the proposed Cartesian reading of Derrida will be briefly discussed.

By self-reflexivity or reflexivity, and the Cartesian kind, in particular, I mean a dual turn of the mind that simultaneously engenders heterogeneous orders within a given thought, the first order and the second; When in reflexion, the mind “grasps” these two orders at once; Hence, in this sense, the self “returns” to itself when in self-reflexion. When I write “(self-)reflexion” in the following pages, instead of “(self-)reflection,” my intention is to stress the metal-level reflexivity operative in the completion of an act of judgement; Which is to imply, when I write “reflection,” I intend to highlight the open-ended movement of a thought towards a higher order, which remains to be captured by a subsequent movement of reflexion. Tyler Burge’s description of the reflexive movement of judgement in the Cartesian “individuation” of self-knowledge [1988: 72ff] is useful in this context;

[...] knowledge of one’s own mental event, particularly knowledge of the sort which interested Descartes. Such knowledge consists in a reflexive judgement which involves thinking a first-order thought that the judgement *itself* is *about*. *The reflexive judgement simply inherits the content of the first-order thought.* [...] One knows one’s thought to be what it is simply by thinking it while exercising second-order, *self-ascriptive powers*. One has no ‘criterion,’ or test, or procedure for identifying the thought, and one need not exercise comparisons between it and other thoughts in order to know it as the thought one is thinking. Getting the ‘*right*’ one is simply a matter of thinking the thought in the *relevant* reflexive way. [72]

This passage is a lucid account of the atomistically¹⁵ individuated, Cartesian rationality that is concerned with getting a thought “right” by simply “relating” it to itself, that is, by “thinking the thought in the relevant reflexive way.” Burge’s description of the Cartesian reflexivity also shows why, for Descartes, self-knowledge is the most reliable source of knowledge. The key point to note is that a thought one has about oneself, namely, a self-referential thought, gains its automatic infallibility by virtue of being irrelevant to the other; here, the “other” refers to both a totality of other things that the first order thought is not about and a totality of other thoughts which therefore “don’t inherit the content of the first-order thought.”

In exploring the Cartesian world of self-reflexivity, I am going to look closely at the discursive functions of reflexivity. Specifically, I will focus on “the self-ascriptive powers” of the first-person reflexive judgement, in other words, the “self-supporting character [Bartlett 1987: 11]” of reflexively deductive arguments, taking it as a key element that renders the writings of both Derrida and Descartes strategically philosophical as opposed to merely literary. My reading seeks to explicate the ways in which both Descartes and Derrida rely on the epistemological resources of reflexive thinking for the construction of their arguments.

Logocentrism: The way in which Descartes draws on the epistemological resources of reflexion for his *cogito* argument, and, similarly, the way Derrida does

¹⁵ When one characterises the Cartesian self as being “atomistic”, the range of reference to which the term is applicable is to be restricted to the discursive and theoretical, i.e. rationalistic, side of it; at a practical and ethical level, Descartes does not subscribe to the atomistic view of the self. See, for instance, the following excerpt from the letter dated 15 September 1645 addressed to Princess Elizabeth:

After acknowledging the goodness of God, the immortality of souls and the immensity of the universe, there is yet another truth that is, in my opinion, most useful to know. That is, that though each of us is a person distinct from others whose interests are accordingly in some way different from those of the rest of the world, we must still think that none of us could subsist alone and each one of us is really one of the many parts of the universe, and more particularly a part of the earth, the State, the society, the family to which we belong by our domicile, our oath of allegiance and our birth. [AT IV 293/CSM III 266]

Accordingly, when the words “atomistic” or “atomism” are used hereafter in any context in which Descartes’s method of self-reflection is discussed or alluded to, they are meant to be read as terms describing his methodological, i.e. deliberate and experimental, isolation of the reflectively cogitational dimension of the self, which is, acknowledgedly, only part of his more holistic concept of the self.

so in order to keep viable the economy of his deconstructive trajectory, these two seemingly different ways of relying on the reflexive self are commonly and fundamentally “logocentric” in the following Derridian sense: With this move of self-appropriative reflexion, the thinking self that pays phenomenological attention to itself by responding to the reflexive call of self-consciousness is bound to “*subject* everything to the authority of the logos or the word [Mortley, interview with Derrida, 1991: 104].”

What I problematise in this study is Derrida’s reflexive formalism - the “subjection” or submission of a thought to a higher order of the same thought by means of the reflexive doubling of it - taken as a “symptom” of “logocentric” “syndrome”. This particular case of logocentrism found in the writings of Derrida, which I intend to highlight in the thesis, suggests that his discourse is subject to the philosophical authority of the “I,” and to the Cartesian law of reflexive cogitation, to be specific. My claim with this, put more strongly, is that Derrida’s discourse is a logocentrically oriented system of thoughts the textual economy of which is self-closedly self-serving rather than radically open to its “other.” This view on the deconstructive economy of the same therefore underplays, to a significant extent, the “heterological” force of deconstruction, deconstruction typically portrayed as a discourse sensitive to its own constitutive, and therefore irreducible, heterogeneity. Against this standard view, my reading of Derrida’s deconstruction seeks to unravel its intricately logocentric and irreducibly egological level. The argument I put forward is that the force of Derridian reflexion originates from that of Cartesian-Husserlian first-person cogitation. To generalise this point, the Derridian deconstruction is, and is ultimately, a discourse of “subjection” rather than transgression.

Lastly, some words on “economy”; In response to the following question,

RM: “*différance* with an “a” seems to take us in the direction of the same, in contrast with difference with an “e.” The separateness of things seems somewhat *mitigated*. [Mortley, Interview with Derrida, 1991: 99]

Derrida says,

JD: I think you’re right to say that *différance*, with an “a,” veers towards sameness. [...] This is what I call the *economy*: economy is in a way an idea based on *sameness*, the *oikos*, that which *remains* within the “home” of the same. [99]

My reading of Derrida contends that insofar as he remains within the Cartesian terrain of thought, his deconstructive strategy is not only inextricably, but, excessively, bound up with the economy of the same, precisely with the kind that Derrida aptly described in the passage above - the kind of thought that “veers towards sameness” by subjecting itself to the reflection’s self-referential force of reflexive doubling. An example of the reflexive doubling of a thought onto a higher level of reflection can be found in the famous opening line of Derrida’s essay on *différance*, which reads:

The verb “to differ” seems to *differ from* itself. [...] “To differ” signifies nonidentity; [...] it (also) signifies the order of the same. We provisionally give the name *différance* to this sameness which is not identical. [VP/SP 129(trans.)].

The economy of the same operative in this case is the recursive doubling of a given thought: “The verb “to *differ*” seems to *differ* from itself”. Without fully explicating what Derrida means by the sentence at issue, to give only an example of the case he makes here: “A thought that α differs from β ” (the thought as a whole, as such),

which the verb “to differ” conveys, differs from itself. Note that a conventional thought of difference - a thought that α differs from β - is reflexively doubled into a meta-thought on difference, i.e. “a thought that α *differs from* β ” (as a whole, as such) *differs from* itself. Although our immediate concern is with the recurrence of the phrase, “to differ from,” it would be necessary to understand, first, what Derrida means by the “itself” in this case. The common-sensical notion of difference Derrida purports to problematise with his talk of *différance* presupposes an idea of self-identity: the concept of difference itself, in light of which α can be perceived to be different from β , has to be self-identical to itself as a given conceptual apparatus. Derrida’s *différance* is then, as he argues, that which problematises such order of identity-thinking, and accordingly, somehow “differs from” the notion of a difference, an identifiable difference. With a thought of *différance* that automatically differs from any intelligible - intelligible in the sense of being identifiable or recognisable as such - thought of a difference, what Derrida points to, in an indexical manner, is the kind of self-referential paradox inherent in the notion of “a” difference: A thought of difference cannot be really or radically “different” in the sense that the thought itself has to remain self-identical in order to be rendered intelligible as such as a thought. Hence, a thought that remains “different from” itself, i.e. *différance*, which therefore “is neither a *word* nor a *concept* [VP/SP 130 (trans.)].” Now, the point of contention with which we are concerned is that, in view of Derrida’s reflexive doubling of the conventional notions of difference, one can claim that his talk of *différance* “remains within the ‘home’ of the same.” A specification of the self-reflexive movement of *différance* - e.g. the characterisation of *différance* as a meta-thought that makes “a thought that α *differs from* β ” *differ from* itself - shows that *différance* is “un-identical” with, i.e. different from, the conventional thought of difference not in its contents, but only in its discursive order: The reflective level of the former is higher than that of the latter. The point I am highlighting here is that, insofar as the way in which the idea of *différance* is formulated is meta-reflective, that is to say, insofar as an inextricable link between

the first-order reflection on difference and its corresponding second order is thus logocentrically maintained, Derrida is to be viewed as a thinker of the same, in other words, a thinker of restricted economy.

However, immediately after the remark quoted above (from the interview article), Derrida goes on to refute the line of reading I have just offered:

But, I would stress another dimension of différance, which is, by contrast, that of absolute heterogeneity, and therefore of otherness, radical otherness. The term “différance” can’t be stabilised within a polarisation of the same and the different. It’s at once and the same time an idea rooted in sameness, and radical otherness, an otherness which is absolutely radical. [99]

However, I think otherwise: Insofar as the thought of différance is the kind that grasps one “and” the other “at the same time,” insofar as this thought results from a certain reflexive labour of thinking, I am again led to the view that deconstruction is a highly economised, meta-level reflexion. One way to establish this view would be to show that as long as Derrida’s thought around différance is thought in a meta-reflexive manner, it necessarily ends up obliterating its “another dimension,” its “absolute heterogeneity,” i.e. the level that escapes such discursive trap of meta-thought. My analysis of reflexive “automaticity” in the cogito argument [1.31] paves the way for this line of argument posed against Derrida.

The distinction the metaphysicians of economy customarily make between the “intrasubjective” economy and the “intersubjective” economy is useful in this context. As Edward Fullbrook [1997] notes, there are two distinctively different schools of thought in the metaphysics of *homo economicus*. One defends modern views of the atomic and individual self, which gives rise to the modern Cartesian-Lockean-Newtonian mechanistic doctrines of soul atomism and methodological individualism; The other, by contrast, holds a relational view of the

self, offering a model of “desire according to an other,¹⁶” a model of the world as “the mimetic universe¹⁷,” for example. Accordingly, the former is an intrasubjective model of economy, atomistic in its methodological orientation, and modernist in its ethos, and the latter, intersubjective, therefore, holistic in its approach, and postmodern in its ethos. Now, when I suggest that the economy of self-same reflexion is operative in the Derridian discourse, my suggestion, in other words, is that the Derridian model of economy is closer to the intrasubjective one than to the intersubjective one, insofar as deconstruction is, as he says, “*auto*-deconstruction.” Derrida’s repetitive reliance on the word “auto” as in the “auto-deconstruction” of the self can be read as an indication that a governing principle of the reflexive *autonomy* of self-differential thinking underlies the Derridian economy of thinking, which is therefore fundamentally self-same.

Interestingly, Jean-Pierre Dupuy [1990 and 1994], a major contemporary theorist in the school of intersubjective economy, touched precisely upon this issue. In exploring the relationship between the “literary” strategies of violation or transgression and the Derridian “self-deconstruction of convention,” both of which, as he points out, draw on the paradox of self-refutation [1990, 1994: 89-91], he makes the following important point, which I endorse entirely: the Derridian system of self-deconstruction in which “the working of a conventional order contains¹⁸ the principle of its own decomposition [1994: 94]” is fundamentally “*autonomous* [1994: 91ff].” Seen from this point of view, Derrida’s “logic of supplement,” for instance, can be read as a meta-level abstraction of the automaticised self-refuting process that takes place *within* a system of thought; In a deconstructive system of thought, as (if) in a well-made fictive narrative, “*convention violates itself within itself* [1994: 89]” ; *différance* “differs from itself”.

¹⁶ an example from René Girard [Fullbrook 1997: 86], a major proponent of the intersubjective economy.

¹⁷ John Maynard Keynes’s key concepts [Fullbrook 1997: 82]

¹⁸ “The verb “contains” should be construed in its two-fold meaning: “to have within oneself,” but also “to keep in check” [Dupuy 1994: 93].”

Derrida's conclusion, however, not only differs from ours, but contradicts it, as he immediately goes on to say:

*So, I'd say that différance can't be enclosed either within the same, or the idea of the radically other, about which nothing could be said. It is an *enigmatic relation* of the same to the other. [99]*

Clear again is the subtle, and yet crucial, disagreement between Derrida and me on the evaluative interpretation of the mode of his economy of thinking. I view his deconstructive project as a fundamentally logocentric, and ultimately intrametaphysical, philosophical lie, in which a highly sophisticated economy of self-same reflexion pretends to liberate "the radical other" from its snare of self-reflexive interiorisation. Derrida's deconstruction of the self is, ultimately, a self-expansive project of the self in the sense that his ceaseless, reflexive doubling of his reflective self, which results in the textual presentation of the hyper-reflective self engaging in auto-self-deconstruction, ultimately leads to the reinforcement of the discursive centrality of such auto-deconstructive subject; This way, the self in auto-self-deconstruction ends up affirming its authorial territory (in the form of self-referential writings) and expanding it (in the form of textual expositions of the self in self-reflexion). However, by contrast, Derrida considers his auto-deconstructive move as a self-transcending "response" - as opposed to a self-reflexive reaction - to the most enigmatic and yet rigorous "call" of reason: a call for absolute self-criticism. A deconstructive response to the call of reason result, therefore, Derrida argues, in a move towards self-effacement as opposed to self-expansion.

The way in which such self-effacement takes place is however, my counter-argument emphasises, is self-centredly self-expansive in the senses described above. The "enigmatic" "call" of reason that Derrida privileges and follows, my reading suggests, is a call for a metaphysical *self*-violation, which, in this sense,

remains self-referential. According to this rule of thinking, the thinking self must bring a rupture to the internal order of identity-thinking, and it must carry out its de-constructive self-analysis to the effect that the very rupture within the self, the very failure of the self to retain its self-same identity simultaneously marks the tenacious presence of “the other” within the unitary system of “the self-same self.” It is in view of this systematic failure¹⁹ in the economy of self-same reflexion that Derrida is led to observe the “enigmatic relation of the same to the other.”

My exposition of Derrida in light of Descartes in what follows is an attempt to reduce the size of Derrida’s “enigma” as much as possible. I will advance my argument to such an extent that an articulation of the mode of Derrida’s alliance with traditional philosophies, and with the Cartesian, in particular, can demystify some aspects of Derrida’s (non-)thoughts strategically obfuscated by him which therefore remains unnecessarily obscure in his texts. My intention here is neither to reduce Derrida’s deconstructive project to “a” kind of Cartesian phenomenology of the self nor to obliterate the proper and singular name, Jacques Derrida, by simply historicising or formalising it in a schematic manner. Put the scope and object of the study in more positive terms, a reading of Derrida as a Cartesian is not to be considered as a hostile countermove against him, but, rather as an endeavour to bring into light the critical aspects of his philosophical adventure. The ultimate aim of this undertaking is therefore twofold: it is to evaluate the philosophical significance of Derrida’s deconstructive trajectory, and at the same time, to expose the constitutive limits of his philosophical endeavour. The following, in other words, is a small and

¹⁹ Kevin Hart [1989] argues [173ff] that the Derridian deconstruction is neither a “collection of first-order positions about knowledge” nor “just” “a second-order discourse on epistemology and ontology [...] that traces the effects of their *will* to totalise.” I am, in overall, sympathetic to this view that is rightly sensitive to the aporetic undecidability of the discursive status of Derrida’s theoretical assertions. However, my reading, seen from a more specific point of view, differs from Hart’s in the following sense. My contention, to use Hart’s framework, is that it is possible, to a significant extent, to give a positive account of the second-order dimension of deconstruction; this is possible insofar as deconstruction “traces the effects” of its passion for the impossible, in other words, the effects of its failure to totalise, if not its “will” to totalise.

yet sustained attempt to figure out the aura of Derrida's rather "enigmatic," but certainly not mysterious or even mystic, thoughts.

1. Derrida in Relation to Descartes: Self-reflexion

I have never known how to tell a story¹. Why didn't I receive this gift from Mnemosyne?
From this complaint, and probably to protect myself before it, *a suspicion continually steals into my thinking*²: who can really tell a story? [MPM 33/10]

*

I write without seeing. - Diderot, Letter to Sophie Volland, June 10, 1759.

- Do you believe (this) [*Vous croyez*]? You'll observe that from the very beginning of this interview I've had a problem following you. *I remain sceptical* ... [MA 9/1³]

Vous Croyez?: "a suspicion continually steals into my thinking."

Let me begin by reading a sentence from the writings of Jacques Derrida.

1.1 First Exposition: A Suspicion and A Reading

"A *suspicion* continually steals into my thinking," says Derrida. From the beginning, I have a problem following him. I remain sceptical; I remain sceptical of what he says, i.e. that he suspects he cannot tell a story. Staged here is merely a self-effacing, authorial gesture, one might say; I, however, remain sceptical of such lenient reading, particularly when it is Derrida the strategically self-effacing writer that one is reading. The thesis as a whole is a resistant reading of Derrida, a close reading of and behind the sceptical façade of Derrida. It proposes to look at the other side of Derrida's uncertainty, a kind of meta-certainty: he seems to be sure that his thinking will have failed in the end. We the readers, including Derrida the reader,

¹ "*Je n'ai jamais su raconter une histoire*": this is also the first sentence [MPM 27/3] with which Jacques Derrida begins his text on blindness, Mnemosyne, and Paul de Man [MPM].

² "*Un soupçon s'insinue toujours.*"

³ This is the first sentence with which Derrida begins his text on blindness and self-portraiture in *Mémoires d'aveugle* [MA].

must remain alert to the infinite possibilities of deception. We ought to see, following Derrida in suspicion, what lies on the other side of his sceptical move; we ought to see further what lies in between what he says and what he does not say; thereby, a sceptic's vigil is called for. In this section [1.1], I will show two other ways in which the central concern of the thesis can be articulated, each time differently, and yet all in reference to the single sentence at stake: "A suspicion continually steals into my thinking."

Again, "a suspicion *constantly* steals into my thinking," so goes Derrida's self-observation. "Constant" vigilance, therefore, is the name of the game. The one who remains suspicious is the one who, as he puts it, "protects" oneself from the threat of the other, from the manipulation by the other. Derrida resembles the Descartes of the first and second *Meditationes* who faces, and faces alone, the hypothetical attack of the evil genius. Derrida is, as he says about himself, like a "hunted animal, searching in darkness for a way out where none is found.⁴ Every exit is blocked [PR 467/5, translation revised]." In order to survive this trial of thought, our Cartesian meditator must remain insomniac, figuratively speaking; he must, at least, resist falling asleep, the sleep being analogous, in this case, to the absolute vulnerability of the self to the other. This type of methodological insomnia is what, to follow Derrida's interpretation of Heidegger, the "principle of reason" calls for [PR 497-498/19-20]: the principle calls for "the time for reflection [497/19]" "*in the twilight of an eye* [497/20]," which is also "an other (*autre*) time [...] heterogeneous with what it reflects and perhaps gives time (*donne peut-être le temps*) for what calls for and is called thought [497/19]."

A mode of "giving time for what calls for thought, and for what is called thought" is, in Derrida's case, already a complicated one: it is always already embedded in another mode in which a thought has, in advance, been "given time,⁵" i.e. given a chance to be thought. At stake here is the undecidability or ambivalence

⁴ "un animal traqué cherche dans l'obscurité une issue introuvable"

⁵ *Donner le temps* [Derrida 1991]

of the mode of reflection: philosophical reflection is active in the sense that it “gives” time to think, and passive, at the same time, in that it takes place in a “given” time, i.e. in a pre-determined set of conditions, whether it be historical or logical. The thesis sets out to explicate the structural aspects and limits of this kind of double thought of Derrida, this “*abyssal* thought of inheritance [FM 191].” Broadly speaking, the twofold mode of com-pli-cation in which Derrida’s reflections on presence take place, presence taken, for example, as “the present of tradition [Caygill 1995⁶: 293-9],” shall be the broad concern of my analysis.

Caygill’s characterisation of the “double” mode in which Derrida relates himself to the philosophical tradition [293] is highly pertinent to our context: “Derrida [...] *remains implicated within* the oppositions of the modern thought of tradition.” One example of “the oppositions,” which Caygill discusses in his essay, and which concerns us here in this thesis, is the opposition between “donation,” i.e. the act of “giving time,” and “appropriation,” i.e. the act of receiving “given time.” An aporetic site held between these two opposing terms, that is, a space of thinking that lies both within the traditional line of thinking and without - this is where Derrida’s philosophical reflection takes place. Such irreducibly twofold aspect of Derrida’s mode of thinking is often described as de-constructive: deconstruction is both destructive in that it attempts to transcend the traditional order of discursive rationality and constructive in that it seeks to create a new vantage-point of view from which tradition as a whole can be critically investigated. Derrida’s aporia here, however, is that the epistemological or logical resources necessary for such transgressive and yet “donative,” deconstructive endeavour cannot but be borrowed, i.e. “appropriated,” from the traditional metaphysical resources. Hence,

[...] *between appropriation and donation* [...] there is a complex and knotted tangle of routes, paths, and journeys which are remembered, undergone, feared,

⁶ In this short and illuminating essay, Howard Caygill explores a theme that underlies both the poetry of Guiseppe Ungaretti and the writings of Jacques Derrida: tradition as a “present of time,” a “given” time.

hoped for, and which have to be understood in their historical specificity
[Caygill 1995: 293-4].

Specifically in this study, we will investigate the extent to which one can define Derrida as a thinker who follows the Cartesian “path” of thinking, namely, Derrida as a Cartesian thinker. Not unlike Caygill, who immediately acknowledges that he “must play the traitor [...] to Derrida [294],” we will also see to what extent one can be justified in underplaying Derrida’s radicalism, his path-breaking pathos. We will explore the other, secure, and programmatic itinerary of Derrida’s philosophical trajectory, which appears to underlie, and underlie tenaciously, his transgression-driven, “risky” thinking. It is on the conservative “logic” of Derrida’s deconstruction as opposed to its adventurous spirit that the focus of my reading lies. In the course of pursuing a reading of Derrida as a Cartesian, we will be looking at the figure of an old Descartes in Derrida, that is, the figure of a traditional young radical; we will give a reading of this Derrida, this dimension of Derridian discourse, which, I believe, has yet to be exposed.

Has there been such a thing as “an *other* time” in Derrida’s discourse?: “an other time [...] heterogeneous with what it reflects and perhaps gives time for what calls for and is called thought.” This, however, is a naïvely phrased question, given that, as Derrida says, there is no “exit” at all in deconstructive scenes of thinking; Derrida’s point, in other words, is that an attempt to pursue an other path of reflection must be made, whether or not such an attempt can actually succeed. Conceding this point, let us then rephrase our question: does not the Derridian time of reflection bear affinity with the Cartesian night of epistemic abyss rather than with the dawn of a new radical thought? That is to ask, is not Derrida “constantly” preoccupied with the Cartesian aporias of self-reflexion arising from within the Cartesian framework of egological thinking? The thought behind this question is that, although the Derridian vigil sustains the survivability of Cartesian rationality, yet, by doing so, it already appears to preclude the possibility of a radical awakening, i.e. an “other” possibility

of a thought to become awakened to a radically new, “heterogeneous” epoch of metaphysics. In so far as Derrida refuses to extricate his discourse from the self-implicative force of Cartesian reflexion, this refusal limits the ambience of his reflections, accordingly; he cannot think other-wise. That is to say, the Derridian gesture to welcome “an other time *of* reflection,” already excludes the radical presence of the other, i.e. “an other time *for* an other reflection.” In what follows, I am going to examine the extent to which one can portray Derrida the thinker as a thinking “animal [PR 467/5]” trapped in the Cartesian snare of reflexion, in the aporetic formalism of Cartesian self-reflexivity. With this direction in mind, I am going to undertake an analysis of the Cartesian mode of reflexive thinking, in which, as I will demonstrate, Derrida allows his thought to be embedded.

Again, “a suspicion constantly *steals into* my thinking,” says Derrida, a self-doubter. His self-doubts are rigorous, in other words, consistent, to such an extent that, for example, he is forced, by necessity, to renounce the intellectual proprietorship of the Derridian enterprise, namely, “deconstruction (*déconstruction*).” He must, by force of self-effacing thinking, ask who can dare claim the ownership of an intellectual trajectory; he must therefore voice this concern in a manner similar to that in which he says he doubts he can tell a story.

Q: Does the term “deconstruction” designate your fundamental project?

J.D: I have never had a “fundamental project”. And “deconstructions,” which I prefer to say in the plural, has doubtless never named a project, method, or system, especially not a philosophical system. [Poi 367/356]

And again,

Q: [...] Is there a philosophy of Jacques Derrida?

J.D.: No.

Q: There is thus no message.

J.D.: No.

Q: Is there anything normative?

J.D.: Of course there is, there is *nothing but* that. But if you are asking me implicitly whether what I am saying there is *normative* in the ordinary sense of the term, I would have more trouble answering you. [...] [Poi 372-3/361]

Suspicion, then, *is* the norm, if nothing else. What the “norm” of deconstruction *is*, Derrida, being rather “troubled,” refuses to spell out; “troubled,” because this norm, supposedly, only “steals into” his thinking. Therefore, he does not know what it is; he can only “suspect” what it could be. Then, can he not just state what it is that he suspects? No, he cannot; or rather, he must choose not to reveal the secrets, to disclose that of which he remains suspicious. Firstly, he must not, as he himself is not “rigorously sure” what it *is*; secondly, he must not, as any definitive remark will put an end to the interminable drama of self-doubts, which does not contribute to his economy of writing. Regarding the second reason, which is less straightforward and more interesting than the first, we will examine later in detail why this is the case. At this stage, let it suffice to note that, despite all these suspicions and self-doubts, what remains beyond suspicion in the Derridian discourse are the epistemic values of “rigour” and “vigil.” The “normative” level of Derrida’s deconstructive reflection, I will show, originates from this irreducible “preference to experience, or experience *of* the preference⁷ for [see Poi 373-4/362-3]” the vigil of thinking; it also, I will show further, leads to his textual production of reflexive writings.

⁷See my Introduction [0.2] for the full passage from which this phrase is being quoted.

1.2 Intermission: Against Gasché on Deconstructive Reflexivity

According to Rodolphe Gasché [1986], Derrida's deconstructive endeavour is to be viewed as a rigorous self-inscription of "heterology [88ff]," and not as a philosophy of the same. What Gasché's reading highlights is the "Heideggerian" Derrida,⁸ in other words, "the radicality of (Derrida's) heterology [88, (my insertion)]"; mine, against his, asks how "radical" the Derridian heterology, in fact, is. My analysis, to anticipate the later findings, will suggest further that "Derrida's heterological venture [94]" can be, to a significant extent, viewed as a withdrawal into the Cartesian-Husserlian transcendental solipsism, a retreat into the Cartesian world of "hauntological" self-affliction. "Derrida's other is irretrievably plural, cannot be assimilated, digested, represented, or thought as such [103]," therefore in this sense, it is, Gasché argues, the "difference *itself* [87]." In response to this line of reading Derrida, the key question I will pose to Derrida as well as to Gasché⁹ is the following: to what extent can Derrida think the "difference itself" without falling into the Cartesian trap of self-reflexive thinking? Textual reflexivity is most characteristic of the writings of Derrida, and a systematic problem engendered by such a style of

⁸ Whether my reading of Derrida as a Cartesian would therefore automatically lead to the view of Heidegger as a Cartesian, this issue requires another space for discussion, which would also involve a critical appraisal of Derrida's relationship to Heidegger; and here I do not intend to deal with this large issue, nor do I wish to endorse any quick move. Let me, however, only note that it would be indeed worthwhile to explore a reading of Heidegger as a Cartesian, which will clash inevitably with the mainstream interpretations of him. If Gasché's reading of Derrida represents, and also hinges upon, the standard view of Heidegger as a non-representational thinker who problematises Cartesian subjectivism, a counter-reading is not absent. For example, see Timothy Clark's remark on the intimate philosophical ties remaining amongst Descartes, Heidegger, and Derrida [1992: 26-27]:

Derrida is emulating something like Heidegger's practice of a "step back" out of representation thinking [...] Yet despite its radical force, such a philosophy is not as much a *break* from Cartesian subjectivism as it may at first appear. Derrida's pre-reflexive understanding *remains* part of a subject-centred metaphysics. [26-27]

⁹ However, this does not imply that to argue with Gasché will be a main concern of this thesis. In fact, after this section, Gasché's argument will not be examined anymore; it is because the main interest of my study lies in making a textual and conceptual link between Derrida and Descartes, and not between Derrida and the German Idealists, which Gasché has already explored thoroughly.

textual practice is that the stylised reflexivity of Derrida's texts invites idealist or phenomenological readings of them, such as mine and similarly David Wood's [1980¹⁰], which would be apparently disadvantageous to the thinker who likes to think that he attempts to think in a non-idealistic and non-phenomenological way. Why, I should like to ask, does then Derrida insist on taking *this* risk, amongst other possible ones, the risk of being misunderstood *this* way?: this is the question that will guide my investigation.

Gasché's defence of Derrida on this point [80-87] is highly instructive, although not entirely persuasive. His key contention is that the Derridian reflection, the kind that is oriented towards "heterology," lies "beyond" the self-same reflection of the German idealist kind. His point is that the Derridian kind of reflection on a radically different order of the self, namely, on a "heterological" self, is not to be identified with, or treated as part of, the speculative kind of reflections on the "reflexive aporias" of the infinite regress of the self, which originated from Descartes's system of reflexion and German idealism attempts to tackle.

(1) By freeing the structural articulation of Being, Heidegger paved the way for Derrida's even more effective accounting, *beyond* traditional aporetics and speculation, for the problem of self-reflexivity. (2) Concerned both with demonstrating the possibility and essential limits - that is, ultimate impossibility of self-reflection [...] like Heidegger, he (Derrida) focuses on an *entirely new set of issues* on the margin of the philosophical path that leads from aporias to their harmonious unity. (3) *The manner* in which he *tackles* the problem of reflexivity thus takes the form of an investigation into the "*pre-suppositions*," "*pre-positions*," or "structures" to which the exposition of this problem, as well

¹⁰ "The use of [...] strategies of textual reflexivity [...] seems at least to realign Derrida finally within the logocentric tradition he is criticising, and moreover [...] they do this in ways that he did not anticipate, and cannot find acceptable [1980: 226]."

as its eventual speculative solution, *must* necessarily yield. [86, numbers added (1-3)]

Points about Heidegger aside, Gasché's views on Derrida are clear, and clearly mislead. As a way of recapitulating what I have been suggesting so far, and establishing a framework for the subsequent discussion, here I will only indicate very briefly why, and in what sense, I disagree with Gasché on those three points I have itemised. Against the first point (1), I will advance the argument that Derrida's reflection does not "venture" "beyond" the traditional terrain of Cartesian aporetics. The thought is that Derrida's move towards "heterology" cannot but remain gestural as opposed to adventurous; hence, the double "gesture" of Derrida. Gasché's second point (2) can be problematised in the same vein. I will highlight the anachronistic aspects of Derrida's philosophical trajectory as opposed to its radical "new" light. I am going to bring into light the conservative Derrida. Final point (3): in examining the "manner in which Derrida tackles the problem of self-reflexivity," that is, in giving a critical appraisal of the manner in which he forces his deconstructive thinking to take place within the "Heideggerian" pre-reflexive grounds of philosophical reflection, I will point to the structural problems in interpreting Derrida's attempt to deconstruct the self-same identity of the self as a "break" with, and a "displacement" of, the traditional Cartesian paradigm of reflexive cogitation. Furthermore, I will offer a reading of Derrida as a willing victim of his own logocentric, formalistic tendency: a tendency to absolutise the force of meta-level reflexivity. The point is that Derrida is always already forced to play the Cartesian game of reflexive vigil. The "force" at stake, as we shall see in what follows, closely resembles the methodological demand of Cartesianism.

1.3 Second Exposition: Methodological Self-reflexion

This section sets out to elaborate the first contention of the thesis: Derrida's methodological orientation is Cartesian. The second point of contention, namely, that Derrida can be read as a radical Cartesian, will be discussed later in Chapter 2, which offers an analysis of Derrida's reflexive hauntology in light of Descartes's reflective ontology. The thesis as a whole is an elaboration of these two propositions, and the aim of this expository section [1.3] is to establish a "clear and distinct" framework in which this set of key ideas can be further developed later in the subsequent chapters [2 - 5].

In providing a reading of Derrida in light of Descartes, I focus on some significant structural similarities found in the mode of their arguments. My initial observation is that the element of textual reflexivity, explicable in terms of the phenomenological adherence of the self to itself, is found commonly in the writings of both Descartes and Derrida; I read their texts as phenomenological dramas of self-conflicts and self-doubts, narrated by the first person singular. I take up this clue as a guiding thread with which I interweave their seemingly heterogeneous texts. Given that Derrida himself acknowledges his philosophical debts to Edmund Husserl for his "methodological" orientation [Kearney, interview with Derrida, 1984: 109], and given that Husserl, notably and particularly the Husserl of *Cartesian Meditations* is a self-identified pro(to)-Cartesian, any attempt to bring into light a certain homological link between Descartes and Derrida, hitherto relatively undisclosed, would be worth its endeavour.

With this framework in mind, I will set about analysing ways in which the phenomenological unfolding of the self takes place in the writings of Descartes and Derrida. I locate the philosophical affinity between the two in the way in which both the methodologically sceptical Descartes and the self-deconstructive Derrida draw on the recursivity of the phenomenological act of self-introspection. Accordingly, my focus of analysis is the inaugural centrality of the thinking ego: the initial primacy of

the category of the epistemological over that of the ontological or the theological, found in the texts of Descartes and Derrida.

In the course of reading Descartes, the focus will be laid, accordingly, on the point of departure in Descartes's reflection, i.e. the thinking self, and not on the resultant thought of his meditations which effects a dislocation of the thinking ego's subject position, i.e. the proof of the existence of God (who therefore becomes more central than the thinking ego). The analysis in the following [1.31], the scope of which thus restricted, aims to elucidate the formative aspects of Descartes's *cogito* argument, i.e. the inaugural, epistemological turn in the thinking of being.

I will begin [1.31] by singling out two epistemological aspects of Descartes's *cogito* argument¹¹: performative automatism and recursive reiterability. At the second stage of exposition [1.32], I will then show how it is possible to map out the Derridian labyrinth of thoughts by using these working concepts as a set of clues. In other words, the concern of the subsequent analysis is to look at the specific ways in which Derrida appropriates or even exploits such epistemological resources in constructing his self-referential texts; the manner in which Derrida relies on cogitational self-reflexivity, as we shall see in detail, is strategically self-serving, hence, in this sense, economised. The scope of the following analysis of Descartes's *cogito* argument is therefore limited to such an extent: it is to facilitate our understanding of the performative art of self-parasitism staged in Derrida's text in our attempt to locate the origin of his deconstructive techniques in methodological Cartesianism. Towards the end of this chapter, the methodological affinity between Descartes and Derrida will be shown more clearly, e.g. that between the self-reflexivity of Descartes's "*Je pense*" (on which the next section [1.31] focuses) and the self-reflexivity of Derrida's "*Je - marque*"¹² (on which a sub-section [1.323] of the subsequent section [1.32] focuses); with a juxtaposition of these two different

¹¹ A full discussion of its structural dimension will be undertaken in chapter 4: Self-reflexive economy of Descartes's *Cogito*.

¹²It means, simultaneously, both "I mark" and "I marks."

cases of self-reflection, the point of contention to be established is that the latter can be viewed as a derivative from the former, seen from a technical or rhetorical point of view.

1.31 Descartes's Self-reflexion:

Performative Automatism and Recursivity in the *Cogito* Argument

By “performative automatism” I mean a logical mechanism constitutive of a *performative* kind of *reductio ad absurdum*, in which an argument is rendered *automatically* valid when the utterance of the counter-argument is deemed absurd or impossible. At stake is a specific kind of reasoning by *reductio ad absurdum*, a “performative” one, by virtue of which, not only there is the impossibility of allowing the contrary proposition, but, more significantly, is there the impossibility to utter the contrary¹³. Therefore, the most important words here are “to utter.” Before discussing the significance of “utterance” in the *cogito* argument, I will make some preliminary remarks regarding the two notions introduced here: “automatic” and “performative.”

First, why “automatic?” The truth or conclusion of the *ego-cogito*, i.e. *sum*, according to Descartes, is an automatically valid one; it is self-evident in the sense

¹³It is to be noted that the method of argument by *reductio ad absurdum* derives from Aristotle's law of non-contradiction, according to which, when the utterance of the contrary of a given statement leads to a self-contradiction, the given sentence is to be deemed true by virtue of the impossibility of asserting otherwise. The point I am seeking to highlight here, however, is not that Descartes's method is therefore originally Aristotelian, but that, first, his methodological reliance on such Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning has a certain strategic value, and second, what Descartes uses strategically in presenting his argument is the automaticity (or at-once-ness) of the way in which the impossibility at issue is recognised by the cogitational subject; it is with the in-built logical apparatus of the *cogito* argument, and not with the historical origin of the method adopted in the argument, that I am concerned. The point of contention pursued this way will, I believe, shed light on the logical side of Derrida's form of thinking, which I shall go on to characterise as performatively self-contradictory and in this sense meta-cogitational - put the same point more straightforwardly, Derrida the logical thinker knows that he is self-contradictory and it is the very meta-awareness of logical self-contradiction that his “auto-”deconstructive texts stage in a playful manner. This point regarding the syllogistic rationality of deconstructive mind, namely, the point that Derrida implicitly adopts, and further plays on, the “Aristotelian” rule of non-contradiction, has already been put forward by a commentator [White 1992], and I will address this issue again, without going into the historical detail, in my literature review [3.3].

that the negation of it necessarily, that is, automatically, leads to impossibility or absurdity. Note that, curiously enough, in order to validate his move from the *cogito* to the *sum*, Descartes uses an indirect and negative method of proof as opposed to a direct and positive one. A good example illustrating this point is the move Descartes makes from “I am not nothing” to “I am something,” which takes place in the second *Meditatione* [AT VII 25/CSM II 17]:

[...] Let him (a deceiver of supreme power and cunning) deceive me as much as he can, he will *never* bring it about that I *am nothing so long as* I think I am *something*. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I *must* finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is *necessarily* true *whenever* it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.

Note that, here, the truth of *ego-sum* is established indirectly via a series of two negations; the truth of *sum* is *automatically* verified by virtue of the ego’s *inability* to *negate* it at the time of the *cogito*. A certain automatic convertibility of logical values is a condition of the possibility of the *cogito* argument: The double negation as in “I am unable to negate that I think” is converted into a single affirmation as in “I thereby affirm that I think”: What takes place in the logical transition from the inability to negate *sum* (“never... nothing”) to the establishment of the truth of *sum* (“something”) is a conversion from a double negation to a single affirmation. This type of conversion of a unit of mental contents from a negative one to a positive one, analogous to what is technically called, “obversion,” is precisely what renders valid arguments by *reductio ad absurdum*. What interests us here is the automaticity of this transition, of this (value) conversion, of this obversion. Note that, by logical necessity, this conversion takes place automatically. It is in this sense that one can say that the *cogito* argument is characterised by an inevitable “automatism,” peculiar to that particular economy of thought. The *ego* of the *ego cogito*, when running the risk of self-annihilation by attempting to negate itself, by volunteering to invite the evil

genius to the trial of thought, *in turn*, insulates itself against the threats of the evil by converting the logical value of the same thought from a double negation to a single affirmation, in other words, by *re-vert*-ing to the simpler origin of the same thought, to its originary logos. Hence, Descartes's recuperation of the good sense against the challenge of non-sense. In this way, the *ego* of *ego-cogito* drives the evil genius away; in the end, it reverts to itself; finally, it restores itself, its innate good; it returns to itself. In this regard, the risk at stake, to use a Derridian term, is highly "calculated": it is, to use Descartes's word, a "methodological" risk. That is why the automatism of the *cogito* is a highly "economised" epistemic value, an "economised" self-reflexivity. Operative in this logic of automatism is a restitutive economy of dialecticised retrospection; dialectic in the sense that the antithetical threat of nothingness as in "I may be nothing" resulting from a negative and hypothetical meta-reflection is overcome by the meta-reflexion upon the very thought, which leads to a thesis, "I cannot be nothing as long as I am thinking"; and retrospective in the sense that the first thought of negation (I may be nothing) precedes, both logically and temporally, the second thought of double negation (The "I" that entertains the idea that "I may be nothing" cannot be nothing").

The next question is: why "performative" automatism? Descartes's reason is not merely self-reflexive, but performatively so. Performance here can be understood simply as an action: the automatic conversion takes place in an "active" manner rather than in a neutral or passive manner. Only through the act of reflexion, that is, through the re-cognition of the impossibility to think otherwise, the *ego* of the *ego-cogito* can locate its indubitable and immovable site of thinking, i.e. *sum*. Such performance has to be also repeatable in order to be identified as such: The self-same identity of the cogitational self lies in the reiterative sameness of the word, *cogito*. The restitutive re-institution of *sum* takes place not only in a reflexively automatic manner, but through the repeated performances or eventuations of the reflexive *cogito*; hence, Descartes says, "*whenever* I think I am not nothing, I must be something." Note that, first, the terrain of the *sum* is delimited by a reflexive

movement of thought (when I think I may be nothing, I must be, on the contrary, something, because I must be the *very* being or thing that entertains such a negative thought), and second, the same movement is to occur *recursively* (“whenever I think I am not nothing, I must be something”). As Descartes himself repeatedly emphasises, the self-same recursivity of this performance, i.e. the reiterability of the *cogito*, now secures the automatic operation of this thought-conversion, “as long as [Med II, AT VII 27/CSM II 18],” “while [Pri 7, 49, AT IXB 6, 24/CSM I 194, 209],” “whenever [Med, AT VII 25/CSM II 17]” the event of the *cogito* takes place. In this regard, the logic of the *cogito* is characterised by its recursivity, hence, mechanical or formalistic in loosely defined senses of these words.

In order to have an instance of *cogito* work as an argument, firstly, it has to be uttered *by* the first person, not by the second or third person, and secondly, it has to be addressed *to* the same person who utters the sentence, not to another party. The first person reflexive utterance of the *cogito* is the necessary and sufficient condition of the possibility of the *cogito* argument, under which condition alone the automatic operation of its performative logic can be guaranteed. Why this is the case, and why this is an important point to bear in mind in our context, I will seek to explicate in the following few pages.

Firstly, the *cogito* has to be uttered by the first person. To introduce Jaako Hintikka’s illuminating analysis of the performative dimension of the first-person cogitation:

The inconsistency (absurdity) of an existentially inconsistent statement¹⁴ can in a sense be said to be of *performatory* (performative) character. It depends on an act or “performance,” namely on a certain person’s act of *uttering* a sentence (or of otherwise making a statement). [1962: 58]

¹⁴ A statement made or uttered by a person in which the same person negates his or her existence at the time of the utterance; for example, the sentence “Descartes does not exist” is an existentially inconsistent sentence, if and only if stated or conceived by Descartes himself [see Hintikka 1962: 56-59].

To perform the *cogito* means to utter the sentence, *I think*; and, in this case, the object of thinking includes “I” as the existential marker. Thus, for example, the utterance “*I don’t exist*” made by myself, i.e. “I think (that) *I don’t exist*” is an instance of the performance of the *cogito*, the “existential inconsistency” of which, *in turn*, demonstrates, in an indirect manner, that the contrary is true. Therefore, what the *cogito* argument demonstrates and, demonstrates performatively, is that the “I” in “I think I don’t exist,” in fact, exists, regardless, “as long as,” and at the very time when, the same “I” attempts to make this utterance. The *cogito* argument here is such that the absurdity of the sentence, “I think I don’t exist,” leads or rather forces the same “I” to accept the contrary proposition, “(I think) I exist,” as valid: put otherwise, this absurdity, *in turn*, invalidates the original proposition, “I don’t exist.” The force of Descartes’s argument, seen from this perspective, seems to be this: the logical force at stake is such that the “I” of “I think” *cannot but* accept the proposition, “I exist,” even when it attempts to utter the contrary, “I don’t exist.”

It is in view of this peculiar force of ineluctable self-reflexivity at work in the *cogito* argument that Hector-neri Castañeda [1969: 160ff] attributes the property of “ontological priority” to the first-person pronoun. As he rightly points it out, the force of the “unfailing” logic of self-attribution of the existential marker is such that, the category of existence, when referred to by being “picked up” by the self that self-refers, is bound to be automatically attributed to the first-person pronoun, namely, to the “I” that thinks reflexively. He says:

The first-person pronoun has [...] an ontological priority over all names, contingent descriptions of objects, and all other indicators: a correct use of “I” *cannot fail* to refer to the entity to which it purports to refer; moreover, a correct use of “I” *cannot fail* to pick up the category of the entity to which it refers. The first-person pronoun, without predicating selfhood, purports to pick out a self *qua* self, and what it is correctly tendered it invariably succeeds. All other

mechanisms of singular reference [...] may be correctly used and yet *fail* to pick out a referent or to pick up the intended category. Thus, my statement “I don’t exist now” is self-contradictory, *internally* inconsistent [...]. [160-161]

To contrast the case in point with a misleading example, the sentence, “I think (that) Descartes does not exist,” is neither an instance of the *cogito* nor an existentially inconsistent utterance.

What this example illustrates is that, secondly and more importantly, to perform the *cogito* means to utter *cogito*-involving sentences *to* “myself.” In the case of the *cogito*, the utterance is to be addressed to the very same “I” that utters the sentence. Put differently, with the operation of the *cogito*, the “I,” the subject of thinking, is put in relation to “me”, in front of “me.” With the (reflective) *turn to* the *cogito*, the “I” becomes “me,” the object of my thought; with the (reflexive) *return of* the “I” *to* the *cogito*, the “I” becomes “my-self,” the object of “my” own thought. The reflexive relation that the “I” bears to “myself” comes to be established, once the “I” of the *cogito* has gone through these two steps of thinking, a “turn” that opens up the site of self-reflection by way of inaugural reflection and a “return” that closes off the round of thinking by means of reflexive self-limitation; and, as I have been emphasising, this movement of reflection-reflexion takes place automatically, in other words, implicitly, or as Castañeda puts it, “internally”. This internal movement is structurally dualised in the sense that it is reflectively open, on the one hand, and reflexively closed, on the other.

The recognition of this element of automaticity, inherent in the self-reflective and self-reflexive operation of the *cogito* argument, leads us to see further that the “utterance” here is not to be taken in the literal sense of the word. That is to say, one does not need to pronounce the sentence, “I don’t exist,” aloud in order to verify the incorrigibility of the *cogito*; rather, it suffices to entertain the sentence in mind, that is to say, to witness its happening in the self-reflexively delimited interiority of self-consciousness. When the *cogito* argument is at work in my consciousness, I

become self-conscious of its happening, in other words, alert to its call, as I “hear” myself saying it to myself. As Hintikka goes on to say, immediately after the passage quoted earlier,

It (the existentially inconsistent sentence) does not depend solely on the means used for the purpose, that is, on the sentence which is being uttered. The sentence is perfectly correct as a sentence, but *the attempt* of a certain man to utter it assertively is *curiously pointless*. [...] The pointlessness of existentially inconsistent statement is therefore due to the fact that they *automatically* destroy one of the major purposes which the act of uttering a declarative sentence normally has. (“*Automatically*” means here something like “*for merely logical reasons*”) [...] In a special case a *self-defeating* attempt of this kind can be made without saying or writing anything or doing anything comparable. In trying to make *others* believe something, I must normally do something which can be heard or seen or felt. But, in trying to make *myself* believe something there is *no need to say anything aloud* or to write anything on paper. The performance *through* which existential inconsistency *arises* can in this case be merely an attempt to think - more accurately, an attempt to make *oneself* believe - that one does not exist. [1962: 58-59]

Any attempt to “make myself believe” that I don’t exist at the time of the *cogito* is bound to fail. Why is it so? Why is it *bound* to fail?

When I think, according to Descartes and Hintikka, I *hear* myself utter (*s’entendre-parler* [MP xii/xix]) the sentence, “I think.” First turn: the *cogito* is a “phonocentric” phenomenon that privileges the internal voice in the mind that is in an dialogue with itself over other media, for example, the voice of the other person or the visual representations. The *cogito* argument would not work, in this sense,

without some “phonocentric [VP] [MP I-vvx/x-xxix, ‘tympan¹⁵’]” assumptions having already been made regarding the way in which self-consciousness arises. In other words, the argument operates on a model of self-consciousness where phonic or acoustic elements in self-representation are privileged and appropriated¹⁶. Second turn: When I think, I hear *myself* utter the sentence, “I think”; The *cogito* is a self-reflexive act, self-involving and self-referential. Third turn: when I think, I hear myself *utter* the sentence, “I think”; The *cogito* is a performative event. Fourth turn: When I think, I hear myself utter *the sentence*, “I think”; The *cogito* is a linguistic experience. To sum it up: the *cogito* is a self-referentially performative act, which appropriates its own linguistic phonocentrism as its discursive resources. The “pointlessness” in negating the *sum* at the time of the *cogito*, this “curious” phenomenon, as Hintikka observes it, can be explained in this set of terms.

What Descartes’s *cogito* argument effects in the end is therefore a sense of ineluctability. What Descartes shows is that the *ego* of the *ego-cogito cannot but* believe that it exists at the time of *cogito*, and that it is the case even at the time of the thinking *ego*’s active negation of its existence. He draws his attention, and directs ours, to the fact that something like a logical force is at work in the *cogito* argument. The self-referential force is at work; and this force remains invincible, he emphasises, “as long as” the *cogito* is at work, in other words, insofar as the thinking *ego* is in performance. Another dimension he discovers is that this force remains the same insofar as the *cogito* is a reiterative linguistic act. The *cogito* argument is, in this sense, a performatively self-validating one, and the (self-) validation of the truth of the *cogito* occurs in a systematically and endlessly self-recuperative manner. It is in this sense one can say that the *ego* of the *cogito* rebounds; The *cogito* is shaped like

¹⁵ the right column, in particular.

¹⁶ “[...] a *durable* structure is thus formed between the throat and the tympanum, which [...] are subject to a fear of being injured, besides both belonging to the *same* cavernous domain [MP xii-xiii/xix].” Derrida is right in pointing out that the kind of self that engages with nothing but itself, exemplified in the classical *cogito* argument, is the phonocentrically insulated, self-same self. It seems to be in this regard that Derrida is led to claim further that this type of self “repercusses (*répercute*) its absolute limit only in sonorous representation [MP xiii/xix].”

Derrida's "tympan [MP xiv/xx]"; it "circumscribes" itself, "envelopes" itself; it is endlessly self-reflexive, closing and folding upon itself.

This peculiar self-reflexive movement of thinking - Descartes's turn and return to the *cogito* - gives rise to the event of the *cogito*: It is a turn that the thinking subject takes towards its own world of interiority away from the world of the exterior, away from the world of the Other, the Other taken as the master signifier for a totality of that which transcends the epistemological order of intelligibility or self-understanding, e.g., other persons' mind or God. With the utterance of the *cogito*, articulated is an inward turn of philosophy to itself. To use Derrida's diction, the *cogito* argument is an example of the logic of "auto-affection" in operation; with the *cogito* argument, the thinker is inevitably "affected" by him/herself in such a way that (s)he *cannot but* be persuaded by him/herself into believing that (s)he exists as long as (s)he utters the *cogito* to him/herself in the consciousness of his/her own, namely, in his/her self-consciousness. With Descartes, the thought of self-infliction, of self-reflexion, both auto-affecting and auto-affected at the same time, has become formalised, thereby, normalised. One of the effects of this philosophical normalisation of the Cartesian form of reflexion can be found in the following symptom: every time one attempts to transgress the self-reflexively formulated boundary of one's own reflective territory, (s)he is bound to turn to him/herself, to turn back upon him/herself. This, I identify as the mechanical law of Cartesian reflection, under which modern philosophies of consciousness are bound to be subsumed; this law is forceful to such an extent that, as I will argue by pointing to Derrida as a telling example, even when a radical move beyond this terrain of reflection is made, the transgressive gesture *cannot* be made *without* itself being "always already" subject to this force.

The working belief of this study is that, when the reflexive tendency of methodological Cartesianism itself remains unchallenged even in any "radical" transgressive endeavour, the Cartesian tradition of philosophy cannot be effectively overturned in the way it is meant to be. The reason why Derrida is opted, to the

exclusion of other “post-Cartesian” thinkers such as Nietzsche or Heidegger, as a “telling” example, where the Cartesian legacy of thinking is persistently inscribed, is not so much because Derrida is the best example of all other possible ones (although he is an extremely good example) as because the standard interpretation of Derrida tends to treat - or even laud - him as a thinker who successfully problematises, if not absolutely “overcoming,” the philosophical subjectivism of Cartesian tradition. In this regard, the aim of the current project in which proposed is a Cartesian reading of Derrida can be recast in the following broader terms: on the one hand, it aims to explicate the methodological rigour of Cartesian reflection by locating its epistemic resource in modern reflexive reason; on the other, equally, it aims to expose the generic or logical limits of such a reflexive model of thinking that is initially and fundamentally premised upon the cogitational centrality of the thinking subject. The driving force of Cartesian reflection lies in its performative recursivity, and for this reason, it is robust, relentless, and restless: it is an inexhaustible source of philosophical trauma; and in Derrida’s text, this trauma is constantly staged and exploited, i.e. economised, in a performative manner which the next section will see in detail.

1.32 Derrida’s Self-reflexion:

Performative Self-contradictions in Deconstructive Arguments

The working hypothesis of the argument that follows is that, when read in line with the Cartesian logic of reflexion, the mode of Derridian self-reflexivity becomes more or less comprehensible. This final section of chapter 1 [1.32] initiates a reading of performative self-contradictions found in Derrida’s text. And the aim of the reading is to show that Derrida’s deconstructive argument, which seeks to establish a thesis not by means of the constructive articulation and solution of a problem but by means of “a textual staging” of an issue at hand, is self-referential and self-serving; Derrida’s deconstructive argument is self-referential and self-serving in the sense that

its aporetics thus staged are reducible, to a certain extent, to a cogitational play, a reflexive game that the reflexive reason plays with and against itself. To put the same point more strongly, what is explored in the following is the possibility to read Derrida's aporetics as a set of fabricated problems designed to defy any logical solution. The focus of reading is therefore mainly the "strategic" or narrative aspects of Derridian deconstruction. With this, the general point the reading aims to establish is the following: What one finds in Derrida, as in a sceptical Descartes in the self-critical phase of cogitation, is the primacy of the category of the epistemological over that of the ontological. The first two sub-sections [1.321-2] set out to articulate, in general terms, what is self-reflexive about Derrida's texts; and the subsequent, third sub-section [1.323] will offer a close reading of a case in point: "*Je - marque.*" Developing this line of reading, the final part of this chapter [1.324] then initiates a juxtaposition of Descartes and Derrida, of reflective ontology and reflexive ^{hauntology} ~~ontology~~. Chapter 2, which presents a reading of Derrida's reflexive hauntology as a derivative from Descartes's reflective ontology, expands on, and thereby solidifies the grounds of, the main contention thus established in chapter 1, by looking at more examples from Derrida in a more detailed manner.

1.321 Self-reflexivity and The Aporia of Reading Derrida

That Derrida's text is self-reflexive, this observation itself is hardly anything new. Quite expectedly, a number of Derrida commentators have already touched upon this issue. Gasché [1986], for example, contends that the "infrastructure" of deconstruction, which "appears" to generate self-reflexively "literary" text, is not, in fact, self-reflexive, inasmuch as deconstruction's "serious" concern lies in pointing to the limits of reflexive thoughts. However, textual evidence, in my reading, contradicts this view: Gasché's reading, whilst doing justice to the "philosophical" Derrida, as he emphasises, seems to be, however, blind to the staged nature of the Derridian discourse, i.e. the level of textual fabrication. Apart from Gasché, there is

also a vaguely identifiable community of commentators whose studies are, in one way or another, thematic analyses of certain *forms* of Derridian reflection [Apel, Bowie, Critchley, Dews, Frank, Gasché, Harvey, Norris, Priest, White, Wood].¹⁷ The element of “performative self-reflexivity [Wood 1990: 134ff],” in particular, has been well pointed out by them as a trait pervasive in the writings of Derrida [Apel, Critchley, Frank, Priest, and Wood]. The ceaseless textual mobilisation of performative self-reflexivity which tends to result in an implicit meta-thematisation of the very “paradoxes of self-reflection [Critchley 1992],” this, as they say in common in various ways, is what makes Derrida’s text uniquely “Derridian.”

Surveying the exegetical works on Derrida’s self-reflexivity, those mentioned above, one will come across the following curious phenomena: most of Derrida theorists not only attempt to explicate the Derridian “trait” of reflections by relating it to the self-reflexive style of his writing, but rightly suggest that this Derridian trait of thinking, self-reflexivity, is something that Derrida has appropriated, whether acknowledgedly or not, from some fundamentally “classical norms” of doing philosophy. As has been indicated earlier, my study is broadly concerned with developing this line of reading Derrida; my aim is only to add a more specific and relatively new case - Derrida in light of Descartes - to this general thesis thus well-established. A “curious” phenomenon, as I said, is the comparative shortage of detailed studies that can support this large claim. Although there is an extensive range of discussions on the peculiar ways in which Derrida positions himself “in” and “out” of the metaphysical tradition of the West,¹⁸ perhaps still rare and certainly needed is a close analysis of the specific ways in which the Derridian “appropriation” or “expropriation” of traditional metaphysical resources takes place, i.e. the ways in which Derrida “economises” on metaphysical resources in order to create his own ambience of thinking.

¹⁷ A short survey of the relevant literature will be undertaken in 3.4.

¹⁸ See literature review [3.4] for details.

The difficulty in formulating specific theses on issues to do with the traditional sides of Derrida's deconstructive trajectory is apparently structural: the difficulty, the aporia, is that of a dilemma, of Derrida's double bind: Involved here is a kind of constitutive dilemma in trying to make sense of a non-sense. When Derrida attempts to make sense of the strange kind of "difference that differs from itself," for instance, he has already set a foot in the land of non-sense, "'beyond" any absolute knowledge (*au-delà du savoir absolu*) [VP 115/102, "parenthesis in original"]," where only "unheard-of thoughts (*pensées inouïes*) [VP 115/102]" seem to reside. In order to let such "unheard-of thoughts" be heard, i.e. to make it intelligible and make sense of it, one needs to rely, as Derrida himself points out, on the existing order of knowledge and representation; and yet, in order to allow such non-sensical thoughts to challenge the existing order and boundaries of thought, one needs, at the same time, to be prepared to welcome "the other" of identity-based thoughts, non-sensical thoughts, for example. Accordingly, Derrida finds himself caught up in the double bind of sense and non-sense. It is with such in-between-ness of the discursive position of Derrida that we will be concerned in the next following pages.

Perhaps, at this point, it would be necessary as well as helpful to look at the Derridian aporia of double thinking from a reader's point of view, not from Derrida's point of view. A benefit of posing the question of what it means to read Derrida correctly or faithfully, is in that such an approach can explicate effectively the dimension of self-corrosive self-reflexivity pervasive in deconstructive scenes of thinking. To look, closely, at the risks or aporias involved in the task of reading Derrida "correctly" is another way to understand the deeply-rooted element of sceptical self-reflexivity in Derrida's texts. The crux of the matter here, upon which we need to focus, is a strategically contagious force of Derridian self-reflexivity to which Derrida does not allow his readers to become immune; in this way, the constitutive reflexivity of Derrida's text becomes reflected in, and transformed into, a receptive reader's reflective alertness - what this means will become clearer, as we go

on to unravel the intricately reflexive dimension of the relationship held between Derrida the author and us his readers.

Any reader bent on highlighting some traditional aspects of Derrida's mode of thinking, such as myself, is bound not to see the subversive side of his philosophy. Pursuing a conservative line of reading Derrida, one is likely to risk making, at least, three mistakes. First and foremost, one risks not being radical enough; one risks underplaying the "radical" spirit of Derrida's philosophy in which "rigorously and adequately thought about from *another topos* or space [Kearney, interview with Derrida, 1984: 112]" is a *site-cum-non-site*,¹⁹ "where our problematic rapport with the boundary of metaphysics can be seen in a more radical light [112]." The second risk is that of not being a subtle reader; it involves doing injustice to the "subtlety" of deconstruction manifest in Derrida's endeavour to delineate the delicate modality of deconstruction, i.e. its dual mode of "subtle belonging [DG 24/12]" to philosophical discourse - its simultaneous belonging and non-belonging to the order of discursive knowledge. The Derridian move of deconstruction is "subtle" in the sense that it is not definitive: its attempt to delimit its own ambience of thinking is structurally ambiguous. The deconstructive attempt at stake involves both an intra-metaphysical move and a trans-metaphysical gesture: on the one hand, it is an intra-philosophical move to stay within the logically safe area of "traditional metaphysics", and on the other, a transgressive gesture to go beyond the domain of traditional logic and metaphysics into a realm of the "unheard-of". Perhaps the worst risk a conservative reader of Derrida may take, the third, is to ignore, totally, this "subtly" double gesture of deconstruction, thereby, to refuse to participate in the deconstructive thought-experiment. By pursuing a logocentric line of reading deconstruction, three examples of which have been described above, one risks betraying the true "between-ism," as it were, of Derrida's ethos of thinking; the cost of such betrayal is

¹⁹ My central question is : *from* what site or non-site (*non-lieu*) can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself so that it can interrogate and *reflect upon* itself in an originary manner? [Kearney, interview with Derrida, 1984: 108]

not to get “it” (the “it” refers to the correct understanding of Derrida), to be “out of it [Putnam 1992: 109, the “it” refers to the Derridian milieu of thinking]”, therefore, to “*a priori* miss the point [LJ 392/4]” of deconstruction. As soon as one then attempts to make “sense” of Derrida’s philosophical position that, allegedly, lies in “between” position and non-position, “between” sense and non-sense, (s)he is bound to miss “*a priori*”, viz. always and already, something essential about deconstruction, the non-sensical side of it. The burden on the reader’s part is therefore the necessity to keep undoing his or her own understanding of deconstruction, in the same way Derrida is supposed to do. Hence, the aporia of reading Derrida: How can one possibly “get *there* [Wood 1990: 133, See footnote 14]?” to the promised land of deconstruction, where the true meaning of deconstruction is supposed to lie? - how is this possible at all, given that “deconstruction deconstructs it-self [LJ 392/4]” “always already” before the thinking subject attempts to get an grip on it?

As a conservative reader of Derrida, as a reader who takes a “risk” of being “naïve” in demanding an “objective” or formal knowledge of the ways in which deconstruction works, I also acknowledge and recognise the necessity to reflect, in my exposition of Derrida, the difficult position in which Derrida, the thinker of irreducible aporia, finds himself situated. The aim of investigating some formal-logical aspects of deconstructive techniques of thinking is therefore diagnostic, although not necessarily therapeutic: it is to expose the recursive patterns, identifiable as such, in various instances of deconstruction, in other words, to explicate the discursive limits of Derrida’s deconstructive endeavour, which nevertheless, desires to go beyond the limits of discursive reason.

This way of reading Derrida’s deconstruction is not only diagnostic but heuristic: it is also a means by which one can gain an experiential or procedural understanding of what the “auto” of “auto-”deconstruction would mean: “deconstruction deconstructs it-self [LJ 392/4].” A rather reductive reading of Derrida that I have been pursuing so far may seem to be misled, seen from a faithfully “Derridian” point of view which “*a priori*” registers the logical impossibility to

locate the discursive position of Derrida, the strategically auto-deconstructive, elusive thinker. The “auto-” of “auto-deconstruction” seems to indicate, however, that the deconstructive mode of thinking is reflexively self-referential: one can take the word, the “auto,” as a marker for the minimal rule of deconstructive thinking, the operative rule being something like an “auto”-splitting that leads, for example, to the automatic splitting of the deconstructive self into a self that deconstructs and a self deconstructed. This point of contention on the irreducible duality of the deconstructive self will be articulated in the following couple of pages on Derrida’s “strategy” of thinking, and developed further later [1.323].

Derrida himself talks about a “strategy” adopted in his deconstructive manoeuvre of thinking: the strategy of deliberate or “apparent” self-contradictions. He says

[..] Strategy is a word that I have perhaps abused in the past, especially as it has been always to specify [in the end], in an apparently self-contradictory manner and at the risk of cutting the ground from under my feet - something I almost never fail to do - that this strategy is a strategy without any finality. [TT 458-9/50]

Elsewhere Derrida states, in a similar vein, that the strategic “form” of deconstruction “remains necessarily limited, determined by, a set of open contextual traits [Poi 368/357];” then, he explains what he means by the “open contextual traits”: they consist of “the language, the history, the European scene in which I am writing or in which I am inscribed with all manner of more or less *aleatory* givens [Poi 369/357].” Now, of particular interest to us is the word “aleatory”; For Derrida, the “givens” in which he finds himself “inscribed” are characterised as “aleatory,” i.e. random and yet rule-governed. Like a player in a dice game, Derrida finds the conditions of his thinking always already restricted by the pre-existing contextual constraints of some governing rules of thinking, e.g. the exclusionary logic of

either-or and the inherited language of western philosophy; At the same time, however, he views such formal and historical conditions of thinking as “open” to the future - as “open traits” - in the sense that, again as in a dice game, what is to unfold in the course of acting upon such conditions by reflecting upon them is unpredictable. His “aleatory” strategy, accordingly, is to attempt to calculate the incalculable. To put the same thought in a less paradoxical way, Derrida’s deconstructive strategy is to stay vigilant in the face of the unknown, in an anxious anticipation of what is to come: it is, as if in a dice game, to play on both necessity and contingency. Hence, an aleatory strategy for an aleatory situation: This characterises the Derridian “milieu” of thinking.

Descartes’s altercation with the evil genius in the second *Meditatione* is a relevant case in point. If what Descartes does, and does finally, is to overcome the unknown, and potentially global, threats of the evil genius by making them intelligible, which is to say, to weaken the corrosive force of self-criticism by taking a self-reflexively protective measure (by returning to the very *self* that undertakes the *self*-critique), what Derrida does, and does deliberately, is only to restore and sharpen, without resolving, the tension lying in the twofold force of such an ambivalent cogitation; the tension between the reductively reflexive force of *self*-criticism on the one hand, and the irreducibly corrosive force of *self-criticism* on the other; the aleatory tension between the reflexive security of the *self*-critical self and the unpredictability of the way in which the hyper-*critical* force of cogitation comes to disrupt the reflexive equilibrium of the cogitational self.

Self-criticism, taken as a self-corrosive act of the mind, is an instance of meta-self-reflection; the moment when the self remains critical of itself is the moment when the thinking self - the self-critical self - submits itself, reflexively and recursively, to the inexhaustibly hyper-reflective force of cogitation. In this regard, a Derridian thinker, closely resembling a Cartesian meditator in the sceptical phase, is describable as a philosophical personae who is ceaselessly at war with himself, critical of himself. Both Descartes and Derrida struggle and juggle with the

fundamental structural ambivalence of modern rationality, where the principle of critical reason demands that reason be self-critical; *self-critical* on the one hand, to the point of self-destruction, and *self-critical* on the other, to the effect of self-recuperation; “this tension between disruption, on the one hand, and attentiveness, on the other,” Derrida says, “is characteristic of everything I try to do [Caputo 1996: 8, 8-11].”

What Derrida does, staying in the Cartesian framework of self-critical thinking, is to create, within the cogitational self, this “double” bind of *self-criticism* and *self-criticism*, which, in turn, generates the meta-level “tension”: a contention between the self of *self-criticism* and the self of *self-criticism*: a conflict between two different forces of reflexive cogitation, one, the force of reflexive self-recuperation, and the other, that of reflexive self-destruction. What Derrida does, following a Cartesian sceptic in *self-criticism*, is to take one step further than a Cartesian *self-critic*; he unfolds the aleatory scene of self-reflection once more by mobilising the self-corrosive force of reflexive self-destruction that the self of *self-criticism* harbours. In Derrida’s case, self-criticism amounts to interminable self-distancing or self-doubling, in other words, the infinite splitting of the self; The self, Derrida says, “must therefore, split and redouble itself at the same time, at once leave free and take hostage; double act (*coup double*), redouble act (*coup redoublé*) [Pass 36/14].” The meta-critical force of self-disruption which Derrida’s philosophical reflection harbours can therefore be used against Descartes in the sense that it weakens the reflexive force of self-recuperation; it is, however, originarily and ultimately, Cartesian, hence, constrained and tamed to that extent. The deconstructive force of thinking, in other words, is “always already” locked in the reflexive structure of the double. Hence, Derrida’s fixation upon the double, the other of the same (as opposed to the multiple, for instance); “the same,” exemplified in this case, is *the self* of self-critique.

1.322 Linguistic Self-reflexivity and the Strategy of Writing in Derrida

What brings together the awareness of the double, that is to say, what “binds” these heterogeneous forces of doubling, according to Derrida, is the force of language. He gives a linguistic configuration to the structural tension between the reflexive self (*self-critical* self) and the hyper-reflective self (*self-critical* self), which is immanent in Cartesian self-consciousness. If, for Descartes, the evil genius is the alter-ego, for Derrida, it is language. A paradigm shift from that of self-consciousness to that of linguistic consciousness has taken place here, and yet, the structure of allegory itself remains intact. In the following, we will see why this is the case.

Apparently, Derrida is more sensitive than Descartes to the linguistically structural dimension of the *cogito*, i.e. the *impersonal* reiterability of the phrase, “I think”; and also, he is more interested than Descartes in explicating the *intransitive* performativity of cogitational act.

First, to explain the impersonal aspect of the performance of “I think”: The thought here is that the discursive position of Descartes “I” cannot be located outside the linguistic structure that enables the articulation of “I think”; which is to imply, to put it by using the structuralist grammar, what speaks is not Descartes, the self-conscious subject, but rather, the word, I. Hence, the impersonality of the reiterability of the *cogito*. What Descartes the linguistic subject does, when referring to himself, is to fill out the discursive position of the I by providing an empirical content to it. The point Derrida highlights is that, when Descartes says “I think,” the I that pronounces that phrase is not so much the extra-linguistic, cognitively supreme, subject occupying the “Archemedian view-point,” whose discursive locus can be found outside the grammatical or semantic network of language thus used, as the intra-linguistic subject who must participate in the language game - and, in this sense, has no choice but to “subject” himself to the force of language - in order to have its discursive locus represented in that linguistic framework. Derrida’s concern here is not merely to point to the verbal aspects of cogitational self-consciousness, which

Descartes himself recognises and stresses; see, for instance, *Discours* [AT VI 57/CSM I 140] where Descartes highlights the uniquely human ability to use language, which his *letter to More* dated 5 February 1649 [AT V 278/CSM II 366] later characterises as “a sure sign” of the rational soul. What Derrida does, more significantly, is to extremise the inscriptive or structuralising force of the language of self-consciousness by replacing the actively self-conscious subject (Descartes’s image of the reflective self) with the explicitly linguistic, self-conscious subject (Derrida’s), i.e. by having the former be displaced by the latter: what Derrida does is to narrow his thematic focus down from the self-conscious dimension of the self to the linguistically formulated, self-conscious dimension of the self - an example of this move will be shown in next section [1.323].

Second, the intransitive aspects of the performance of “I think”: At a thematic level, Derrida is interested in the hyper-reflective, rather than reflexive, dimension of the *cogito*; at a performative level, accordingly, he exploits the infinite reiterability of the “I think.” In this regard, one can say that hyper-reflexivity is the driving force behind his gesture towards hyper-reflection. Consequently, what one sees in the Derridian scene of self-effacing self-reflections is an irreducible “gesture” of reflective thought that has “always already” lost its object; His reflections are gestural as opposed to determinate in the sense that it remains intransitive, lacking its object. To think, for Descartes, is to let the object of thought appear to the one who thinks, whereas, it is, for Derrida, to let the object of thought obliterate itself in front of the one who thinks; Hence, the difference between thinking of “an object” and thinking with “traces.” Wood [1992: 3] makes the same point in the following way: the Derridian force of reflection manifests “a desire of philosophy” in that “it articulates” its desire to hold itself in its gaze “when it is lost sight of. Derrida is engaged in a theatrical re-animation of the textual space of philosophy’s passion.”

The Derridian “desire” for origin is, my reading suggests, originally Cartesian; this can be argued in the sense that the ceaseless acts of object-tracing, which Derrida allows his text to perform, mark the centrality of the subject that

desires the origin of the lost object. The issue here is the irreducible locus of the cogitational self in Derrida, effectuated, paradoxically, by the very phenomenological act of self-effacement; the focus on the self remains intact, if only replaced by an empty gaze. If the Cartesian “I” represents the centrality of self-presence, the Derridian “I” marks the centrality of the experience of absence or loss.

In the absence of an unmediated access to the “pure” interiority of Cartesian self, what makes possible this “marking” or “inscription” of the intransitive event of reflection, according to Derrida, is language; language provides an access to self-consciousness in the Derridian model of self-reflection. An interesting parallel can be drawn here between Descartes’s evil genius and Derrida’s language. There is a structural similarity between the way the hypothesis of an evil genius provides an access to the discovery of the true self (in Descartes’s case) and the way the attention to the language of the self leads to reflexive self-awareness (in Derrida’s case): in the case of the former, it is the evil genius that is used as a medium through which the locus of the cogitational self can be marked, retrospectively (it was, after all, “me”, the thinking I, who created such a fictive destroyer of the world), and in the case of the latter, the language of the self (it is by means of using the word “I”, by means of seeing myself “being written” in the text, that I am led to double myself, again and again)²⁰. The point to be noted is that both Descartes and Derrida, in this way, economise on the discursive force of doubling.

Consequently, Derrida is, as he says about himself, “armoured” in a “tunic of writing [MA 44/39],” the “nets of which language” protects, and at the same time, threatens him. To explain what this means by introducing the language of the self as an example of Derrida’s “tunic of writing”: The linguistic network of egological words protects Derrida in the sense that it allows him to point to, if not occupying, the locus of his self-consciousness - without which the very act of designating the space of the cogitational self would be impossible; and yet, it also threatens him in

²⁰ The next section [1.323] on Derrida’s “*Je - marque*” elaborates this point.

the sense that the language of the self, which is public (e.g. everyone uses the same word “I” in order to self-refer), leaves him alienated, i.e. split, from a private realm of his own self-consciousness. Two points can be extrapolated from this observation on the constitutive ambivalence of the role language plays - the language of the self, in particular - in the formation of the Derridian self.

First, the textuality of the cogitational self: text as a medium of self-relation: According to Derrida, when it comes to the dialectic of self-interrogation, what comes into play is the language of the self in self-dialogue, and not the extra-linguistic self in unmediated self-introspection. In the Derridian scene of self-reflection, language takes precedence over, and gives a configuration to, self-consciousness. What controls a scene of self-reflection, Derrida points out, is not a kind of “pure” and un-mediated, transcendental subject, which he describes as the “autistic[MP 162/135]” self, i.e. the Cartesian self in *self*-criticism; rather, it is the linguistic force of signification, which he calls “*écriture* (writing),” material rather than ideal, and contaminated rather than pure, the structure of which resembles that of a complicated “fabric” or “spider’s web” [Diss 49/42] rather than that of a building with a hierarchically-organised, “clear and distinct” directory. This force of self-reflection, therefore, Derrida argues, does not originate from a kind of pure, self-transparent self that is in dialogue with itself in a clearly self-conscious manner; rather, it is the “*hors livre* (outwork) [Diss 7-67/1-60]” of some linguistic resources that ceaselessly force such an autistically pure self to externalise itself - “externalisation” in this case means the materialisation of the non-linguistic, ideal self, or the contamination of the non-linguistic, pure self, namely, the linguisticisation or, to use Derrida’s preferred diction, textualisation of the self.

Second, an aporetic status of the hyper-reflective movement in cogitation: hyper-reflection as both an intra-textual (linguistic) and an extra-textual (non-linguistic) event: the irreducible desire of self-critical reason for unmediated, pure self-presence: the hyper-critical force of philosophical self-reflection lies in the recursive desire for cogitation, which manifests itself in the form of the recursive

applicability of the cogitational phrases such as “I think” or “I doubt” to an act of self-introspection. What such hyper-reflection desires is an object of its discursive engagement; At stake here is the cogitational desire of reflective mind that arises due to the very absence of its object of cogitation. This type of obsessively recursive force of self-critical cogitation, the fixating force of *self-criticism/introspection*, effects what Derrida describes as an “extra,” “faint” “turn” [Diss 48/41²¹] of self-reflection, which is both intra-textual and extra-textual; intra-textual, insofar as it is tied in a linguistic (textual) structure, and extra-textual, insofar as its vectorial tendency or irreducible desire to go beyond a given order of thinking is uncontrollable by any rational means and inexplicable in any textual terms. This hyper-reflective dimension of the cogitative mind, Derrida calls “*restance*”²² [Diss 13/8]”. With this word, what Derrida attempts to highlight is the irreducible force of intransitive reflection generative of reflexive texts. This transgressive force of linguistically-mediated self-reflection is that which “remains” inexhaustible in the textual scene of self-reflection; it remains there as a “remainder which is added to the subsequent text and which cannot be completely summed up within it [Diss 14/9]”. Such a “remaining” force of philosophical self-reflection is both excessive and supplementary, hence, ambiguous; excessive in the sense that it overflows the self-same economy of reflexion (it cannot be “summed up within the text”); supplementary in the sense that it leads to another instance of self-reflexion that takes place within the reflexively generated text taken as a whole (it is “added to the subsequent text”); hence, ambiguous in the sense that such a transgressive force of reflection is both excluded from the textual order of intelligibility (i.e. extra-textual) and necessary for the further unfolding of the text (i.e. intra-textual). In this way, what Derrida calls the “structure of the feint [Diss 48/41]” - the meaning of the feint taken as the ambiguous turn of hyper-reflection, i.e. a reflective “gesture” of cogitation - produces a “web” of textuality at a micro-level, and a spectacle of

²¹ “*la feint [...], un tour de plus, [...]*”

²² coined from *rester*; Barbara Johnson translated it into “left-overness [Diss 48/44].”

meta-reflection at a macro-level. Here, what remains irreducible is the desire of reflective reason for self-mastery.

Demonstrated by Derrida's "turn" to linguistic or textual self-reflexivity is not how the structural limits of Cartesian reflection can be overcome, i.e. how the cogitational subject can be de-centralised and displaced; What Derrida's linguistic turn shows, I have been arguing, is rather how the Cartesian model of self-reflexive introspection can be sharpened and reconfigured in a new vocabulary, the old vocabulary being that of self-consciousness, and the new, that of linguistic self-consciousness. The point of contention here is that the Derridian model of self-consciousness, which merely privileges the linguistic self-referentiality of the reiterative "I" over the phenomenological self-referentiality of the extra-linguistic "I" without overturning the self-referential structure of the Cartesian model of self-consciousness, can only replace the old model rather than displace it. The point, to put it more strongly, is that despite his reconfiguration of the Cartesian paradigm of thinking, Derrida's linguistic paradigm of cogitation still repeats or even reinforces the reflexive tendency of the Cartesian mind; Derrida repeats the reflexive Descartes in the sense that his self-reflexive texts draw on - as the first two *Meditationes* do - the hyperbolic force of cogitation, traceable in the infinite regressiveness of the "I"; The reflexive tendency of the Cartesian mind is reinforced by Derrida in the sense that Derrida is closer to a sceptical Descartes - suffering from "the malady [Hume, 1888: 218]" of "profound and intense reflection," who will "never be radically cur'd" - than to a positive Descartes who overcomes such corrosive self-doubts and finds faith in reflective ontology constructed on the very possibility of self-reflexion. If Descartes in good faith uses reflexive scepticism methodically, Derrida uses it stylistically; methodical in the sense that the unfolding of the sceptical self is telos-oriented, and stylistic in the sense that a certain over-used or aestheticised mannerism, namely, a "style" of thinking, if nothing else, constrains the way in which the sceptical self stages itself.

Derrida's rhetoric of impasse or blindness is pertinent here. The discursive strategy Derrida often adopts, when producing his texts (which are characteristically self-reflexive, as I have been pointing out in this study), is to acknowledge in advance that, as Wood put it, "there is no other place to go [1988: 69]," i.e. there is no other alternative ways of doing philosophy; Then, the one and only method Derrida seems to privilege over other possible ones, I have been arguing, is that of self-reflexion. Hence, Derrida's philosophical preoccupation with the theme of "living on the limits and boundaries" of discursive reason. Derrida's philosophical fixation on the sense of the limits manifest itself, often in his texts, in the form of him repeatedly acknowledging the restrictive preconditions under which his deconstructive project becomes a necessity as well as a possibility. Within the large category of "the metaphysical tradition of the European West" that Derrida tends to evoke as the master signifier for the aforementioned "preconditions," a more specific context the current study highlights, in and out of which Derrida's deconstruction is operative, is a sub-category designatable as the "epoch" of philosophical modernity, the starting point of which Derrida himself locates in Descartes, the philosopher of self-consciousness²³. To combine, in light of my line of argument pursued so far, Derrida's impossibility thesis - there is no other place to go - with his epochal designation of Descartes as the starting point of methodological self-reflection, the resultant thought gives us a more concrete picture of Derrida's strategy of acknowledgement: what Derrida acknowledges, by implication, if not by means of explicit articulation, is that he cannot think without relying on the Cartesian mode of self-reflection. This tactical move that Derrida seems to make implicitly is problematic on the following two accounts. First, it is unjustifiably presumptuous: Derrida presupposes, in the name of tradition (the Cartesian tradition of philosophical modernism, in particular), the impossibility to think in a non-reflexive,

²³Derrida [ED 294/198] locates the opening of "the epoch of self-presence [...] and its central support" in Descartes who finds "presence in consciousness"; Derrida sees Descartes as the initiator of the modern, epistemological paradigm of thinking being, in which a reflective consciousness of being - rather than being itself - becomes a starting point of philosophical inquiry into the truth of being.

un-self-conscious way; Accordingly, he excludes *a priori* other possible models of thinking, in which philosophical concepts such as being or the self can be thought out and formulated, for example, from a multiple or non-restrictive,²⁴ non-logocentric point of view (rather than in the course of a philosopher's solitary pursuit of his own dialectically-constrained or limit-driven self-consciousness). Second, Derrida's tactic of acknowledgement is self-appropriative and self-referential, therefore, part of his restricted economy of writing: he converts his philosophical shortcoming or habits, i.e. his inability to think otherwise or his penchant for a reflective mode of thinking, into a certain "blind," i.e. exclusive and irreducible, "passion" of not only his philosophy, but of philosophy in general. Derrida's "passion" expressed in his philosophical writings is "the passion for the impossible [Caputo 1997: xvii-xxvi]," for impasse, for the "the experience of the impossible [Derrida 1990: 15]."

However, to a certain extent, the "passion" for aporias, which Derrida glamorises into a spectacle of aporetic, philosophical meta-self-reflection, is a self-reflexive fabrication, i.e. a creation of his own, hence, in this sense, even a pseudo-passion. To what extent are then the writings of Derrida reducible to the reflexive games a reflective mind plays with and against itself? The next section explores this question.

1.323 An Example of Linguistic Self-reflexivity: The Case of "*Je - marque*"

This section sets out to explicate some strategic aspects of Derrida's discourse. The purpose of exposing the reflexive economy of his writing is to show a certain degree of banality and deceptiveness in his textual staging of the "undecidability" thesis. With this, what is to be explicated is the irreducible centrality of the reflexive subject exemplified in his text. Accordingly, a reading of Derrida as a

²⁴Deleuze's notion of philosophy [1991: 21-37/16-34], for example, in which to do philosophy is characterised as an act of "creating" concepts as opposed to an act of "reflecting" upon them may count as a good contemporary case of non-reflective philosophies.

guardedly self-reflexive, crafty writer, as opposed to a thinker of “the impossible Other,” will be explored. Closely analysed in the following is an example of such reflexive playfulness: the case of “*Je - marque*”.

I - marks(s) first of all a division in what will have been able to appear in the beginning. [MP 327/275]²⁵

But - I mark(s) the division - [...] [MP 327/275]

But - again, I mark(s) and multiply/multiples (*multiplie*) the division - [...] [MP 328/276]

For Derrida, [...] reflexivity points to [...] the medium *and* practice of writing *itself*. [Wood 1990: 145]

The problem we are to raise is in the very mode of beginning, in the very contrived way in which Derrida’s text unfolds, in the very staging of a reflexive play on the word “I”: the insertion of “-” between “*Je*” and “*marque*”. His essay on Paul Valéry’s “I” [“*Qual Quelle*”, MP 327-358/273-306] begins with an equivocation, with a performative “marking” of the linguistic force of equivocation; The textual function of “-” thus marked repeatedly is the sustained production of a self-differential tension between the “*Je*” of “*Je marque* (I mark)” and that of “*Je, ce marque* (I, it marks ...)”. This way, “*Je - marque*” signifies *both* “I mark” *and* “I, it marks”: It stages these two different meanings simultaneously.

This particular way of beginning is self-reflexive, and performatively so, in the following threefold sense. First, the “I” of “I mark” is performative in the sense that it is that which carries out the marking in the text; It refers to Derrida the writer

²⁵ “*Je - marque d’abord une division dans ce qui aura pu paraître au commencement.*”

who writes the sentence. Second, the “I” of “I, it marks” is reflexive in the sense that it is that which forces Derrida the writer to reflect back upon the first “I” (The “I” of “I mark”) and to ask whether the (first) “I” that marks is the same as the (second) “I” that makes him mark the word “I”. The first “I” is pre-reflexive, pre-critical, and un-sceptical; The second, by contrast, is reflexive, critical, and sceptical. Noted so far is the mechanism of the double in which the word “I” operates: the “I” can be employed both pre-reflexively and reflexively; both referentially when used as a marker of the grammatical subject, and self-referentially (indexically) when mentioned as an object of phenomenological introspection. Third, the “I” of “I - mark” is performatively meta-reflexive in the sense that it presents, simultaneously, the first, pre-reflexive “I” and the second, reflexive one; hence, the third dimension of the “I” is not merely performative in the pre-critical self (as in the first case), but self-implicative so in the sense it includes both the pre-critical natural self and the critical phenomenological self. The simultaneity of the staging of the two “I”s, which the marking of “-” effects, renders Derrida’s way of beginning performatively meta-reflexive and, in this sense, economised.

If the writing of “*Je - marque*” stages ambiguation, i.e. equivocation, an interpretative, threefold translation of this single sentence effects a certain degree of dis-ambiguation. What the foregoing analysis aims to show is the following: the whole problem of textual self-differentiation of the self Derrida pursues in the rest of his essay can be read as a self-reflexive construct, therefore, in this specific regard, as a kind of pseudo-problem that knows, in advance, that a solution is impossible. Derrida’s linguistic fixation on the elusive “I” and his reflexive frustration with it, the philosophical gravity of which he justifies in the name of Cartesian tradition (Valéry is an example of Cartesian writer Derrida discusses in this essay), manifest themselves in the recurrence of the problem of self-differentiation in his writings. And the issue here is not the recursivity per se; it is rather the self-serving way in which the necessity to chase after the elusive “I” is justified and reinforced, that is, “inscribed,” in Derrida’s text - such direction and force of thinking is self-inscribed

from the beginning, in other words, reflexively indexicalised. His opening move, “*Je - marque*”, is deceptively adventurous in the following sense. Derrida begins an essay by staging, i.e. creating performatively, an immediate splitting of the self, and then purports to convince the readers, as well as himself, that the rest of his essay is “the experience of the impossible”, a manifestation of his “passion for the impossible”. What is impossible, in this case, is the union of the selves thus split, which he has already made impossible from the beginning. The problem I am highlighting is that the possibility of the unification of the divided selves was already, i.e. *a priori*, precluded by Derrida’s opening move; so, what is the point of staging such impossibility further on?

The first sentence of Derrida’s essay, in a way, is illustrative of both the whole point of Derrida’s impassioned essay and that of my unsympathetic reading: “I - marks(s) first of all a division in what will have been able to appear in the beginning [MP 327/275]”. Derrida’s point is that the mastery of the self, i.e. the undivided attention to, and the unmediated apprehension of, the “I,” is an impossibility insofar as the self is always already in self-relation and the mode of its relationality is not only dialectically reciprocal, but on top of that, linguistically so; Hence, the simultaneous splitting of the “I” into the “I who marks the word, I”, and the “I that is thus marked” by the word, I. And this line of thinking leads to the following thesis that the quoted sentence stages in a cryptic manner: The perfect beginning of the pure, immediate self that may lie in the future - “the beginning that will have been” - is, nevertheless, always already unlocatable, due to the originary “division” of the self caused by the force of language, i.e. by the inscriptive force of the word, I; the aporia at stake is that the pre-linguistic “I” must use the word “I” in order to identify itself as such, and yet as soon as it locates itself in, or “inscribes” or “marks” itself on, the linguistic map, the pure origin of the I - “the beginning” of the I - becomes obliterated; Hence, (from Derrida’s point of view), the impossible dream of locating the exact or pure “source of the I”; (from our point of view), Derrida’s *a priori*

preclusion of the possibility of a radically new beginning, of a radically new mode in which the self can be conceived in a different manner.

The point of contention one can raise against Derrida, in this regard, is regarding the twofold movement of his self-reflection: the movement of reflective opening and reflexive self-closure: one, the movement of self-splitting (“I - marks: *Je - marque*”), and the other, the trans-temporal fixing of the division through a meta-reflexive doubling of the very ruptured state of the self (“a division *in* what will have been able to appear in the beginning: *une division dans ce qui aura pu paraître au commencement*”); the latter, reflexively closed, movement of thinking is describable as trans-temporal in the sense that his strategic use of the future perfect tense - “will have been” - reveals that the kind of future Derrida envisages is not the one that is radically open to temporality and, therefore in this sense, un-fixable and unpredictable, but the one projected *a priori* from the point of view established in the present tense, which dictates what X is and what X will be, and accordingly, which sees what X “will have been” as a completion or structural solidification of (as opposed to a separation from or interruption of) the project of X. Derrida’s meta-reflexive fixing or control of a scene of disruptive self-reflection, viewed as the opening move in his essay, is a good strategic decision, because it illustrates, performatively, the argument of the essay as a whole: the impossibility of self-mastery, i.e. the inexhaustibility of the linguistic source of the “I”. This strategy is, however, too good in the sense that the self-closed tightness of his, what I previously called, “tactic of acknowledgement” contradicts his overt argument for the impossibility of exhaustive self-knowledge. With the inscription - marking - of the single sentence that announces, in advance, the impossibility of “the beginning”, what Derrida does is to create a loop of self-reflexivity, to which “the subsequent text is added”; The rest of his sentences in the essay, in this sense, is the fortification of such self-closed loop of self-referential thinking.

Put the same point differently, Derrida’s compositional mastery over his text pre-determines self-reflexively, therefore, restricts *a priori*, the range of his “passion

for the unknown, for the impossible, for the aporetic”; restrictive in this case is his projected, “perfect-futural” notion of the beginning, as it were, i.e. the beginning “that will have been.” This move is self-contradictory in the sense that it is precisely the illusion of subjectivity, of self-mastery, of the projective capacity of the self that Derrida purports to highlight and problematise. Insofar as his text remains auto-generative of a loop of self-reflexivity, and insofar as he is implicitly committed to such a methodologised or stylised self-reflexion, his thinking cannot, due to its structural limits, reach out for his “other” to which his deconstructive strategy of thinking purports to point.

What remains to be questioned accordingly, in this investigative line of reading Derrida, is the centrality of the narrative subject in his text: Namely, the question is, *who* marks “*Je - marque*”? if not Derrida himself? In raising this question, one will have to be ready for at least two types of resistance from Derrida, one, immediate, and the other, reflective.

Derrida’s immediate answer would be: That which marks “*Je - marque*”, if an answer need be given, is the word I thus employed, and not the precritical, extra-linguistic I. Therefore, to extrapolate this point, Derrida’s answer is language, language taken as “the other” of the narrative subject, or the other that comes *prior to*, and thus constitutes, such subject: “*Je - marque*” is, in this sense, the work of language, not that of the writing subject. In order to register this point, one only needs to be reminded of the demonstrative aim of Derrida’s self-implicative, textual performance exemplified in “*Je - marque*”: His rhetorical purpose is to show that the uncontrollable textuality - elusiveness - of the language of the self manifests itself through the auto-representation of its mysterious capacity of equivocation. What remains beyond authorial control, i.e. un-masterable, demonstrated as such, is the disruptive force of self-division the word “I” possesses. Derrida’s aim is to show, in other words, that Derrida the writing subject is struggling not to be “fooled” or “manipulated” by such monstrously disruptive force of language. What he demonstrates performatively to his readers, as well as to himself, is that he, as a

rigorously self-conscious writer, is beware of such “double bind” into which language, particularly the language of the self, puts him.

Before introducing Derrida’s more “reflective” resistance to our question, i.e. “who marks “*Je - marque*”?, it would be helpful to note briefly, this time in more generalised terms, what it is that Derrida aims to achieve by producing such self-reflexive texts, in other words, why such style of writing needs to be adopted: this is to ask what kind of strategic values self-reflexivity has for Derrida the writer. At least two elements in Derrida’s style of textual practice, related to each other, can be noted in this context that focuses on the strategic aspects of his writing.

First is an element of monstrosity. Derrida the writing subject “re-monstrates [Mulhall 1995]” the world through his practice of writing.

The future can anticipate itself (*s’anticipier*) in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only proclaim itself (*s’annoncer*) and present itself (*se présenter*), as a sort of *monstrosity*. [DG 14/5, translation revised]”

If my style marks itself, it is only on a surface which remains invisible and illegible for me. *Point of speculum*: here I am blind to my style, deaf to what is most spontaneous in my voice. [...] to make it (“it” referring to the thought of “*point of speculum*”) deviate toward a lexicographical *monstrosity*, [...] [MP 345/296, (my insertion)]

The “future” of writing, the future of his textual world, Derrida says, is in “an absolute danger”, because the direction of its unfolding is not only unforeseeable, but, more significantly, threatening; threatening in the sense that, firstly, it is pre-determined by a certain, un-masterable and unknown, governing logic of writing to which his text cannot but subscribe, and secondly, this underlying logic has a “deviatory” potential for having not yet been known as such to his writing self.

However, as the passage quoted above says, is it not Derrida himself who “*makes*” a given thought “deviate towards a lexicographical monstrosity”? Similarly, and in more general terms, is it not, after all, Derrida himself who, in the first place, puts the “I” into the monstrous game of double bind? According to Derrida, the discursive philosopher, and not the crafty writer, it is the inscriptive force of language and not the writer that plays this monstrous game of double bind; and yet, the opening move of “*Je - marque*” which demonstrates his thesis too perfectly and effectively in a “monstrous” manner, can invite his readers to resist this claim of authorial self-effacement Derrida makes.

Second is an element of theatrical exemplarity.²⁶ If one of the points Derrida aims to illustrate in his deconstructive texts is the monstrosity of the world of textuality, his text itself is presented as an example of such monstrosity. This Derridian world of monstrosity that defies de-monstration, according to Derrida, is not the intelligible world consisting of “clear and distinct” ideas and theses; it is, to adopt Kantian vocabulary, real and noumenal as opposed to ideal and phenomenal, in the sense that it is that which lies beyond the world of subject-oriented representations. For this reason, Derrida consistently relies on the technique of what Ulmer called “op-writing [1983],” where that which cannot be articulated in the form of a thesis is presented or demonstrated through the direct showing of it rather than through a discursive representation or exposition of it. Therefore, what remains to be seen in Derrida’s text, in the absence of an articulated thesis in it, is a kind of rhetorical and demonstrative effects that the intra-textual movements of thinking - the subsequent movements of thinking induced by the first marking of “*Je - marque*”, for

²⁶ Hillis Miller [1991] emphasises that we come to an understanding of deconstruction only by looking at different “examples,” rather than by gaining a definitive, propositional knowledge of it. He argues that this inability of deconstruction to define itself is structurally necessary insofar as the “indefinability” of a concept is precisely what deconstruction purports to show;

[...] Sentences of the form “Deconstruction is so and so” are a contradiction in terms. Deconstruction cannot by definition be defined, since it presupposes the indefinability or, more precisely, “undecidability” of all conceptual or generalising terms. Deconstruction [...] can only be *exemplified*, and the examples will of course all differ. [1991: 231]

instance - produce performatively and recursively. What is being problematised here, regarding the Derridian style of auto-representative writing, can be summarised into the following two points: the contrivedness (first point) and staged nature (second point) of his discourse, of which the case of "*Je - marque*" is a perfect example.

Then, our previous question that problematised the textual centrality of the narrative subject in Derrida's text returns, although in a revised form: *Who* is it that attempts to stage this monstrous world of double bind? *Who* is it that "sees," in other words, has insight into, such constitutive predicaments of the human linguistic self?

What has been referred to as Derrida's other possible answer addresses our revised question: Derrida would answer our question by problematising the inadequacy or inappropriateness of it, in other words, by reflecting upon the question itself. Derrida's questions posed against himself in the middle of the exposition of *différance* reflect our concern: "*What* differs? *Who* differs? *What* is *différance*? [MP 15/14]"; and his subsequent problematisation of this type of questions, exemplifies Derrida's hyper-reflective move: "With this question, we reach another level (*un autre lieu*) and another resource of problematic [MP 15/14]." Interestingly enough, Derrida then goes on to stress that, by asking this type of question, we take a greatest risk of "falling back into what we have just disengaged ourselves from [15/14]." The risk is to commit ourselves to the assumption that "prior to the sign and outside it [...] something like consciousness is possible [17/16]." By asking the kind of questions headed by "who" or "what," we run, again and "incessantly [17/16]," the risk of privileging the power of metaphysics of "synthesising traces [17/16]," in other words, the risk of "reassembling [17/16]" such "traces" into a unity of single thought. When privileging the "speaking subject"²⁷ [16/15] this way, the "I" in "*Je marque*", namely, "the speaking subject", inevitably neglects or forgets the "I" in "*Je - marque*," the writing subject, the "I" thus "*inscribed* in the language [16/15]," the "I"

²⁷By "the speaking subject," Derrida does not mean someone who makes noise phonetically, but an authorial "I" with a definite authorial intent who "intends to say (*vouloir dire*)" something in the text, believing in some kind of "pure intention" that lies outside the structure of signification.

“functioning [16/15]” only within the pre-existing system of the language. Derrida’s point here is twofold: Firstly, our revised question itself, which implicitly privileges the extra-linguistic kind of “I”, the speaking subject, by demanding an unequivocal answer to the question of “who” or “what,” *a priori* suppress the intra-linguistic kind of “I”, the writing subject; In this way, secondly, such a logocentrically formulated question *a priori* blocks a path of reflection that opens itself up to the “*equivocal passage* of one different thing to another [18/17],” to the very equivocity resonant in the inaugural passage that the “I” mark(s).

Derrida suggests that, therefore, one ought to pay extra attention to the very “moving discord of different forces, and of difference of forces [MP 19/18],” operative in any text that assumes unity in and of itself. These forces of “detour, relay, reserve [19/18]”, according to Derrida, remain “*active* [19/18]” inexhaustibly in any given text. To explain why, and in what sense, this is the case: Firstly, the “forces” of self-disruption immanent in the self, as Derrida argues, are entrenched in an invisible “chain” of linguistic signification rather than in an objectifiable system of nomination; And, for this reason, what becomes impossible for the self in self-reflection, thus mediated by the language of the self, is to position or occupy its own place within such chain of self-differentiation that constantly “moves” on; Hence, the forces of “detour and relay,” ceaselessly distractive and disruptive. Secondly, the reason why the chain of linguistic signification keeps on moving and expanding is because the elusive force of the self cannot be tamed or mastered by any means, and can only be expressed by another set of terms; Hence, the forces of “reserve” that resist exhaustive explication. And thirdly, Derrida wants to interpret the manifestation of these forces in his text as an act of language rather than as an act of his own; Hence, the forces that remain “active” in their own way, regardless of Derrida’s authorial desire or commands. Following this line of argument, what Derrida intends to highlight is a governing force of language that lies “beyond” his empirical control over the text he produces. It is much anticipated, in this regard, that Derrida would rely on a diction of vertical imposition in order to refer to this

“higher” textual dimension which lies “beyond” his reach of philosophical cognition, and which, nevertheless remains operative in his text as the unstoppable force of narration: the forces of “*super*-mark (*super-marquer*) [D 18/22]” or “*superimprinting* [Sur 146/100]”.

Here, still, remains a question: who or what then *sees* the very movement of such “super”- forces of deconstruction? Who or what sees the “active” “detour” that happens in the text, namely, the arche-trace of “margin-mark-march (*la marge-marque-marche*) [MP 13/12]”? Who or what sees this arche-trace of deconstruction, by virtue of which one is led to “suspect the very form [MP 15/14]” of the un-subtle and naive questions - such as mine - that ask “who” or “what” marks “*Je - marque*”? In what way can one *see* the very higher level of textual disruption at all, if the seer is supposed to have “always already” been conditioned by such textual force in such a way that he remains blind to its governing logic? How can Derrida justify the validity of his residual insights into the “remainders” of deconstruction, i.e. that which remains to be deconstructed over and over again, without relying on a certain supreme or superior level of philosophical eidos necessary for the metaphysical envisioning of them? How can one see the deconstructive event of thinking, without, in a certain way, relying on a certain philosophical vision, by means of which *the very* event of deconstruction is observable? The issue here, raised again in different terms, is whether any immanent and not some transcendental, enabling condition of deconstructive “suspicion” can be sought after in a coherent, non-self-contradictory manner, and my analysis so far has been suggesting that the answer is negative. The underlying point of contention behind the foregoing series of questions is that the force of deconstruction is formalisable as a form of metaphysical meta-reflection, to the extent that a certain kind of upward mobility, i.e. a quasi-transcendental reflective move, characterises the direction and manner in which it manifests itself in Derrida’s text.

Irene Harvey characterises the transgressive, and yet, aporetic mode of deconstruction in the following way: “the transgression of form by force *and* the

transgression of force by form [1986a: 135]”. The internal symmetricalness of her phrase reflects the problematically reciprocal relationship between the deconstructing “force” of thought and the “form” of deconstructive thought that is further subject to the transgressive force of deconstruction: form, as in the logocentric “form” of an ultimate metaphysical question (e.g. what is?), and force, as in a transgressive “force” of questioning that questions the very validity of such a logocentric question. And the irresolvable aporia here, which Harvey’s phrase stages effectively, is that the mode of meta-metaphysical questioning, e.g. what is “what is?,” cannot but resemble the “form” of the original metaphysical question, namely, what is?. The problem I am highlighting here is twofold: first, what Derrida means and understands by a deconstructive “force” of thinking is indistinguishable from a reflexive doubling of the ultra-logocentric form of thinking, and second, the indistinguishability at issue is a problem that Derrida’s deconstructive model of thinking cannot tackle or even acknowledge for a structural reason, i.e. for his model is always already embedded in a reflexive mode of thinking. The reciprocally dual mode of auto-deconstruction in which deconstruction, taken as a meta-philosophical endeavour, attempts to transcend or transgress its discursive limits by questioning its own form of questioning, engenders, as Derrida puts it, “the narrative of the narrative, *the narrative of deconstruction in deconstruction*²⁸ [Sur 146/100]”; Note here the recurrence of the first instance of deconstruction (the narrative *of* deconstruction) at a higher level of inquisition (the narrative of deconstruction *in* deconstruction). The reflexively automatic doubling of the force of deconstruction, exemplified in “the narrative of deconstruction in deconstruction,” leads to the meta-reflexive formalisation, or put more loosely, fixing, of such force. This way, the transgressive force of deconstruction becomes highly formalised; by implication, one can argue further that what prevails in the end in the “moving discord of force and form,” generative of deconstructive scenes of thinking, is a certain ultra-formality, i.e. a “form” of

²⁸ *Le récit de la déconstruction en déconstruction.*

deconstructive thinking thus reducible into a sort of meta-form, and not the putatively irreducible tension between a deconstructing “force” of thinking and a deconstructed “form” of thinking.

The reason why the underlying formality of Derrida’s deconstructive mode of inquisition becomes an issue in our context - the context of discussing the deconstructive strategy of writing exemplified in “*Je - marque*” - is the following: The formality of deconstructive movement of thinking entails the centrality or primacy of the deconstructive subject thus privileged in a textual scene of questioning, rather than the dissolution or displacement of such cognitive subjectivity: In other words, insofar as what remains to be seen, i.e. intelligible, in a deconstructive scene of thinking is a form of self-distancing, exemplified in the marking of “-” in between “*Je*” and “*marque*,” what remains operative, by implication, is Derrida the discursive subject, i.e. the “*Je*” of “*Je - marque*” who thus distances himself by “marking” the space of recursive self-spacing, namely, the space of “-”. The simple fact that Derrida renders auto-self-deconstructive an otherwise plain sentence (*Je marque*) by simply inserting “-” in between two words (*Je - marque*) can therefore be more telling than trivial, seen from such a strategic point of view.

Bearing in mind such an inextricable, logocentric link between the formality of deconstructive thinking and the centrality of the authorial subject who organises a deconstructive scene of thinking in a tightly self-reflexive manner, I read, with some readerly resistance, the following remark Derrida makes regarding the ordeals of writing:

[...] Writing is *inaugural*, in the fresh sense of the word, that it is dangerous and anguishing. It does not know where it is going, no knowledge can keep it from the essential precipitation towards the meaning that it constitutes and that is, primarily, its future. [...] There is thus no insurance against the risk of writing. Writing is an initial and graceless recourse for the writer. [MP 22/11]

Portrayed here is Derrida the writing subject, who is falling into an abyss of non-knowledge, into the chasm that opens itself up to “non-anticipatable events (of writing) that lie ahead [Mortley 1990: 106].” How genuine, one may ask at this point rather sceptically, is Derrida’s anxiety about writing in general, and about the invisible force of, and temporal openness of, deconstructive writing, in particular? With this question, we are, again, led back to our initial concern: the reflexively strategic aspects of deconstructive writings of Derrida. The following several pages, where a couple of other relevant examples from Derrida are introduced and discussed, will pursue this question, again; and the next section [1.324], with which the chapter 1 concludes, will provide some notes of comparison between Descartes in a sceptical phase and Derrida in deconstruction, presenting Derrida as a Cartesian thinker of “vigil”.

Back to the question: How, in the writings of Derrida, does the writing subject deal with its “inaugural” anxiety, i.e. the anxiety of blindness (blindness taken as a metaphor for non-knowledge)? What does Derrida do when he is unable to see where his writing is heading? What he does is to lay a textual trap in which he then becomes caught. What this signifies, in more general terms, is that the absence of a foreseeable telos to which writing unfolds is marked by the presence of the writing subject, Derrida the writer: Put differently, what Derrida ends up doing here is to replace - rather than to displace - “the speaking subject” by the writing subject, an old model of extra-linguistic subjectivity by his new model of intra-linguistic meta-subjectivity. This way, the subject position of Derrida in his texts becomes more strongly pronounced.

The self-reflexive construction of the space of self-inscription as in “*Je - marque*”, in the face of the threats of the unknown, is a protective measure the writing subject takes. What the Derridian self does is to “mark” a textual space in which it effaces itself. What it does, to put it simply, is to territorialise itself by marking its own space of self-spacing. That is to imply, to stay with the metaphor of

territorial spacing, Derrida merely reconstructs, rather than “deconstructs”, his own house of metaphysics, willingly and “actively” “sinking into the autism of closure [MP 162/135]”; and yet, this house, as Derrida claims, problematically again, is supposed to be full of “surprises”:

There is always a *surprise* in store for the anatomy or physiology of any criticism that might think it had mastered the game, surveyed all the threads at once, deluding itself, too, in wanting to look at the text without *touching* it, without laying a hand on the “object,” without *risking* - which is the only chance of *entering* into the *game*, by getting a few fingers *caught* - the addition of some thread. Adding, here is nothing other than *giving to read (donner à lire)*. One must manage to think this out: that it is not a question of embroidering upon a text, unless one considers that to know how to embroider still means to have the ability to *follow* the given thread. That is, if you follow me, the *hidden thread*. [Diss 71-2/63]

It is the “*between (entre)*,” whether it names (con)fusion (*confusion*) or separation (*intervalle entre*), that [...] carries all the *force* of the operation. [Diss 250/220, (con) added]

A question can be raised regarding the authorial ownership of those “fingers” Derrida refers to in the passage above: A question can be raised regarding the organiser or weaver of those “hidden threads” in Derrida’s texts. There are, however, several pre-conditions under which this question can be rightly asked. Before raising the question again, let us enumerate these conditions one by one and confirm that they have been fulfilled in Derrida’s text.

Firstly, there *is* a “finger,” in the Derridian text, which “touches” the text before an eye can see it; What this marks out is authorial presence. Secondly, Derrida’s “fingers,” when initiating a game of textual production and explication,

“*mark* the spots of what can never be mediated, mastered [Diss 250/221]”; What this signifies is authorial control and self-awareness. Thirdly, the writing subject, as opposed to the speculative subject (the subject who “sees”, i.e. “knows”), experiences an irreducible *experience* of getting “caught” and “surprised” by the rule of the game, the game of the “already-caught-and-always-surprised”; What this illustrates is the narrative centrality of authorial experience, the discursive centrality of an author who economises on his experience of a failure and inadequacy by taking it, i.e. describing it, as a chance to increase textual productivity; To put the same point in words less abstract and more figurative, what becomes conspicuous in this picture, to which the attention of both the writer and the readers is drawn, is the figure of an author who struggles to work himself out of the intricate traps and loopholes of the game, and not “the rule of the game” that generates such trouble. Fourthly, the textual “entrance (*entre*) [250/220],” according to Derrida, *is* locatable in “between” the visible and the invisible of the text, in the very “confusion” of the two dimensions; What this implies is the performative mode of narrative opening - the starting point of a narrative is not something the author knows in advance, but something that he designates performatively in the absence of the knowledge of it. Fifthly, therefore, “it is possible” for the writing subject “to recognise *a serial law* in these points of indefinite pivoting [250/221],” which renders the invisible visible in every turn of textual movement; What this means, put simply, is that to write is to render visible the narrative self that would be otherwise invisible. To elaborate this point, in conjunction with the aforementioned fourth point about the originary performativity of the narrative beginning: What can be achieved through such performative beginning is textual self-production, and the textual production of the self takes place in the process of self-inscription or self-visualisation. What the author of the “I” does in this case is not to write about himself, about the self that exists *prior to* the event of writing, but to write himself, the self that is produced and invented in the very “serialised” process or chain of (self-inscriptive) writing, which is therefore open to the “indefinite pivoting” of the futural self. Finally, to conclude, this chain of

reflections *do* happen in Derrida's text in the form of "spinning out the text"; In other words, there is in Derrida's text the textual presence of a controlling author who economises on his own authorial inadequacy by producing - or to put it more strongly, fabricating - a ceaselessly self-referential text that has "indefinite" endings and the acknowledgements of a failed beginning. Therefore, in Derrida's text, there is no "end" or "beginning" in the conventional senses of the words; what *is* there, however, I emphasise, is Derrida the author, who actively prevents such definite opening or closing - beginning or ending - of a book from taking place, who only "spins out the text" from the epistemological or methodological resources of self-reflexivity without stopping, and with care.

Now, given such textual evidence that reveals the logocentric dimension of authorial control embedded in the texts of Derrida, are we still to be deprived of the right to enquire into the ownership or subjectivity of Derrida's "fingers," the afflicted fingers of deconstruction caught up in the double bind of neither-the beginning-nor-the end? A thought behind this question is that, again, the dextrous hand of Derrida seems to fabricate, and therefore, ensure, the very possibility of a "surprise"; for instance, what he calls the "semantic void [Diss 251/222]," a kind of irreducible gap between two opposing concepts that opens up a productive textual space of deconstruction, which the "-" of "*Je - marque*" marks out²⁹, for instance, seems to be, in fact, constitutive part of his textual fabrication³⁰, i.e. a creation of his

²⁹An irreducible "gap" in this case would be that between the concept of activity and the concept of passivity: "*Je*" of "*Je - marque*" is neither active nor passive in a mutually exclusive manner, for it is both active and passive at the same time; active in the sense that it is "*Je*", the author of the sentence in question, that marks "*Je - marque*"; passive in the sense that "*I*", the signifier for the author at work, is also "marked" by the force of signification, i.e. situated intra-linguistically at a particular point that the structure of signification designates, regardless of its extra-linguistic, "pure" intention. Hence, Derrida's putative de-constitution of authorial subjectivity by means of de-stabilising its unitary conceptual basis such as the notion of self-knowing, authorial self; putative, because what Derrida does here, as I have been arguing against him, is only to replace an old model of extra-linguistic subjectivity by his new model of intra-linguistic meta-subjectivity.

³⁰Miller raises a similar question about the structuralised formality of this Derridian void. However, his tone, unlike mine, is more respectful than suspicious: "The uncanny moment in Derrida's criticism, the *vacant* place around which all his work is organised, is the *formulation* and *reformulation* of the ground out of which the whole textual structure seems to rise [...] [1991: 126]."

own. A Derridian mode of such global fabrication, I identified earlier in this section as a strategy of “ambiguation” or “equivocation”.

The persistence with which this line of distrustful reading is pursued is, in fact, Derridian in its ethos. The task of the readers, as Derrida says, is to decode the “syntactical” rule of the game, to which a given text is subject;

[...] A reading [...] should no longer be carried out as a simple table of concepts or words, as a static or statistical sort of punctuation. One must reconstitute a *chain in motion*, the *effects of a network* and *the play of a syntax*. [Diss 221/194]

The syntax of “*Je - marque*” is, again, a telling example. There remains in Derrida’s texts a dual and self-splitting experience of “following” a certain “serial law” of self-inscription. Derrida’s marking of “*Je - marque*” auto-represents such experiential event of self-inscription. Now, one’s proper response to that staged space, to that Derridian move of self-spacing, as a faithful reader of Derrida who follows him by resisting him³¹ as well as “attending to or awaiting³²” him, would be

³¹ This point may perhaps require a clarification. The necessity to “resist” Derrida when reading him is not to be equated with an inevitability to betray Derrida at the time of talking “about” Derrida. With regard to the question of what it means to be a “faithful” Derridian reader, I am not concerned with the constitutive aporia of “running the risk” of misrepresenting, “misunderstanding” or “mistranslating” Derrida by imitating or, equally, not imitating him, as Wolfrey [1998: 29] puts it, so much as with the problem of how one can maintain a critical distance from his text while, at the same time, participating in his textual game. Something like a reader’s hermeneutic struggle with the author, taking place not in the form of an ultimate betrayal, but in the form of an endless juggling, this form of reading Derrida is what interests us here. Here Wolfrey makes an interesting and insightful point, regarding the constitutive problems in establishing the faithful readership of deconstruction, which we are also addressing at this point; he argues that one’s text *on* Derrida can “behave internally in a self-referential and reflexive manner, a manner which wishes to acknowledge the problem of being faithful to Derrida’s text” and yet, at the same time, it “can only be faithful by being unfaithful in a somewhat knowing fashion.” However, at a more specific level, his commentary deals with a problem in which I am not interested any longer. His concern is to point to an inevitable irony of representing Derrida whose work, by definition, resists representation or objectification; in contrast to this, my concern, to stay with this formula, lies rather in examining the possibility of representing the un-ironised Derrida, in other words, the Derrida that remains still underrepresented.

³² I often talk about spacing, but this is not simply space as opposed to time, but a mode of producing space by temporalising it. Temporisation [...] means waiting or expecting (*attendre*), postponing or delaying. Temporising is spacing. [Mortley 1991: 100, interview with Derrida]

to distance oneself from it, which amounts to, as he says, “nothing other than giving to read”: In short, the space of reading Derrida, the space where Derrida the author lies, is the “-” of “*Je - marque.*”

1.324 Descartes in Doubt and Derrida in Deconstruction

Again, as Derrida emphasises,

The reading *must* always *rigorously aim* at a certain relationship, *unperceived* by the writer, *between* what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a *signifying structure* that the critical reading should *produce*. [DG 227/158, “rigorously” missing in the translation]

To remain distant, that is, spaced, from the object of engagement, the object that “gives³³” a signifying structure - this is the rule of the game. The rule of critical reading Derrida articulates here is distancing or spacing, these words taken as spatial metaphors for suspicion; A distancing reader is the one who does not really believe in authorial intention; A reader that “spaces” himself or herself from the author is the one who see³⁴ in “between” what the author says and what he does not, in order to

³³ Elisabeth Weber, whilst discussing the theme of sexual difference pervasive in Derrida’s texts, describes in the following way what it means for Derrida to engage, to engage with the text: “[...] to *engage* the discussion: to apostrophise, resonate, argue, respond, correspond, contest, provoke, affirm, give - to give one to think or to give, period (*donner à penser ou donner tout court*) [Poi 10/3].”

³⁴ Commenting upon the passage quoted above, Barbara Johnson stresses, rightly, that the role of deconstructive readers lies in discovering the constitutive or necessary blindness of a given text; “in other words, the deconstructive reading does not point out the flaws or weakness or stupidity of an author, but the *necessity* with which what he *does* see is systematically related to what he does *not* see [Diss, xv, translator’s introduction].”

reach a deeper, impersonal, and linguistic level of “signifying structure” to which the given text is perceived to be subject.

When Christopher Norris characterised Derrida as “one of those *undeceived* modern thinkers [1987: 150],” what is celebrated is Derrida’s “rigorous” rationality, his circumspection, his “vigilant³⁵” attitude, his refusal to be manipulated. As Norris goes on to point it out, rightly, the following appears to be one of Derrida’s most deeply rooted, working beliefs:

The process of “performative” or “pragmatic” self-differentiation of modern Western rationality - for all its random, “aleatory” character - *still* has to be reckoned with on terms that derive what *critical* force they possess from the principle of reason [1987: 161].

“We must always recall the other hand, or the hand of the other³⁶ [MA 16/9],” says Derrida. A Derridian thinker is the one who maintains a critical distance against himself as well as against the other. He is the one who fears not seeing what he is doing to himself as well as what the other is doing to him. He guards himself against blindness, in other words, against manipulation. The Derridian reason is, in this regard, a reason on the alert, on the look out, a willingly insomniac reason that refuses to sleep.

³⁵ A typical logocentric compliment that one would give to Derrida, again Norris’s, for example, runs as follows:

Deconstruction is the vigilant seeking-out of those “aporias”, blindspots or moments of self-contradiction where a text involuntarily betrays the tension between rhetoric and logic, between what it manifestly means to say and what it is nonetheless constrained to mean. To “deconstruct” a piece of writing is therefore to operate a kind of strategic reversal, seizing on precisely those unregarded details [...] which are always, and necessarily, passed over by interpreters of more orthodox persuasion. [Norris 1987: 19]

³⁶ *Il faut toujours se reppeler l'autre main ou la main de l'autre.*

There is a striking resemblance, in terms of philosophical ethos, between Descartes in malady of scepticism and Derrida in suspicion. Here is Descartes the rigorous sceptic:

I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, [...] all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgement. I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, [...]. I shall stubbornly and firmly persist in this meditation [...] resolutely guard against assenting to any falsehood, so that the deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, will be unable to impose on me in *the slightest* degree. [Med II, AT VII 22-23/CSM II 15]

Such similarity given, there is, however, a notable difference between Derrida and Descartes: The former wishes to remain vigilant all the time; The latter, however, somehow finds consolation in sleep, in the temporary abandonment of his sceptical self. Here is Descartes the moderate sceptic.

But this is an arduous undertaking, and a kind of laziness brings me back to normal life. I am like a prisoner who is enjoying an imaginary freedom while asleep; as he begins to suspect that he is asleep, he dreads being woken up, and goes along with the pleasant illusion as long as he can. In the same way, I happily slide back into my old opinions and dread being shaken out of them, *for fear that my peaceful sleep may be followed by hard labour* when I wake, and that I shall have to toil not in the light, but amid the inextricable darkness of the problems I have now raised. [Med II, AT VII 23/CSM II 15]

If Derrida wishes to keep pushing his hyper-reflective, sceptical move, for the reasons of meta-logical “rigour,” Descartes, by contrast, wishes to keep his hypothetical scepticism restricted only to a certain extent, for the economy of psychical equilibrium³⁷. The dissimilarity here reflects something like a difference between scepticism as an end itself and scepticism as a means to an end; a difference between an excessive use of sceptical rationality and a moderate use of it.

Such dissimilarity noted, further notable in this context is the contrasting attitudes Descartes and Derrida adopt towards the notion, project. Descartes has a project in the ordinary sense of the word (a telos-oriented trajectory), which is to find the indestructible grounds of knowledge, whereas Derrida has no such thing. Derrida says,

[...] In the delineation of *différance*, everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendental truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of domination, a mastery and development of the field. [...] *a strategy without finality*, what might be called blind tactics, or empirical wandering. [MP 7/7]

Elsewhere [ED 22/11], Derrida says, in a similar manner, that his deconstructive move is “dangerous” for “not knowing where it is going,” therefore in this sense, only “strategic” or “adventurous.” The “objectives” of the Derridian reflection, therefore, cannot but remain unclear and, more significantly, invisible. This also explains why Derrida cannot but rely on the “strategy without finality” that “*admits* (or acknowledges, in advance) that it does not know where it is going [TT 459³⁸/50, (my

³⁷Descartes the economic sceptic - economic in the sense of being moderate and teleological - “happily” and “lazily” “slides back into his old opinions,” when need be - here, the need is psychological rather than logical.

³⁸“*La stratégie sans finalité, [...] la stratégie aléatoire de qui avoue ne pas savoir où il va [...].*”

addition)].” His reflection, as he claims again [MP xxv/xxviii], “remains entirely unforeseen,” “without anticipation,” “without measure.” It is, as he puts it, a reflection of “a hand”- not of an eye - “that is blind”. A hand is blind, as a matter of course, by virtue of simply not being an eye with which one sees things, but when Derrida says his hand is “blind”, by that he means more than the obvious: When in self-reflection, he cannot reach the self except through a linguistic mediation, and such language, taken as an enabling condition of self-reflection, manifests itself through his writing. In this sense, Derrida’s “hand” of reflection signifies the invisible and transcendental locus where such condition resides.

Descartes’s reflection progresses towards a single end, whereas Derrida’s remains “double-ended”, as we will see shortly what that means. Descartes’s objective, his aim, his goal, is unequivocal: it is to discover the secure grounds of science which, as he claims, can be found in the reflexive resiliency of the *cogito*. By contrast, the end of Derrida’s reflection, as he envisages it, for example, in “*The ends of man (Les fins de l’homme)* [MP 129-164/109-136],” is a strange kind that is (n)either the termination of the Cartesian version of phenomenology (n)or the completion of its tradition [MP 161-2/134-5]: In other words, the aim of Derrida’s reflection is (n)either a destruction of the Cartesian project (n)or a continuation of it. Rather, Derrida’s project without “a” project (without a single definite aim), if locatable as such, lies in “between” these two options, “between two ends of man [MP 164/136]”, between one end that leads to the termination of phenomenological self-reflection, and the other that leads to the completion of it. Here, Derrida plays on the semantic ambivalence of the word “end (*fin*).” This word that denotes finality can be conceived either constructively as in “the teleological end” or destructively as in “the end of the world”; it means, on the one hand, the purpose for which something is done or towards which one is working, and on the other, simply, the cessation or termination of a course of action or activity, which does not have any teleological connotation. Derrida uses the word “end” ambiguously, i.e. de-constructively, when talking about “the ends of man”; he points simultaneously to the twofold, equivocal

aspect of the concept of the “end”. Derrida’s notion of the end is constitutively complicated - explicitly inclusive of the twofold aspect of the notion - in such a way that it engenders double-ended reflection on the future of man.

The Derridian man with, or rather torn between, the two ends, is therefore a man without a single aim: Such a man strives for an unforeseeable telos, and at the same time, marches towards death. This way, Derrida doubles the focus of his meta-reflection on himself - himself taken as an example of the philosophical man in the late 20th century. Such bi-focalised reflection, therefore, does not lead to a definite conclusion; It remains as it is; It only presents itself as an irreducible aporia. Even in a dream [MA 23/16] where Derrida is caught up in an altercation between two older men (the two old men here can be understood as representing the dialogic or dialectical tradition of European philosophy in which he finds himself working), he sees no conclusion in it, no end to it. He wakes up in the middle, interrupted. Derrida’s man is haunted by, and attracted to, the “trembling (*s’ébranler*) [MP 161/133-4]” tune “the equivocality of the end” “plays” between “its *telos* and its death [MP 161/134].” This man works like “an ant at work [Four 125]”; like “an insect” that “strangles, compresses, disciplines itself laboriously in the corset of annuli.³⁹” The labour of self-deconstruction takes place within the site of thinking structurally delimited by Derrida’s “two” - and not multiple or plural - “ends” of meta-reflection; And, such tightly controlled ambience of reflection resembles something like a “corset of annuli”.

³⁹ In his fascinatingly self-revelatory analysis of the image of ant, Derrida makes the following self-observation, intended to be contrasted with his observation of Hélène Cixous:

I will say how I see the difference of dream, between her and me, and why she writes *to* the dream [*au rêve*], if you will, she strides to the dream when she writes, that is, [...] she gives in writing, she gives to write, she advances to the dream, she advances on the dream, she nourishes herself with dream but also she strides *on it, towards it*, she goes to, gives herself up [*se rend*] to it, in advance, while as for me, *I stride to the interruption of the dream* or rather to a certain *separation/repairation* of the dream: I strangle the dream, the dream strangles itself in me, tightens and compresses itself, represses itself, prevails over itself also, like an ant at work, as an insect strangles, compresses, disciplines itself laboriously in the corset of its annuli. [Four 125]

The double structure of Derrida's deconstructive reflection, accordingly, engenders a "double" risk. Derrida's "strategy without finality [MP 7/7]" is to take a certain "risk [162-3/134-5]," the mode of which is structurally double: a risk, on the one hand, of "deciding to *change terrain*" of phenomenological reflection by "attempting to reinstate the new terrain on the oldest ground," and a risk, on the other, of "sinking into the autism of closure" by "attempting an exit and a deconstruction *without changing terrain*" of the autistic self-reflection, in other words, "by repeating what is implicit in founding concepts and the original problematic." In the case of the former, what one risks is naïveté, in the latter, blindness: one risks either the naïveté of the one who claims (s)he heralds a radical beginning beyond the tradition, or the blindness of the one who totally allows the tradition to determine what (s)he thinks. The twofold risk involved in deconstructive reflection, which Derrida describes here, is, in other words, "a risk of cutting the ground from under my (his) feet,⁴⁰" as he says. It is therefore a double-edged risk.

What, then, remains in the end? In view of the "double-edged risk" of deconstruction, one may ask what such philosophical endeavour can achieve at a meta-logical level. A possible answer would be "the loss of security [Wood 1988: 67]." The loss of teleological grounds on which Derrida stands, seems to be the very end - the end as telos - to which his reflection unfolds: Put paradoxically, the loss of aim is what he aims at. What remains, therefore, in the end, is the meta-logical or para-logical effects of the discursive movements of self-effacement, i.e. the illusions of traces.

⁴⁰ This phrase has been quoted earlier in this chapter. The following account of "the deconstruction" Miller provided can be read as a faithful exegesis of the point Derrida is making here:

The deconstruction [...] annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that the text has already annihilated that ground, knowingly *and* unknowingly. Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of the text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air. [1991: 126]

By evoking images of irreducible duality such as “traces” or “trembling” of thoughts (as opposed to an image of single linearity such as a “line” of thinking, for instance), Derrida aestheticises the meta-logical or para-logical force of deconstructive reflection, identifiable as that which resembles (for being still logical), and at the same time disturbs (for being “meta”-logical), the self-same order of phenomenological self-reflection. What this indicates is that an aestheticisation of the infinite yearnings of meta-reflection leads to a textual construction of the aesthetically autonomous milieu of thinking; The aesthetic autonomy of a self-deconstructive text comes from the fundamental and systematic self-referentiality of the self in auto-self-deconstruction. To explain in what sense one can say deconstructive move is fundamentally and systematically self-referential as opposed to, say, irreducibly other-oriented: the regressive force of deconstructive reflection, manifest in the self-referential form of “cutting the ground from under one’s feet,” is engendered from *within* the reflective self: Derrida’s philosophical reflection starts from the cogitational self and ends with the cogitational self.

The key point to be noted, again, is this: In so far as Derrida’s texts remain self-referential and self-destructively self-referential, i.e. self-corrosive, what they can achieve is limited to that extent; they remain aesthetically autonomous and epistemologically autistic, in other words, ontologically ungrounded.

Descartes in a methodologically sceptical phase of thinking also plays this Derridian game of self-effacement in the sense that he sets out to reduce the grounds of his being, progressively, as it were, i.e. step by step; However, he does so *in order to* see at what point he can terminate this progressive regression. His reflection, *albeit* regressive, unfolds towards a future-oriented goal, a single “end,” which is to rediscover the axiomatically irreducible, Archimedean point of self-knowledge. Descartes’s staging of the cleverest devil, a mirror image of himself in bad faith, is therefore a highly strategic tactic. The reason why he invites the evil genius to the scenes of self-reflection is to demonstrate that it can be expelled after all. In the end, his *self-critical* self wins over his other self, the *self-critical* self, the alter ego, the

shadow of self-certainty lurking in the abyss of self-doubts; the evil genius is therefore the name of the latter self, the self-*critical* self. After having summoned this figure onto the stage of reflection, Descartes then shows how this figure can be de-monstrated, that is to say, mastered, by the subsequent turn of the mind. The process of Descartes's reflection is that of moving away from monstration towards de-monstration. His reflection is therefore inherently a telos-oriented, progressive endeavour. In the end, "good, natural reason" prevails. His aim, seen from an epistemological point of view, is to achieve the ultimate, reflexive equilibrium of the *ego of cogito*: It is to grasp the moment when the two selves are united into one through their reciprocal collaboration. Descartes's reflection strives for, and strides towards, goodness, the nature of which is harmony and symmetry as opposed to disharmony and asymmetry⁴¹.

The Derridian reflection, by contrast, strives for, and "strides towards"⁴², "interruption" or "disruption." To use a Cartesian framework of reference, Derrida's "risk" can be read as a risk of remaining evil. The process in which Derrida's philosophical self-reflection unfolds can be characterised as that of re-monstration or ambiguation, as we noted this aspect earlier in this section. Derrida "unhinges"⁴³ [MP ix/xvii] the progressive order of dialectical self-reflection by sharpening his meta-awareness of the paradoxical mode of Cartesian self-relation. Consequently, Derrida's meta-reflective move comes to bring "rupture" to the world of "One" the reflective self of Descartes discovers in the course of self-reflexion. Derrida plays this "monstrous" game of self-interruption and self-disruption, and does so endlessly; He

⁴¹ Leszek Kolakowski's following remark is highly instructive in this regard:

The idea of intrinsic goodness, [...] may be made intelligible by its hypothetical mythological origin. The gods in various mythologies are not necessarily good either in the sense of being kind and helpful to people or that of providing us with models of moral conduct. [...] But good in mythologies seems to be invariably linked with peace and harmony, evil with war, chaos and destruction. Once the myths are sublimated into metaphysical speculation, these elementary insights naturally tend to achieve a complete conceptual consistency: if good equals peace and harmony, perfect good equals perfect peace and harmony, and this means the perfect absence of tension, and thus ultimately, absolute undifferentiation and immobility, or One. [1988:39]

⁴² See footnote no. 39 of this chapter.

⁴³ "de la faire sortir [...] coups de ses gonds"

endlessly and deliberately complicates, rather than clarifies, the peculiarly duplicitous mode of relationship that the *self*-critical self bears to the *self-critical* self.

Derrida's sustained fascination with the image of "com-*pli*-cation," with the image of two different dimensions (e.g. two different orders of self-reflection) *folded*⁴⁴ together, seems to limit, rather than expand, the scope of his philosophical imagination. To illustrate this point, the key issue Derrida raises, for instance, in his earliest text on the "dialectics" of Husserlian phenomenology, is not only the problem of the beginning, but, that of a particular form of the beginning: the problem of a "complicated" beginning: "How can everything begin by/with a complication (*par une complication*)? [*Problème vi*]." For Derrida, the beginning is always already complicated in the sense that firstly, the starting point of reflections remains invisible and hidden to the one who reflects, and secondly, when it "unfolds" itself, it immediately dualises its mode of unfolding, hence, a further and systematic complication.

Descartes in self-doubt can envisage the end of his self-reflection, whereas Derrida in self-deconstruction cannot. It is because Descartes is committed to ontology, whereas Derrida is interested in "hauntology"⁴⁵ (*hantologie*) [*SpecM 31ff/10ff*]." Descartes is interested in discovering the *sum* in the reflective "curvature of thought [*Marion 1982: 80*]", thereby, in constituting "reflective ontology"⁴⁶ on the basis of the very possibility of self-critique. Descartes in epistemological mode is interested in grasping the single moment when the reflexive reason returns to itself. He attempts to seize upon that which remains unchanged in the dialectical process of self-transformation, namely, the self in *self*-criticism. As if in a countermove, as I have been arguing so far, Derrida pursues the line, or rather "traces", of *self-criticism*; He puts into play the haunting force of meta-reflexivity, i.e. the

⁴⁴The image of "fold" evoked here is that of "folding" as in the "unfolding" of the course of self-reflection, i.e. the exposition or explication of the source and telos of self-reflection.

⁴⁵"Let us call it a *hauntology*. This logic of haunting [...] would harbour with itself, but like *circumscribed* places (*lieux*) or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves."

⁴⁶See introduction [0.2] for an explanation of the meaning of this phrase.

discursive force of hauntology. What Derrida does here is to shift the focus of self-analysis, to take just “one more step” from Descartes’s destination, excessive and hyperbolic, to the effect that the Cartesian self of self-criticism comes to be, in turn, “haunted” by the “critical” force of meta-reflexive reason at work, which therefore comes to disrupt the reflexive equilibrium of Descartes’s “good” sense. Like Descartes, Derrida stages, in his philosophical texts, the intricate problems involved in locating “the self” that can be reduced to, and identified as, an autonomous entity, i.e. “the One”; and yet, unlike Descartes, he does not (attempt to) resolve the aporia of undecidability. Put the same point in more positive terms, Derrida illustrates, rather than articulates, his “undecidability” thesis regarding the location of the self by means of a textual staging of the two contending selves in mutual self-destruction, i.e. in auto-deconstruction. For Descartes, there is a single self that remains unchanged in the course of self-reflection, the *ego* of *ego-cogito*. By contrast, for Derrida, such a self remains irreducibly and structurally twofold, that is, double; such a binary structure of the self then generates the force of reflexive doubling; and such a force of reflexive doubling creates a scene of the self in infinite self-reflections. It is this structural irreducibility of the force of doubling that haunts Derrida’s scenes of interminable self-reflection.

To summarise my arguments so far, the main concern of this chapter was to provide an analytic framework in which the following thesis can be further articulated: Derrida can be read as a Cartesian thinker. For this, I pointed to some methodological similarities between the way in which Descartes’s *cogito* argument unfolds and the way in which Derrida’s deconstruction stages its self-referential movements. Specifically, I focused on the ways in which Derrida appropriates the formal-epistemological resources of Cartesian reflexivity, i.e. automaticity and recursivity.

The aim of the chapter, to put it in descriptive terms, was to argue a case that Derridian self-reflexivity is derivative from the kind of self-reflexivity constitutive of Descartes’s *cogito* argument. The key contention here is that, at a fundamental level,

the Cartesian mode of constructive self-reflection which gives rise to the reflective ontology, and the Derridian mode of de-constructive self-reflection which produces theatrical scenes of reflexive hauntology, these two modes of self-reflection are more similar than contrary to each other. They are similar in the sense that the Cartesian model of the binarised self in self-reflection determines the formal structure in which the Derridian mode of self-reflection unfolds; None the less, they are different in that Derrida, unlike Descartes, is without an explicit ontological project. Chapter 3 on Derrida's hauntological reflexivity, which will follow shortly, seeks to explicate further, by discussing some other examples, such embedded dual structure of self-reflection found in the writings of Derrida

The aim of chapter 1, put polemically, was to show that, first, the reflexive style of writing Derrida adopts is not merely a contingent "style," but a necessary "strategy," and second, such strategy, somewhat over-used, limits or pre-determines the ambit of his philosophical trajectory. Derrida's strategy of "ambiguation" consists of mobilising and exploiting the mutually cancelling, paradoxical tension arising from within the systematically dualised self in self-refutation, i.e. between the self in *self-criticism* and *self-criticism*. The reflexive complexity in Derrida's mode of writing, which I attempted to unravel by using an example of "*Je - marque*," invites as well as demands closely textual readings of it; The strategic functions of textual reflexivity become conspicuous, when one follows through his "web" of thinking which, in the end, typically refers back, in a tightly controlled and yet deceptive manner, to the starting point of its weaving, namely, Derrida, the writer, the weaver of the Derridian text. Pursuing such rhetorical and intra-textual reading, I proposed a case of Derrida's deconstructive writing as an aesthetically or epistemologically fabricated, intratextual "play" rather than as some mysterious and uncontrollable, ontological "event" of writing, which, as he insists, always "surprises" a clever and impatient "player who assumes that he has mastered the game"; the "ontological" in this context can be understood simply as the marker of un-masterable negativity as in the un-known, the in-visible, the un-thinkable, etc. i.e. that which lies beyond the

epistemological order of intelligibility and similarly the aesthetic range of creation. In the course of arguing for this case, the critical point I raised against Derrida, put rather schematically, was that when the way in which a surprise takes place becomes predictable, the game is less surprising than it is supposed to be. This degree of banality or mannerism evidenced by Derrida's recursively adopted, reflexive strategy of writing, I sought to show further, reflects the constitutive limits of his deconstructive rationality, i.e. the logocentric limits of hyper-reflexivity.

2. Derrida after Descartes: Reflexive Hauntology After Reflective Ontology

Chapter 1 presented a case of Derrida as a Cartesian thinker. Developing this line of investigation, Chapter 2 argues a case of Derrida as a radical Cartesian, providing a reading of his reflexive hauntology as a radicalised form of Cartesian scepticism, that is to say, as a Cartesian epistemology without ontology. The key point of contention to be established in this chapter is the following: if Derrida remains resistant to ontological Cartesianism, this is because he remains committed, instead, to epistemological or methodological Cartesianism, i.e. the reflective mode of cogitation. To this end, the chapter seeks to show, in the course of analysing some of the hauntological concepts or images that Derrida uses frequently, viz. fold, interest, and law, some structural limits and strategic aspects of his reflexive hauntology; it presents a reading of the reflexive hauntology as a form of meta-reflection, to be more specific, as a performative staging of meta-reflection. Highlighted in the course of argument will be the point that the reflexive hauntology both thematises (in a theoretical manner) and exposes (in a performative manner) the structural dualism inherent in the reflective mode of thinking. The critical point of contention this chapter aims to establish, to put it in more general terms by relating it to the broader concerns of the thesis, is that, insofar as Derrida promotes his hauntologically meta-reflective, philosophical endeavour as not merely one possible mode of doing philosophy, but as the only remaining option to take, the scope of his philosophical trajectory, thus reflexively inscribed and prescribed, cannot but remain necessarily limited to such an extent.

Anticipating the aforementioned line of argument, this chapter first sets out to examine a way in which Derrida thematises the impossibility of reflective ontology, i.e. the impossibility to achieve ontology through a reflection on being. The first section [2.1], which describes the image of Derrida's "fold" and some others (the

image of a block, marks, and traces) in a more discursive set of terms, undertakes this task.

The subsequent section [2.2] aims to expose the constitutive limits of such sceptical line of Derrida's meta-reflection, in other words, the extent to which Derrida's sceptical move remains ineffectual - ineffectual in the sense that what it engenders is only the infinite regress of meta-reflection towards its envisaged impasse as opposed to an opening-up of a thought onto an ontological horizon. Highlighted, accordingly, will be the structural constraints of meta-reflection: first, the reciprocal duality between that which reflects and that which is reflected, and second, the epistemological primacy of the former (the reflective subject) over the latter (the object thus reflected). To this end, an analysis of Derrida's notion of "interest" and his textual use of it will be undertaken. The aim of the analysis is to show that Derrida's philosophical reflection on this word "interest" exemplifies a case in which an ultra-reflective, i.e. meta-reflective, discursive subject produces or projects the "inexhaustible" object of reflection by positing it in advance as its unobtainable telos; And to argue this case in Derrida is to contradict his claim that what he intends to show in his discourse on "interest" is how the ontology of a thing that "interests" a reflective subject in the end resists an epistemological "exhaustion" of it, i.e. a discursive mastery over it. The problem my analysis shall seek to point out is that Derrida's text on the non-discursive kind of "ontological" interest that escapes and transcends the subject-oriented order of reflection ends up affirming, at a performative or pragmatic level, the epistemological or discursive centrality of the reflective subject. In this sense, what remains irreducible and central in a Derridian scene of thinking is the discursive subject in reflection. The key contention here, put more polemically, is that the extent to which Derrida's reflection on interest is "self-interested" (in the negative, egological sense of the word) is indicative of that to which the constitutive reflexivity of his style of thinking lacks an ontological dimension.

The first section is on Derrida's thematisation of the impossibility of reflective ontology, the second, on his reflexive appropriation of his own impossibility thesis, and the third, final section [2.3], on his legitimisation of the impossibility thesis into a "law" of thinking, the law of "acknowledgement," as I would characterise it, borrowing the word from Derrida himself. To explain here, only briefly, what kind of law of thinking it is and what significance the word "law" carries in this context, Derrida's law of acknowledgement is a reflexive reinforcement of his impossibility thesis; reinforcement in the sense that he generalises his thesis on the limits of reflective knowledge into a thesis on the constitutive or necessary limits of discursive reason in general; reflexive in the sense that such generalising move is self-implicatively totalising so that a move towards the acknowledgement of the limited conditions of knowledge becomes integral part of his deconstructive strategies that attribute its own discursive shortcomings and limits to such universalised predicament of thinking. Accordingly, when Derrida fails to achieve the positive effect - if not the "goal" - of deconstruction, i.e. the overcoming of the limits of discursive reason, the ultimately disabling condition of deconstruction, i.e. the universal limits of discursive reason, which he projects and envisages in advance, can justify such failure. When subscribing to such generalised and absolutised law of acknowledgement, what one comes to acknowledge, following Derrida, is not a local problem in philosophy, but the global "aporia" of philosophical reason, in other words, the inevitable and universal limits of philosophical reason in general. By making such a totalising move, Derrida's system of deconstruction exposes its constitutive limits: In such tightly regulated law of acknowledgement, any creative formation of all other possible kinds of philosophical reason that are open to, and inclusive of, non-reflective rationality, is *a priori* disallowed or, put less strongly, discouraged. And Derrida makes such prohibitive move, as we will see later, in the name of Descartes, "the master [MP 351/295]".

2.1 Fold

Before entering into an analysis of Derrida on “fold,” it would be necessary to make some preliminary remarks on Derrida’s hauntology by way of delineating a discursive context in which the image of fold becomes central to hauntological scenes of Derrida’s meta-reflection. The following few pages on Derrida’s “*revenant*” aim to provide such framework.

Cogito, sum: Descartes’s *sum* designates the moment when a self in self-reflection returns to itself by way of self-reflexion. It is in this regard that his ontology can be characterised as reflective as opposed to pre-reflective or non-reflective. Derrida, however, problematises such kind of ontology that is constituted on the epistemological basis of reflective reason: any attempt made by self-consciousness to gain its self-same identity through self-reflection, he argues, is bound to fail.

The reasons for this failure can be summarised in the following way. Two points are to be noted. The first concerns the discursive limits of reflective reason. The thought here is that the origin or source of self-reflection cannot be reached via reflection, insofar as it is an enabling ground of self-reflection. The principle behind this thought is rather simple: the discursive order of cause and effect cannot be reversed. The second reason, an intriguing implication of the first, concerns the originary duplicity of reflection; “*du-pli-city*” here signifies two-fold-ness as well as deceptiveness. The thought here is that what one designates as the origin of self-reflection, the *ego* of *ego-cogito* and *ego-dubito*, for example, is illusions of the origin, effects or traces of something more originary at work, and not the origin *per se* which remains unknown to the reflective subject. The originary duplicity, i.e. the irreducibly deceptive and twofold quality, of self-reflection has got something to do with the irreducible duality of the reflective self; it is the motive of the irreducible “double” that demands attention here. The self in a critical mode of self-reflection, for example, is always already split into two different selves: one, the observed or

projected self, and the other, the observing or projecting self. This internal and structural duality of the reflective self leaves a room for a dupli-citous unfolding of the self.

The point that self-reflection carries an irreducibly or constitutively double structure, thereby generative of a double discourse within a text on self-reflection, can be illustrated by the example of Descartes's evil genius. Seen from a Derridian point of view, the evil genius is a personification of the hauntological force of hyper-reflection; it represents the ultimate source of duplicity. As Descartes's ultimate aim lay in solidifying the grounds of self-certainty rather than in allowing his alter-ego in bad faith to keep undercutting such grounds, he needed to eradicate the hauntological force of the double in a certain way; and the method he chose was to channel the two contending selves into one single self; Hence, the identification of the "I" of "I doubt" with the "I" of "I think." In this regard, one can say, Descartes stands firmly in the tradition of unity-oriented philosophies that "suppresses the (originary) double," which Derrida criticises;

Any attempt to reverse mimetologism or escape it [...] only amounts to an inevitable and immediate fall back into the system: in suppressing the double or making it dialectic, one is back in the perception of the thing itself, the production of its presence, its truth, as idea, as form, or matter. [Diss 235/ 207]

A question that is particularly pertinent to our present concern is why then *Meditationes* creates and unfolds the double, in the first place; we are interested in Descartes's purpose of staging such suppression of the double. In Descartes's scenes of self-reflection, the evil genius is a mediating figure through which a thinker can be seen to return to, in other words, to "fall back" on, his thinking self, and it is precisely such move of separation or dissociation from the evil genius, staged as such, that leads Descartes to, and consequently situates him at, a level of reflection that is higher than that of his rival. To explain how this effect is achieved: as long as

Descartes is aware of the very fact that the world he believes to be real could be an illusion created by an evil genius, his doubting self itself cannot be further deceived; and at least in terms of reflective position, it is Descartes the hyper-reflective thinker, and not the evil genius the master illusionist, who has the upper hand. In this regard, Descartes's use of such fictional character is strategically economised rather than merely "hyperbolic" in that it leads to the solidification of the Archimedean position of reflective subject. The move from the initial welcoming of the evil genius to the consequential expunging of the source of simulacrum and deception is telling in this regard: this shift of focus illustrates that Descartes's telos - up to this point in the whole of his *Meditationes* - lies in the restoration of the centrality of the reflective self, and not in the fragilisation of the subject position.

It is, however, this positive aim, this teleological drive, that Derrida questions. The issue Derrida raises here is that, once the evil genius is invited into the house of philosophy, he cannot be completely driven out of it. The reason for this is explained earlier in terms of the originary duplicity of self-reflection. The irreducible duplicity of the self of self-reflection haunts Derrida the reflective thinker, and he allows himself to be haunted by the self-splitting force of meta-reflection. In short, he remains in this reflective site of thinking; he allows the irreducible force of the double "returns, remains, and therefore haunts (*revenant*) [SpecM 25-6, 31/6, 10]" him; hence, Derrida's version of *cogito: Je reste* (I remain, I remain haunted) [C, Glas, MA, SpecM, Sur, for example].

Egological or epistemological Cartesianism underlies the self-reflexive movement of Derrida's hauntology, the haunting march of his "ghost - phantom or revenant (*revenant*) - an absolute figurant, a walk-on who walks on and on, in accordance with [Sur 137/91]" some "obsequent logic (*la logique de l'obséquence*)¹"; "there are now only spectres² [MA 69/68]." In so far as the

¹One can understand this "logic" in terms of "the law of acknowledgement" which I explained briefly in the introductory part of chapter 2, and which I will elaborate later in a section on Derrida's "law" [2.3].

²"*Il n'y a plus que des spectres*"; see also *De l'esprit* [37/24ff, particularly 37/24, 53-4/40, 79-80/62, 97-8/78]; the best and most recent example of his thematic exposition of hauntology is found notably in

discursive site of Derrida's self-reflection lies in between that of the *cogito* and that of the *sum*, which he names, "*Je reste* (I remain)," where he stops (*Je m'arrête* [Sur 137-8/91-92]), it can be said that Derrida remains committed to staying *within* the phenomenological terrain of thought rather than to break out of it. The Derridian self, haunted by the reflexive force of cogitation, remains (caught up) *in* this terrain, following and enacting as an invisible ghost who, without knowing "*whither* [SpecM 16/xix, English in original]" it has proceeded from or it leads to, just walks "on and on" towards an unforeseeable end of its march. Derrida remains haunted by the recursive force of meta-reflection programmatically built in the *cogito* argument, which demands a mechanically ceaseless repetition of the twofold act of self-presentation (a representation of the reflective self by means of self-reflexion) and self-effacement (an obliteration of the reflected self by means of self-distancing meta-reflection), of self-recuperation and self-annihilation, "*again and again* [SpecM 32/11, English in original]". He is, to put the same point more strongly, committed to remaining haunted by the meta-reflective, recursive force of the *cogito*, in other words, committed to resisting a certain ontological leap into the thought of *sum*; "the spectre is reflected in the shadow of self-reflection [MA 72/68]," in the "eye of a darkened intellect"³ [Med, AT VII 52/CSM II 36]." Derrida's hauntology, in this sense, is Descartes's reflective epistemology devoid of its onto(theo)logical basis. It is in view of Derrida's implicit and irreducible commitment to methodological Cartesianism, exemplified in his hauntological staging of meta-reflection, that one can suggest further that he can be read not only as a Cartesian, but a radical one.

A "trace", a "gesture", a hint of meta-reflective thought, remaining tenaciously in the "haunted" texts of Derrida, is an indication that Derrida makes an attempt to grasp the end point of reflective regression, the point that will, however,

Spectres de Marx.

³I should like to pause here and spend some time in the contemplation of God; to reflect on his attributes, and to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it.

never be reached. Two reasons why this end point, however, cannot be grasped by any means of reflective endeavour, which Derrida himself acknowledges and articulates, the early part of this section explained in terms of the impossibility of reflective ontology: first, the discursive limits of the reflective model of thinking, and second, the originary duplicity of the structure of reflection. Why, then, does Derrida insist on staying on this reflective line of thinking? Why this “passionate” pursuit of “the impossible”? Let us keep this question in mind, as we go on. At this point, let it only suffice to note that one of the “haunting” images by use of which Derrida promotes his textual hauntology is what may be described as a “fold (*le pli*)” of reflection, as we will see shortly how this image comes into play.

The hauntological texts of Derrida are reflexively self-delimited, discursive sites where a *du-pli*-citous play of self-reflection stages itself “again and again”; the very fact that Derrida allows his authorial persona to be consistently and persistently haunted by the unstoppable movement of regressive self-reflection illustrates that such a site of thinking is reflexively generated and thus, in this sense, self-delimited; the structural *du-pli*-city of self-reflection manifests itself in the irreducibly two-fold manner in which the unfolding of the self in self-reflection takes place, one, the manner of self-effacement, and the other, that of self-recuperation. The “fold” for Derrida, which he borrows originally from the texts of Paul Valéry [MP 327-63/275-306] and Stéphane Mallarmé [Diss 257ff/227ff], and uses with a notable frequency throughout his writings, is a figure that marks out the limits and duplicity of self-reflection.

Firstly, the fold (as in a *fold* in a folded piece of paper that effects a boundary between the inside and the outside) represents a barricade, a block, a boundary, i.e. a limit. Hence, Derrida’s talk of “the impeded march [Frank 1992: 236]” of self-reflection on its “barricaded street [Diss 299/268]”; it is that which marks the limits of discursive progression of self-reflection - which is to imply, it is that which marks the regressive force of self-reflection. Similarly, Gasché’s “tain of the mirror [1986]”, the unreflective foil on the other side of the mirror, also refers figuratively to

such limits that reflective reason, by necessity, cannot overcome; by necessity, insofar as reflective reason operates, that is to say, un-folds itself, only by means of producing its mirror-image, i.e. by means of reflective self-introspection. In this context, Derrida's claim that "the fold is not reflexivity⁴ [Diss 302/270]" can be understood as meaning the following: the fold is that which marks the discursive limits of reflexivity, and therefore, in this sense, cannot be equated with, or reduced to, phenomenological or egological reflexivity itself; the fold refers to that which transcends the self-same order of reflexivity.

Secondly, the fold (as in an *unfolding* of the self) represents the originary duplicity of, or the irreducibly twofold aspect of, a reflective turn of thinking; "a *trope*, a trick, a turn, within an elaborate relay system [Ormiston 1988: 46]"; "the deported effect of a *turn*, a *return* or *detour* (*l'effet déporté d'un tour, retour, ou détour*) [MP 333/280]." What is at issue here is the constitutive otherness of the self in self-reflection, the presence of the elements of the other within the reflective self, within the self that nevertheless, firstly, assumes the possibility of its immediate self-presence and secondly, attempts to realise that possibility by means of un-mediated self-reflection. For Derrida, the experience of self-reflection is a limit-experience: it is an experience of facing a structural impasse (the impasse being the "fold" in the first sense described above): it is, to use Derrida's words, an experience of "*alienation* [MP 355/299]" from oneself as well as "*alteration* [MP 355/299]" of oneself. Self-reflection is an experience of self-alienation in the sense that an event of self-contamination takes place the moment the reflexive self assumes that it is in most intimate dialogue with itself, intimate in the sense of not being un-mediated; it is also an experience of self-alteration, namely, self-transformation, in the sense that self-mediation by means of the other, "by detour", as Derrida puts it, is not only a constitutive predicament of the self in self-reflection, but, a necessary condition of the possibility of self-reflection. Derrida's reading of Husserl [VP], for

⁴ "*Le pli n'est pas une réflexivité.*" Barbara Johnson added a word, "form," to this sentence; consequently, her translation reads, "the fold is not a *form* of reflexivity."

example, illustrates this point about self-reflection as an experience of alterity: his deconstructive reading of Husserlian self discloses that Husserl's "pure and ideal" discourse of transcendental phenomenological self-reflection is always already "contaminated" by the "material force" of signification, namely, by the linguistic force of the "I" that obliterates the locus of extra-linguistic pure self by "marking" its material presence⁵. Here, the point of contention Derrida makes, more constructive rather than destructive, is that such empiricity or materiality of the language of the self - language taken as the other of Cartesian-Husserlian subject of self-consciousness - is an enabling condition of self-reflection rather than a hampering block in the progressive unfolding of the self in self-reflection. It is in this vein that Derrida says [MP 360/303], "an alterity [...] [is] folded over (*repliée*)" in the source⁶; the argument here is that the self-transparency of the reflective self is a deceptive notion; deception is always already at play in the source; the source of self-reflection is originary and structurally du-pli-citous. The originary deceptiveness of self-reflection is ineradicable in the same way the pure origin of self-reflection is unobtainable. The "other" that is always already "folded over in the source of self-reflection" is an irreducible "alter" ego; it is, for example, the evil genius of Descartes who forces a reflective opening of a thinking to take place, rather than Descartes who re-flects upon that self-reflectively created figure, reflexively; it is the (reflectively open) self in *self-critical* mode as opposed to the (reflexively closed) self in *self-critical* mode; it is the "*Je*" of "*Je - marque*" as opposed to that of "*Je marque*" (see 1.323); it is the self of self-effacement as opposed to the that of self-recuperation. One textual effect of such reflective "relay" or "chain [LJ 392/4]" of thinking created in the process of self-reciprocation is, as one of the quoted passages says above, a kind of "deportation" of the reflective subject. The force of self-reflection (a "turning" of the mind) is, in Derrida's description, heterological or

⁵The same point has been made, performatively, in Derrida's self-inscriptive self-reflection, "*Je - marque*", as we discussed this case earlier [1.323].

⁶ See also [Diss 302-3/270-1]

“heterogeneous” in the sense that it leads to a displacement of the self-same self by a self that incorporates the other, to a “deportation” of the reflective self from its own egological territory; the “source” of self-same reflection is already, he emphasises, “the other and plural,” “heterogeneous” [MP 330/277]. In this context, Derrida’s claim that “the fold is not reflexivity” can be understood as meaning the following: the fold is a pre-condition under which the reflexive doubling of the self can take place, and therefore, in this sense, cannot be equated with, or reduced to, phenomenological or egological reflexivity itself; the fold refers to that which produces, whilst retaining an irreducible element of alterity within itself, the self-same order of reflexivity.

Where do then these two thoughts on the fold - the un-masterable transcendence of the fold and the originary duplicity of it - lead to? It leads to a meta-reflection upon such transcendental duplicity of the fold, which is to say, back to hauntology: It does not lead anywhere but, for example, to this: “the fold folds (itself) (*Le pli (se) plie*) [Diss 290-1/258]”.

The fold folds itself, “*again and again* [SpecM 32/11, English in original]”⁷, regardless of what the reflective subject makes of it (the first point), and despite the reflective subject’s discursive effort to terminate its duplicitous unfolding (the second point). The fold that folds is Derrida’s “invisible ghost” who “walks on and on” without revealing its true identity. The fold that folds itself is an allegory for both the ultimate limits of reflective thinking and reflection’s insatiable desire to transcend such constitutive limits. The fold is therefore a figure of that which “remains” in Derrida’s limit-driven, hauntological discourse that attempts to dwell on “the theme of that which cannot be thematised”⁸ [MP 332/279]”; it is what mobilises the negative prefix, the “de-” of de-construction, the “dis-” of deconstructive dis-integration of unity as in “the movement of *dis*jointing (*désajointment*), *dis*junction, or

⁷This phrase has been introduced earlier in this chapter.

⁸“*Le thème de ce qui ne se laisse pas thématiser*”; my suggestion is that we translated this passage into “the theme of that which does not *allow itself* to be thematised.”

disproportion: in the inadequation to self [SpecM 16/xix].”; in this way, a march of the fold unfolds, “on and on,” towards its unforeseen end that remains double (du-pli-citous), “out of joint”.

The direction in which this ghostly march of the fold unfolds is regressive rather than progressive, and this can be said in view of the following. A deconstructive move is irreversibly self-referential in that what the limit-driven line of reflection ends up pointing to is its own failure to overcome its envisaged limits, i.e. its inadequacy. Put the same thought differently, a sense of structural limits predetermines the direction in which deconstructive reflection unfolds, and to this extent, the structure of auto-deconstruction as a whole remains self-reflexively self-closed; Derrida’s fold is a loop of abyssal self-reflexivity in which a reflective thinker comes to be caught.

The failure to recapture the presence of the gaze outside the abyss into which it is sinking is not an accident or weakness; it illustrates or rather figures the *very chance* of the work (*il figure la chance même de l’œuvre*), the spectre of the invisible that the work lets be seen (*donne à voir*) without ever presenting. [MA 69/68]

For Derrida, the “very” failure of reflection becomes a chance for another reflection. The passage introduced above shows at least two things: first, a regressive movement of deconstructive self-reflection, and second, the productive regressiveness of such movement. The rest of this section will focus on the second point that relates to the deconstructive economy of regressive reflection; the specific point to be noted here, to put it in Derrida’s own words, is that the experience of failure “sets to work (*mise en œuvre*) [MA 69/68]” the “very” operation of hauntology. A thematic link between this particular point on the productive regressiveness of deconstructive move and the broader concern of this section - an analysis of Derrida’s “fold” as a central trope governing his deconstructive discourse on the limits of

reflective rationality - will begin to emerge in the following paragraphs, which set out to interpret the experience of failure at issue as an experience of *cogito*.

Staged in the passage quoted is Derrida's initial step into the abyss of "spectral" self-reflexivity; the "initiation" is to be read, accordingly, as an opening move (as in an "opening"-up of the entrance to a labyrinthine garden) rather than as a starting point (as in a "starter" in a three-course meal presented in a linear order). In Derrida's frame of thinking thus opened up, to "gaze outside the abyss" is impossible, for the gaze automatically "sinks (back) into" the same abyss, in other words, for the gaze is only present within, rather than outside, the reflexively constituted frame of thinking. Hence, "the failure to recapture the presence of the gaze *outside* the abyss *into* which it is sinking". What this illustrates is that "the gaze outside the abyss" is not merely a contingent impossibility, but a structural or logical one; any attempt to break out of the given framework of thinking is, however recursively it may be made, bound to fail, for the frame *is* the abyss, or rather, for there is nothing but the abyss outside the frame in the sense that to venture "outside" the frame, in this case, is to fall back "into" another larger frame of abyss. The abyssal frame of recursive reflexivity leads to the failure of a self-reflecting self to capture the gaze of the self, the gaze of the I/eye that returns to itself, "again and again", hauntingly.

The failure to capture the gaze of the self by reflexion not only leads to an infinite regress of reflection, but, here Derrida emphasises, "figures the very chance to work (*Il figure la chance même de l'œuvre*)"; the point to note here is that such failure can be made productive as long as the limit-experience engenders a series of subsequent reflections. A significant part of the *œuvre* of Derrida demonstrates his point performatively; for example, his persistently and consistently regressive move towards that which cannot be reflected can be shown, most explicitly, in his sustained, meta-philosophical reflections on the "blink" of an eye (*augenblick* [VP]), on the "point of *speculum*"⁹ [MP, 353/296], on the blind spot of speculation

⁹ "Point of *speculum*: here I am blind to my style, deaf to what is most spontaneous in my voice."

(*punctum caecum*¹⁰ [MA]), namely, on the transcendental dimension of self-reflection that escapes the phenomenological attention of the self-reflective subject, for itself being an enabling condition of such reflection.

If not Derrida himself, some commentators see, rightly, a certain systematic, conceptual link between Derrida's philosophical regressiveness - manifest in the consistent direction in which his thinking unfolds - and Descartes's cogitational model of thinking. Consequently, Derrida's thematic preoccupation with the "blindspot" of self-reflection is often identified as a sustained theoretical interest in "the moment before the statement of the *cogito* [Bennington 1991: 116]," i.e. the moment of "prereflexive *cogito* - before the "I think" can be reflected upon and pronounced [Spivak, OG IX, translator's preface]."

Whether, then, this Derridian, *pre*-reflexive moment that comes "before" the moment of reflexive *cogito* is, or can be, conceived by Derrida in a radically or completely *non*-reflexive manner, neither Bennington nor Spivak asks further in any specific manner. The following passage from Derrida, which shows the element of recursive regressiveness inherent in the movement of thinking the *avant* (before), suggests that the answer is negative.

What announces itself as ineluctable seems in some way to *have already happened*, to have happened *before* happening, to be *always* in a past, *in advance* of the event. Something began *before* me, the one who undergoes the experience. *I am late*. If I insist upon *remaining* the subject of that experience, it would have to be as a *pre*-scribed, *pre*-inscribed subject, marked *in advance*, by the imprint of the ineluctable that constitutes the subject without belonging to it.¹¹ [D 598/2]

¹⁰ What the self-portrait shows - and Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* catalogues - is the *inability* of the source point or *punctum* to be thematised or drawn, that it is instead always drawn away from its *destiny, destination, or fatality*. Its logic de-monstrates the spectre of the invisible, lets it be seen without ever appearing. [Vallier 1997: 205]

¹¹ *ce qui s'annonce comme inéluctable semble être en quelque sorte déjà arrivé, arrivé avant*

“Something began before me, the one who undergoes the experience”; this “something” is that which precedes the time of the Cartesian *cogito*, that which comes as a pre-condition for the possibility of the *cogito* - language, for example, as we have discussed this case earlier in chapter 1. Derrida’s “I” of “I am late” is, in this regard, an extension or deferral, rather than an eradication or deletion, of Descartes’s “I” of “I am”. A Derridian, parenthetical variation on Descartes’s *cogito* argument would be: I think (belatedly), therefore, I am (late); I think “belatedly” in the sense that a thought of “I think” is, in fact, according to Derrida, an effect of something more originary at work - e.g. a work of language - rather than an un-mediated, immediate self-knowledge. With this reformulation of “I am” into “I am late”, the pure “I” of “I am” unadulterated by any implicated belatedness or inadequacy is therefore merely pushed ahead, i.e. deferred infinitely, rather than completely obliterated or abandoned. This is a reason why Derrida “insists on remaining” in this scene of self-reflection as “the subject of experience” that undergoes, and undergoes willingly, the metaphysical ordeals of regressive cogitation. Although this pure “I” of “I am” remains uncapturable for the systematic and logical reasons of which the “I” of “I am late” is well aware, Derrida’s experiential subject, nevertheless, marches towards it; the I of “I am late” that always already lags behind the I of “I am”, nevertheless, keeps on making the recursively regressive movement of thinking the *avant*. To extrapolate this point, the *avant*, this Derridian moment that comes “before” the moment of pre-reflexive *cogito*, is already a reflexive concept, i.e. a reflexively acknowledged force of regressive cogitation that un-folds, therefore, reflexively. To acknowledge such force of cogitation is to allow in advance the regressive mode of self-reflection to set in as a norm; this force has been

d’arriver, toujours passé, en avance sur l’événement. Quelque chose a commencé avant moi qui en fais l’expérience. Je suis en retard. Si j’insiste pour en rester le sujet, ce serait en tant que sujet prescrit, pré-inscrit, d’avance marqué par l’empreinte de l’inéluctable qui le constitue sans lui appartenir.

characterised earlier as “spectral”; this force, Derrida characterises here, following Lacoue-Labarthe, as “ineluctable” - ineluctable is the need to think the “before” before thinking the “now”.

A productive kind of cogitational regressiveness is also found in Descartes’s text. The way in which Derrida economises on a sustained experience of failure (the failure to capture the precise moment of *sum*) is reminiscent of Descartes in the second *Meditation*, where, as Derrida would say, “the *very* failure” to negate the *sum* “sets” the argument “to work.”: “as long as I am thinking, I *cannot* be *nothing* [...] I am something, and therefore, I am¹².” Observe, here, the movement of a thought in which “not-nothing” becomes reflexively identified as “something” by the I, the reflexive subject, who holds these two thoughts together at once; observe Descartes’s awareness of “not-nothing” which becomes automatically economised into a meta-awareness of “something”; observe the fixity of the thought of “something” with which all the previous regressive thoughts (that I may be, after all, nothing) come to an end, the kind of fixity that remains as yet epistemological (which Descartes reinforces later on a more solid onto-theological ground) as opposed to ontological or theological. The reflexive fixing of a thought of “not-nothing” into a thought of “something”, viewed in this regard, can be described as an epistemological economisation of cogitational regressiveness.

Now, the regressive movement of Derrida’s “*avant*”, one can observe further in this context, unfolds at the point where Descartes’s I of “I am something” assumes that it has achieved its reflexive equilibrium; Derrida’s “I” thinks, instead, “I am something, and yet, something that began before me, something that remains yet to be

¹² I am referring to the following passage introduced earlier in chapter 1, where I thematised the automaticity and recursivity of the movement of a thought from “I am not nothing” to “I am something”:

[...] Let him (a deceiver of supreme power and cunning) deceive me as much as he can, he will *never* bring it about that I *am nothing so long as* I think I am *something*. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I *must* finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is *necessarily* true *whenever* it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. [Med II, AT VII 25/CSM II 17]

seen". Hence, the search goes on; Derrida's limit-driven discourse draws on this philosophical need for something more originary and fundamental, i.e. something that remains yet to be seen, and this need remains hauntingly irreducible, i.e.

inexhaustible. This need, Derrida describes as "scopic pulsion, voyeurism itself [MA 72/68]"; this irreducible force of scopic reason, he characterises here, again, as something "spectral," i.e. invisible and yet operative, consistent and yet disruptive.

Given that the spectral is, as Derrida suggests in *Mémoires d'aveugle*, derivative from specular "pulsion," would it not be, after all, somehow reducible to the specular or speculative, to a certain extent? This seems to be the case, for, in Derrida's system of "scopic pulsion," the self that adheres to itself in the endlessly self-splitting speculation on itself *is* the self that appears to itself in the ceaselessly self-disruptive spectralisation of itself. The point is that the spectral marks not only the limits of the speculative, but, more pointedly, the insatiability of speculation's completion-drive; which is to imply that the Derridian economy of reflexion is still speculative to this extent, and to this exact extent of incompleteness thus measurable. In this sense, it can be argued that in Derrida's case, in contrast to Descartes's, this desire for a scopic mastery over the self is epistemologically oriented rather than ontologically grounded; Further philosophical implications of the difference at stake will be discussed in the following two paragraphs with which the current section concludes.

To use Derrida's paradigm of philosophical thinking in which a metaphysical desire for the origin of the self is characterised as a certain "scopic pulsion," a "voyeuristic" instinct, Descartes's textual staging of the evil genius who would otherwise remain invisible can be read as a metaphysical thinker's attempt to visualise, i.e. de-spectralise, an inner ghost, who out-thinks the thinker, who would therefore force the thinker to reflect on himself "again and again". Such metaphysical visualisation of an alter ego, which leads to the textual invention of the evil genius, unfolds in a tightly controlled and consecutive manner, in which the privileging of the category of the epistemological over that of the onto-theological is implicit. That is to

imply, in Descartes, the aim of reflection, to use Derridian diction, would be the de-spectralisation (meaning, clarification) of the world, as opposed to the spectralisation of it to which Derrida's deconstructive project is committed. In Descartes's case, firstly, there is a reflectively open, disruptive move, namely, the emergence of the evil genius. A deliberative manner in which the hypothesis of an evil genius unfolds suggest that Descartes, at this stage of meditation, does draw on what has been described as the "spectral" force of regressive cogitation; regressive, in the sense that, at this point, the meditator "steps back" from - rather than progresses into - the world at large by leaving the possibility open that perhaps the whole thing may be an illusion, the possibility that, as Derrida would say, there may be "something that comes before" him. In the face of such metaphysical threats, Descartes, secondly, makes a reflexively closed, stable move. The reflexive resiliency or equilibrium of the *cogito*, which Descartes discovers in the course of equating the I of "I am threatened by a thought of the hypothetical evil genius" with the I of "I am thinking that conjectural thought," comes to block any further possibility of sceptical self-corrosion. Such an economised manner of thinking, in which the operative boundary of the evil genius comes to be delimited¹³ by Descartes's subsequent turn of reflexion on the very hypothetical thought, suggests that Descartes's telos-oriented economy of thinking - the telos being the discovery of the unshakeable onto-theological foundations of knowledge - does not allow, any more within its system, a hypothetical or discursive space in which a further thematisation of the spectral can take place, the spectral here taken as that which remains potentially invisible in, and disruptive of, a stable system of reflexive cogitation. Accordingly, the point where the consequential self-reflexive closure of a thought takes place corresponds to the point where the ultimate expunging of the evil genius from the

¹³The question of whether or not such delimitation is successful or valid lies beyond the scope of this study; the current analysis, as well as the thesis as a whole, focuses on the question of how the delimitation takes place.

system, after the initial welcoming of it, is also staged: “he will never bring it about that I am nothing *so long as* I think I am something. So, [...] I am. I exist.”

“Scopic pulsion, voyeurism itself is always on the lookout for the originary ruin [MA 72/68].” Derrida’s system of reflection, *a priori* lacking any onto-theologically grounded telos, and thereby built upon, if nothing else, its own reflective drive, cannot eradicate the spectral presence of a corrosively intra-systematic, sceptical move, namely, a meta-reflective move that regresses into its envisaged limits, into its “originary ruin”; the ontological basis of deconstruction is envisaged as a “ruin,” because Derrida thinks that a pristinely preserved origin is *a priori* unobtainable, for the reasons of the impossibility of reflective ontology. Then, what such system of thinking, embedded in a reflective structure of limit-thinking, can do alternatively is to attempt to thematise the very regressive force of reflective reason that infinitely delays the system’s entry into an ontological ground. And in Derrida, the thematisation of the impossibility of reflective ontology takes place in a manner of theatrical self-exposure, or put less strongly, self-exposition; The self-referential texts of Derrida consistently and persistently stage the aporia of a hyper-reflective move in which the reflective self, on the one hand, seeks its ontological ground that renders its phenomenological self-reflection possible, and on the other, acknowledges in advance the ultimate futility of such endeavour. Hence, Derrida’s “insistence” upon tracing back “something that comes before” him, this aporetic “something” that “remains,” and yet cannot be, seen, viz. the spectre and the fold. When Derrida follows this alternative, “aporetic” path of regressive and yet productive self-corrosion, what his texts produce is philosophical dramas of self-reflexion; Derrida the thinker is stuck in the loop of an epistemological mirror play in which Descartes the self-doubter, haunted by his own hypothesis of an evil genius, is also caught; Derrida the writer, stuck in such milieu of thinking, creates a world of his own. Allegedly, however, what Derrida the self-deconstructor “looks out for” is a pre-reflexive ontological ground of the self, and not some kind of a loop of reflexivity. Facing such a hypothetical objection to the line of reading pursued so far,

one will then have to show further how Derrida's epistemological loop of reflexivity creates an illusion of ontology from within, in other words, how a putative ontological basis of deconstruction, "for which" the deconstructive self is "on the look out," is fabricated rather than discovered by Derrida the reflexive writer: this is the task of the next section which offers a close reading of Derrida's "interest".

2.2 Interest

What Derrida looks "out" for, i.e. the ontological basis of the deconstruction of the self, ends up being swallowed up in a loop of egological self-reflexivity: the ultimate resiliency of the reflexive self, exemplified in Derrida's philosophical reflection on the notion of "interest (*intérêt*)" [VPT 5-18/1-13], is the object of analysis in this section.

What is at issue, to state it in broader terms before detailing my argument, is the embedded or irreducible self-referentiality of Derrida's deconstructive move. With this in mind, I will seek to explicate the extent to which Derrida's putative attempts to go "beyond" the subject-oriented terrain of self-referential or self-reflexive reflections can be seen as gestural in the negative sense of the word. The aim of such investigative reading of Derrida is to problematise his impassioned claim that the deconstructive force of thinking lies in its radical "exteriority"; and his contention will be problematised on the grounds that a highly structuralised and strategically exploited, regressive self-reflexivity of the self, i.e. an element of ineradicable interiority, is detectable in his milieu of thinking; the interior, in this case, refers to the reflective self, the thinking ego, whose epistemological centrality, as I will show, is reflected in the compositional aspects of his text. What is to be highlighted in the course of analysis, in other words, is that Derrida's hyper-reflective model of thinking, in which an envisaged impasse of reflection induces an "ineluctable" meta-reflection on the impossibility of the completion of reflection, is more centre-oriented than, as Derrida claims, "marginal [MP]". In short, the

following is a sceptical - sceptical in the sense of being resistant - reading of the putative “exteriority” or “marginality” of Derrida’s deconstructive mode of thinking. The key point of contention underlying the resistant mode of reading Derrida thus proposed, to put it more polemically and schematically, is that the putative radicality of deconstruction’s move towards its “other,” towards its “outside,” remains feigned, and does so to the exact extent that deconstruction also reflexively envisages the impossibility of such other-oriented move, in other words, to the extent that this double gesture of “thinking the impossible” remains self-referential; there remains, in the end, no outside in Derrida’s deconstructive system of thinking in the sense that, firstly, the outside is reflectively posited or created meta-systematically as the unreachable destination of reflection, and secondly, his subsequent, cogitational gesture towards such other is thereby automatically subject to the reflexive force of further meta-systematic interiorisation of the outside thus posited intra-systematically. How this movement of the meta-reflexive interiorisation of the other takes place, the following analysis of a way in which Derrida’s discourse on “interest” unfolds aims to show. With an explication of Derrida’s strategy of reflexive writing detectable here, what has been referred to as the “meta-”dimension of Derrida’s discourse (meta-systematicity or meta-reflexivity) will become clearer.

For Derrida, the “other” is that which remains un-interiorisable in the reflexive economy of the same, in other words, that “on” which the self-same self of self-reflection “cannot get a grip [Spivak 1995: 244]”: it is what lies “outside” the range of intelligibility the reflective reason delimits. A case of such other Derrida presents in the inaugural part of *La Vérité en Peinture, “Passe-Partout”* [VPT 5-18/1-13], is an inexhaustible dimension of the concept of “interest”; inexhaustible in the sense that a thing that interests, i.e. engages, Derrida the reflective subject, possesses a quality of not only being interesting to him, but, more importantly, “remaining [VPT 8/4]” interesting even after he ceases to take interest in it, that is to say, even if he decides that there is nothing more interesting in it. Accordingly, the dimension of a thing on which Derrida becomes interested in reflecting further is that

which remains beyond his reflective grasp of it, which “exceeds and overflows [8/4]” his “discursive doing (*un faire discussif*) [8/4],” i.e. reflective endeavour; it is this dimension that interests Derrida, the meta-reflective thinker.

Derrida’s thesis underlying this meta-reflective move is the following: a thing that is not merely interesting, but inexhaustibly interesting, seen from an ontological point of view, has a priority over the epistemological subject who shows interest in it: a thing that remains ceaselessly interesting, to use Derrida’s diction of economy, keeps to itself its ontological “fund (*fonds*) [VPT 17/12]” from which the epistemological subject derives its discursive “interests”: it keeps creating its “surplus value (*plus-value*) [VPT 9/5].” The ontological is therefore, by analogy, the capital or stock, the immovable properties of a given thing; what the epistemological subject does then is to “bank (*faire fonds*) [17/12]” on it - this act of “banking,” Derrida describes as “discursive doing”.

A similar move to ontologise the epistemological notion of “interest” is also found in Heidegger’s “*interesse*¹⁴,” the “*inter-esse*” that lies at the centre¹⁵ of a thing, *in medias res*, which does not cease to engage the one who remains thus interested in the thing at hand. Arguably, in this regard, one can say that Derrida’s notion of interest adds an economic dimension to Heidegger’s, an effect of which is an added focus on the discursive subject caught up in the “interest”-driven economy of thinking; what this signifies is that Derrida focuses not only on the uncapturable, ontological pole in the notion of interest, but more significantly at a practical and textual level, on the epistemological pole. A result of this move, which we are going

¹⁴ “Interest, *interesse*, means to be among and in the midst of things, or to be at the centre of a thing and to stay with it [Heidegger 1993: 371].”

¹⁵ Note the similarity between Derrida’s notion of interest and Heidegger’s:

When I write “what interests me,” I am designating not only an *object* of interest, but *the place that I am in the middle of (le lieu au milieu de quoi je suis)* and precisely the place that I cannot exceed or that seems to me to supply even the movement by which to go beyond that place or outside of it. [...] This value of interest is thus no longer an object for demonstration. [...] Once it envelops or exceeds [...] our whole “history,” “language,” “practice,” “desire,” and so forth, the modes of demonstration should no longer be prescribed or coded by anything that belongs simply within these borders. [Poi 72/67-8]

to highlight in this section, is that he constantly envisages the impossibility to reach the ontological dimension of the notion of interest by pushing it ahead beyond the “border” of intelligibility. The ontological dimension of an interesting thing, which precedes *and* induces Derrida’s epistemological unfolding of it, is an example of his “other”, a case of “something that comes before him”; Derrida envisages not only the coming of the other, but the coming close to, if not becoming one with, the other; the latter move can be characterised as, to stay with his analogy of economy, as an economic approximation of the other.

Derrida’s opening line stages his thesis on the ontological priority of the other that comes before the reflective self: “Someone, not me, comes and says the words: “I am interested in the idiom of truth in painting [VPT 5/1].”” And with this, much anticipated is his focusing on the reflective self that economises on the other, on the “coming” of the other, i.e. on the sentence thus given; “*Passe-Partout* [VPT 5-18/1-13]” as a whole is a subsequent series of reflections on this single sentence. Derrida begins his discourse on the truth of painting by writing “four times *around* (*autour*) painting [VPT 14/9],” as if the given sentence were a painting; each time, he writes differently about, and yet always in reference to, the words of a hypothetical stranger, who suddenly comes to him and says abruptly, “I am interested in the idiom of the truth in painting.” Derrida begins by speculating on the intention of the one who utters this, who has already “come” to him, before him.

Here, we are not concerned with the question of what Derrida’s four different interpretations¹⁶ of the sentence are; we are concerned with the question of why he is “interested,” in the first place, in brining a figure of the outsider into his discourse. In short, we are not interested in the result of Derrida’s speculations, but in the motive of his undertaking. The question is twofold: first, what is it that Derrida,

¹⁶ Derrida lists, as follows, four different interpretations, amongst other possible ones [VPT 9-12/5-7], of what the “I” of “I am interested in the idiom of the truth in painting” is interested in: when the hypothetical stranger utters this sentence, by “the idiom of the truth in painting” he may mean one or some or all of the following things: “1. that which pertains to the thing itself; 2. that which pertains to adequate *representation* in the order of fiction; 3. that which pertains to the *picturality*; 4. that which pertains to truth in the order of painting.”

by initiating such hypothetical discourse, purports to problematise?; second, in what way does he prove his point?

First, what is Derrida's point? By saying emphatically and carefully that he writes "*around*" painting, "around" the sentence given to him, as opposed to "about" it, what Derrida purports to show is that "the frame is missing"¹⁷ [VPT 5/1]; the frame of reference is already missing, the frame, in this case, being the objectively definable context in which the sentence is uttered. To put the same point in different words he used in a different context [MP 327/389]¹⁸, the upshot of Derrida's argument is that insofar as the "exhaustion" or "saturation" - i.e. a clear delimitation - of the context from which a text arises is impossible, the acquisition of the true - true, in the sense of being objectively locatable - meaning(s) of the text is *a priori* "prohibited (*interdit*)". Accordingly, the difference between thinking "about" the given sentence and thinking "around" it, in this context, amounts to that between the objective¹⁹ or phenomenal visibility of the frame of reference both the speaker (the hypothetical stranger) and the listener (Derrida) shares, and the invisibility, if not the absence, of such referentially restraining context; by "the frame is missing," Derrida must not mean that the frame as such is absent, but that it remains operative and yet invisible, for, without a certain, minimal and axiomatic, assumption of the transcendental fixity of such discursive constraints, his discourse cannot even stay "around" the given sentence; the "frame" that remains invisible here is to be understood as a kind of ontological anchor of his discourse. Hence, Derrida's necessity to write "around" the given words by speculating on, without deciding,

¹⁷ "*Les bords d'un contexte s'évasent.*"

¹⁸ By pointing to the uncontrollable reiterability of signature as an example of the undecidability of context, Derrida problematizes a logocentric tendency in Austin's speech act theory: Austin's tendency to take for granted the intelligibility or centrality - i.e. decidability - of the speaker's intention. [See "*Signature Événement Contexte*," in MP 365-93/307-30].

¹⁹ when I write "what interests me," I am designating not only an *object* of interest, but the place that I am in the middle of (*le lieu au milieu de quoi je suis*) and precisely the place that I cannot exceed or that seems to me to supply even the movement by which to go beyond that place or outside of it. [...] This value of interest is thus *no longer an object for demonstration*. [Poi 72/67-8] (This passage has been introduced earlier in this section.)

what the true meanings of them could be. What “remains” in the end in the single sentence thus given, Derrida goes on to claim in this regard, is “the savings of a natural language [...] capable of [...] saying so many things in so few words [VPT 8/4].” These “so many things,” Derrida argues, cannot be exhaustively explicated in any discursive manner; they are, accordingly, that which induces the labour of explication, e.g. Derrida’s “discursive doing” in his text; four examples of those “so many things (*tant de choses*),” Derrida himself provided.

The fact that it is Derrida himself, and not the hypothetical stranger, the other, who does the discursive labour, can be a starting point with which we can pursue our second question: in what way does Derrida prove his thesis on the inexhaustibility of the ontological “savings” of language? The answer is: performatively. By the performative mode in which Derrida makes an exposition of his thesis on the inexhaustibility of the ontological, I mean, broadly, his strategy of textual staging, and specifically in this context, his strategy of what may be called self-parasitism. What his text on interest shows performatively, rather than articulates discursively, is how the ontology of interest remains productive, and for that reason, resists an epistemological mastery over it; four instances of the productive resistance of the ontological have been put on display in his text. And this mode of demonstrating a thesis is self-parasitic in the sense that Derrida justifies his point self-referentially. That is to say, his failure to catch “the frame that is missing”, i.e. his inability to grasp the ontological truth about interest, staged as such, becomes the evidence that supports his argument. By describing this self-referential mode of argument as “self-parasitic”, what I intend to highlight is the economic dimension of his self-justificatory move: Derrida sticks to his case of failed reflection, showing it as an example of his thesis on the impossibility to reach the ontological. The general point to note here is that, in Derrida’s text, the element of textual performativity is not external but internal to the formation of a discursive structure. With this, the more specific point I am making is that the intra-textual staging of an envisaged thesis effects a reflexive form of argument; Derrida’s “discursive doing” takes place only

within such a self-reflexively delimited site of reflective thinking, and for this reason, the validity of Derrida's argument thus presented in a performative fashion cannot be tested outside the very loop of self-involving self-reflexivity he has carefully engineered.

To clarify what has been referred to as the engineered - that is, strategic - aspects of Derrida's textual performativity: Derrida's "discursive doing" involves both the performative self and the discursive self at once; Derrida the performer shows something - his "doing" something - and Derrida the theorist becomes parasitic on his performative self when he draws on it by using it as a justificatory, demonstrative basis of his theory. The textual strategy he adopts, in an attempt to thematise an "un-thematisable" and un-interiorisable, ontological force of "interest," is to demonstrate, *in advance*, how his discourse itself is subject to this force at issue. This is a good example of the peculiarly self-parasitic way in which Derrida's theoretical text is "*already* an application, so there is no separate "Derrida" in the form of theory who might *then* be applied to something else [Bennington 1996: 17]." The systematic, textual conflation of the two different orders of writing, one, discursive, and the other, performative, results in the creation of a self-closedly reflexive text that stages the reciprocity between the two by continuously unfolding its internal "*trait* (connection, pertaining) [VPT 9,13/5,8]," i.e. by rendering visible the hidden and tight reciprocity. This way, the two un-identical dimensions appropriate each other: they are parasitic on each other; on the one hand, Derrida thematises an ontological truth about interest, according to which the reflective self interested in something is structurally "prohibited" from gaining an epistemological mastery over it, and on the other hand, he applies to his own writing his theory of ontological "prohibitionism," as it were, by setting out to write "around," as opposed to writing within, the frame of reference that, as he claims from the start, remains invisible. To conclude: Derrida's writing on interest is a reflexive application of his theory on interest, and such constitutive and therefore ineradicable, meta-reflexivity

that underlies the structure of his performative argument indicates that his discourse is self-interested in the egological sense of the word.

To point to the fundamental self-interestedness of Derrida's discourse is to highlight the egological centrality of Derrida's writing self. And to view Derrida the writing subject as one who creates a textual world of his own is to argue against Derrida, the thinker of "the other": it is to argue, specifically, against Derrida who allegedly seeks the ontological truth about non-egological interest, and more generally, against Derrida who contends [LJ 391/4²⁰] that the self of self-deconstruction, although "wholly enigmatic," is *not*, in any case, that of "egological self-reflexivity".

Derrida's point of contention, demonstrated as such, is that, when he writes, that which writes is not Derrida the author in control, but Derrida a spectre of writing; when Derrida writes "around" a thing the frame of reference of which remains invisible to him, the one who writes, he claims, is not Derrida, the reflexively self-controlling, writing subject, but Derrida who loses his egological self-reflexivity, led by some "enigmatic" and ghostly thing - e.g. the mysterious, ontological truth about interest that an interesting thing keeps to itself - that induces his "inaugural adventures" into the unknown.

My point of contention, posed against Derrida's, is that the organisational meta-reflexivity of his text makes Derrida the writer looking more contrived than enigmatic; more playful than "rigorous"; more self-parasitic than "other"-involving; more, in fact, epistemologically oriented than, as he claims, ontologically committed. First, contrivedness: Derrida, the weaver, fabricates a text, a whole text, which includes a hole²¹ within itself - the hole, in his text on interest, is a sense of

²⁰ "[...] The *se* of "*se déconstruire*," which is not the reflexivity of an ego or of consciousness, bears the whole enigma."

²¹ Do not forget that to weave is *first (d'abord)* to make holes (*trouer*), to traverse (*traverser*), to work (*travailler*) one-side-*and*-the-other of the warp (*le part-et-d'autre de la chaîne*). [MP xxv/xxviii]

irrecuperable gap between the ontological and the epistemological, generated by the failure to capture the ontological truth about interest. And the hole thus created leaves a room for the reflexive creation of textual “traits” - the traits, in his text on interest, are the four instances of writing “around” the given sentence. Second, playfulness: by creating “a kind of chain (*un enchaînement*) of security, of quasi-continuous plenitude which [...] makes these ciphers resemble the thing itself [MP 347/292],” Derrida himself shows a tendency to pursue something central as opposed to “marginal”, a kind of metaphysical tendency he criticises²² as “logocentric” that privileges the terms denoting the centre, e.g. the self-same self, self-presence, self-consciousness, essence, Being, etc. The centre in Derrida’s text is the reflexive self, a sort of [VP 15-16/15-16] of “hold (*prise*)” “protected” and “repeated” by the “oblique, laborious and tenacious endeavour of phenomenology” of the self. By drawing on the cogitational force of reflexivity, Derrida initiates a textual game of reflexivity that stages a “tightly woven play on succession [MP xxv/xxviii]”;

Let us not rush [...]. Never miss a twist or fold [...]. Compulsively.

As is said in common French: never miss a one (*ne pas en manquer une*).

[D 606/10]

Compulsion rather than rigour would be a better word to characterise Derrida the player, who is playful enough to stage his own compulsive self-analysis, that is to say, who is not rigorous enough to call into question the stylised, methodological reflexivity itself which renders his deconstructive milieu of thinking *a priori* self-centred rather than open to the other. Third, self-parasitism: the reflexive self, locatable as the governing centre of, i.e. the driving force behind, Derrida’s self-analytic text, promotes the textual production of abyssal scenes of self-reflection,

²²For Derrida’s image of metaphysics as a “*chain*” of reflexion, see also [Diss 12/6] and [ED 410/279]; “the metaphysical is a certain determination of direction taken by a *chain* of sequence [Diss 12/6]”; “the entire history of the concept of structure [...] must be thought of as a series of substitutes of centre for centre, as a linked *chain* of determinations of the centre [ED 410/279].”

and a sense of abyssal falling is created at the moment when the reflexive self attempts to step outside its loop meta-reflectively, the movement of which is again “tightly,” i.e. meta-systematically, controlled by the recursive force of reflexion. The reflexive self, in this sense, is self-parasitic: it is bound to stick to itself. A “haunting” abyss into which Derrida’s discourse plunges “headlong [TT 459/50]”, “around” which reiterations - e.g. the four rounds of reflection on the first sentence of *La Vérité en Peinture* - take place, marks out the centre that governs the self-parasitic economy of Derridian reflection. What Derrida, the self-parasitic player, shows is how he economises on this abyss; economisation in this case means the consequential, reflexive interiorisation of the sense of the outside the reflective self envisages in a meta-reflective manner; one example of the outside which his text on interest attempts to show is the irreducibly ontological elements inherent in the epistemological notion of interest.

To conclude: epistemological orientation: insofar as the ontological, the uncapturable other of the epistemological, is represented in Derrida’s text as that which fails the reflective subject, Derrida’s meta-reflective project remains hauntological rather than ontological in the sense that, this line of thinking thus pursued, what becomes pronounced in Derrida’s text is the negative and “haunting” presence of the ontological, in other words, the cogitational subject of haunting experience, rather than the positive and un-troubling presence of the ontological. Insofar as Derrida makes the ontological serve the negative function of marking the constitutive limits of reflective ontology, the “barricade” of reflection, rather than makes it push through the hauntingly reflexive structure of meta-reflection, his hauntology remains closer to epistemology than to ontology. Such epistemological orientation of Derrida’s hauntology becomes reinforced, when Derrida not only relies implicitly on the epistemological resources of cogitational self-reflexivity, but promotes his hauntology, rather explicitly, as the “law” of thinking which he cannot but acknowledge as a given condition of thinking. The final section of this chapter

traces Derrida's move towards a methodological solidification of the cogitational model of thinking.

2.3 Law

Derrida's philosophical fixation on the reflexive self has a methodological basis: he relies on the cogitational force of self-reflection, which he describes as "a trap"²³ [MP 351/295]," and specifically, a trap of the *cogito*, "into which generations of servile fetishists will come to be caught, thereby *acknowledging* (*viendront se laisser prendre à connaître*) the law of the master, of I, René Descartes" : it is, in the words of Valéry quoted by Derrida, "a reflex action of the man."

What is the operation of the I in the Cogito? To assure itself of the source in the certitude of an invincible self-presence, even in the figure - always paternal, Freud tells us - of the devil. [MP 350/294]

Of a number of points Derrida makes in his reading of Valéry as a Cartesian writer, some of them [MP 350-1/294-5], directly relevant to our reading of Derrida as a Cartesian thinker, can be articulated in the following way. Three points are to be noted. Firstly, the discursive centrality of the *cogito* is a trap of self-reflexivity; the I of I think returns to itself, falls back onto itself, even when what it thinks is a thought of the exterior, e.g. Descartes's thought of a hypothetical devil as that which possibly subverts the existing order of self-knowledge. Descartes's evil genius is represented as a threat to the assured interiority of the self, as that which may dislocate the reflective subject by means of having the whole world turned upside down. The hypothetical devil himself, however, as long as it is the kind that is conceivable only by the hyper-reflective subject, comes to be caught, in the end, in the world of Descartes's reflection, i.e. in a trap of self-reflexivity. Secondly, such trap of

²³See also Sarah Kofman [1991] for a similar discussion.

reflexivity has an epistemologically positive, “very great value [350/294, Valéry’s words quoted by Derrida]” in that it provides a discursive security to the I of I think by having the I return to itself, reflexively, whenever there occurs a risk of self-division or self-differentiation. Descartes’s textual presentation of the reflexive I can be interpreted, in this regard, as both the recognition and a solution of the Cartesian problem of irreducible duality of the reflective self: the structural division between the reflecting self (the I that thinks, the I that looks into the mirror or the I that writes, analogically speaking) and the reflected self (the I that is seen to be thinking, the I that is reflected in the mirror or the I that is written) is recognised and staged as such in the course of a reflexive unification of the aforementioned two different selves into one self, i.e. into the I that thinks *of* (or sees) itself *as* a thinking being. Descartes’s definition of the self as a thinking being unifies, without necessarily blurring the conceptual distinction between, the subjective pole of the self (“I” of “I think”) and the objective pole (“myself” appearing in “I think of myself”), and the structural bi-polarity of the self, once constituted as such by means of the reflective self’s reflexive recognition of it, brings stability to the recursively reflective unfolding of the I. Such structural systematisation of the reflective movement of the ego is conducted, Derrida says, “by means of the egotistic impression of a form [351/295]”; here, he describes the thinking ego’s reflexive recognition of its cogitational structure as the reflective subject’s (stamping-like) imposition of its form of thinking on itself. The I of I think designated and controlled as such, or “written [350-1/294-5]” or “impressed” as such, taken as a secure source of reflexive cogitation is, in this sense, the ineradicable marker of, as Derrida put it, “invincible self-presence.” Thirdly and finally, what Valéry “acknowledges” as “a servile fetishist of the law of the Cartesian I,” Derrida points out, is this ensnaring “power [350/294]” of self-reflexivity, this “very great value” constitutive of the backbone of the reflective model of thinking. The crux of this line of argument Derrida pursues is that the reflexive form of Cartesian cogitation becomes irreversibly inscribed in a reflective mind; that of my line of argument in this chapter is that Derrida is also “a

servile fetishist of the law of the Cartesian I” in the very sense he describes. Derrida is haunted by an un-erasable figure of Descartes lodged in his thinking self in the same way his Valéry is.

To invoke a figure of philosophical authority, to acknowledge the law of the master, if “servile” in itself, is not necessarily a mere expression of philosophical modesty; Derrida’s “law”-abiding ethos can be a manifestation of something else, something deeper than that, particularly when a motivation behind such acknowledgement is self-serving. This is the case with Derrida, who obeys the law of the *cogito* rather than questions the methodological “value” of the Cartesian form of cogitation. The mode in which Derrida subscribes to the view that methodological self-reflection is a prescribed norm of thinking is self-serving in the sense that the pre-given condition of thinking, acknowledged as such²⁴, becomes a self-justificatory basis of his system of thinking; he uses it as a means by which to authorise his text in a certain way; to authorise it not only in the sense of conferring authority on it by marking its historical locus within the bounds of tradition, but, more interestingly, in the sense of justifying its internal aporetics as necessary, as “ineluctable”. With Derrida’s act of acknowledgement, what becomes justified, in advance, is twofold: his philosophical fixation on the reflexive self and his implicit privileging of the reflective model of thinking over other possible ones. Derrida’s philosophy of deconstruction thematises the limit of reflective reason and highlights the inadequacy of the reflective model of thinking being. And yet, oddly enough, it does not divorce itself from such tradition of thinking it problematises; it not only refuses to extricate itself from the reflexive “trap” of reflective rationality, but promotes, or even celebrates in a certain sense,²⁵ such methodologised reflexivity in the form of staging his impossibility to overcome the reflective tradition of doing philosophy, the origin of which he locates in Descartes. Derrida’s strategy is to highlight this experience of impossibility, to exaggerate it, to absolutise it, in short, to draw a sense of fatality

²⁴See the concluding part of 1.322 for a further explanation of this point.

²⁵“a joyous self-contradiction, a disarmed desire [...] of cutting the ground from my feet [TT 495/50]”

from the “ineluctable” failure thus envisaged in advance. To put the same point differently, Derrida economises on his own acknowledgement, on the acknowledged fact that he is unable to overcome the internalised authority that stands always already in front of him. Derrida’s gesture of acknowledgement can be translated, in this regard, into a strategy of reflexive self-entrapment, an economy of reflexive self-limitation.

Directly relevant to this point is Derrida’s acknowledgement of his philosophical debt to Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, “existential” in the case of the former, and “methodological,” the latter [Kearney, interview with Derrida, 1984: 109; see also Pos 18ff,73/9ff,54]. Derrida, for example, talks about his “*departure* from the Heideggerian problematic (*un écart par rapport à la problématique Heideggerienne*) [73/54]”; “what I have attempted to do” - the formulation of the non-concept of *différance* - “would not have been possible without the opening of Heidegger’s questions [18/9].” The problem I am pointing to is not that Derrida is thus implicated and located in the philosophical tradition he acknowledges, but that, in Derrida’s case, the act of acknowledgement leads to the self-reflexive fixing of the historical condition under which his philosophy unfolds. Hence, Derrida’s dilemma, i.e. deconstruction’s “aporia” of double bind: on the one hand, his milieu of thinking is thus constrained and limited, and on the other hand, he must, nevertheless, try to extricate himself from the snare of tradition. How genuine, however, one is led to ask, is Derrida’s philosophical desire to overcome the limits he envisages? Is it not the case that he submits to the demands of the tradition he chooses to highlight, and responds to the internalised call of his philosophical “masters” he chooses to recognise, rather than breaks out of his reflexively formulated mould of thinking, rather than pushes through what he sees as a kind of oppressive regime of logocentric tradition of philosophy?

Derrida’s acknowledgement of Michel Foucault is also a case in point. Interesting to note, also closely relevant to our later discussion of Derrida vs. Foucault on Descartes’s madmen [Chapter 5], is that Derrida, the disciple of

Foucault, prefaces his engaging dialogue with his philosophical master with a cautious “servile” acknowledgement, *avertissement*, that his discourse that is to unfold will inevitably be haunted by the “absent” presence of the master, namely, that of Foucault. Here are the first two paragraphs [ED 51-2/31-32] of Derrida’s essay, ‘*Cogito et histoire de la folie* [ED 51-97/31-63]’:

These reflections (*réflexions*) have as their point of departure [...] Michel Foucault’s book *Folie et déraison*.

This book [...] is even more intimidating for me in that, having formerly had the good fortune to study under Michel Foucault, I retain the consciousness of an admiring and grateful disciple. Now, the disciple’s consciousness, when he starts, I would not say to dispute, but to engage in a dialogue with the master, or better, to articulate in interminable and silent dialogue which made him into a disciple - this disciple’s consciousness is an unhappy consciousness. Starting to enter into dialogue in the world, that is, starting to answer back, he always already (*toujours déjà*) feels “caught in the act (*prise en faute*),” like the “infant” who, by definition and as his name indicates, cannot speak and above all must not answer back. [...] The disciple knows that he alone finds himself already challenged by the master’s voice within him that precedes his own. [...] As a disciple, he is challenged by the master who speaks within him and before him [...] Having interiorised the master, he is also challenged by the disciple that he himself is. This interminable unhappiness of the disciple perhaps stems from the fact that he does not yet know - or is concealing from himself - that the master, like real life, may always be absent. *The disciple must* break the glass, or better the mirror, the reflection, his infinite speculations on the master. And *start to speak*.

Derrida, the disciple, must break the mirror in which the image of his master is reflected - but can he? or does he wish to? or does he allow himself this chance? Can Derrida, in fact, break the mirror, when he find himself “always already” caught up in a mirror play with his master? Does he, genuinely, wish to “start to speak” his own mind, after having emphasised the fact that he had already interiorised the voice of the master who speaks “before and within” him, i.e. “precedes” his own voice? Does he, really, allow himself to challenge his master in a non-reciprocal manner, when he, as a disciple, sees himself as a kind of “infant” who cannot answer back?

To detect a hint of strategy from a seemingly ordinary, if only slightly excessive, disciple’s rhetoric of subservience may be viewed as an over-reading. However, noting that one of the points of contention Derrida raises against Foucault in this lecture-essay, as we will examine later more in detail, is that Foucault is, contrary to what he thinks he is like, more ambitiously Cartesian²⁶ than Descartes himself, one will then see how Derrida’s acknowledgement of Foucault, taken as a pre-meditated strategy of argument, can be used against Foucault, effectively and economically: Foucault’s naive ambition, his lack of “unhappy” consciousness can be contrasted with Derrida’s rigorous circumspection, his unhappy recognition of his own condition of thinking: Foucault’s ultimate failure to acknowledge the ineradicable presence of his philosophical master he attempts to challenge, i.e. the Cartesian legacy of rationalism, can be contrasted with Derrida’s *a priori*²⁷ acknowledgement of the undesirable and yet inevitable “trap” of discipleship, the trap of a mirror play between the master and the disciple in which the disciple sees,

²⁶To introduce Derrida’s argument in sketchy terms: Foucault is Cartesian, for his archaeology of madness is, in fact, a logocentric endeavour to have a rational mastery over madness rather than a self-effacing attempt to let madness speak for itself; and he is ambitiously so in the sense that, if, as Foucault argues, Descartes simply excluded the madmen from his category of thinking beings, Foucault attempts to include them in that category by seeking to make sense of their irrationality by some rational means, i.e. by means of his “archaeology of madness,” which is, in fact, a kind of explicative and investigative project that leads to a further silencing of the pure silence of madness.

²⁷*Déjà* [...] interrogated by Derrida (is) what *precedes* every interrogation [...] The remark we wanted to make *before* beginning *turns out to be already* in some sense [...] an anticipation of our most intractable problems. [Bennington 1993: 9-10]

defines, and recognises himself in the eyes of the master, reflexively, i.e. by means of the reflexive interiorisation of the master's authority. The disciple, Derrida emphasises, "must start to speak"; but he, Derrida also emphasises, can hardly speak his own mind that has "always already" interiorised the voice of the master. Foucault wanted to speak against Descartes; but, he could not, Derrida argues, speak in a voice other than that of Descartes. Derrida wants to speak against Foucault; but, he may not, Derrida acknowledges in advance, be able to speak in a voice other than that of Foucault; he will, nevertheless, start to speak. The chain of implications is such that Derrida must also hold the view that, the issue of the possibility to overcome Cartesianism aside, both Foucault and he remain indebted to the master they share in common, Descartes. Derrida's own, internalised Cartesianism, however, is neither acknowledged nor articulated in any explicit manner in this essay; it only manifests itself in the form of Derrida (as a committed Cartesian, who believes in the methodological value of, if not sharing with Descartes the onto-theological faith in, self-reflection) attempting to "speak" and speak *for* Descartes, i.e. defending Descartes against Foucault's criticism that Descartes's system of cogitation *a priori* excludes madness, the other of reason.

Without going into the intricate details of Derrida's counter-argument against Foucault's, which chapter 5 will analyse, here we shall only note a general point directly relevant to the concern of this section: to expose Derrida's methodic fixation on a kind of rule-governed process of meta-reflection and to explore the possibility to interpret it as a textual manifestation of his implicit, that is, un-acknowledged, methodological Cartesianism.

The rule of thinking Derrida follows again here, and follows respectfully in this essay, is the recursively regressive movement of "before" or, similarly, of "beyond." Firstly, in what way is the rule of thinking the "before" operative in Derrida's argument? Derrida's point of criticism, posed against Foucault, is that, "before" setting out to create a discourse that can be systematically divorced from what he perceives as a "rationalistic" Cartesian framework of thinking, Foucault

should have reflected upon the very possibility to pursue such alternative path of thinking, i.e. the possibility of “the archaeology of madness”. Then, secondly, in what way is the rule of thinking the “beyond” operative in Derrida’s argument? Derrida’s attempted meta-reflection on ubiquitous Cartesianism as a historical pre-condition under which Foucault’s alternative route of thinking itself can be mapped out reveals a deeper dimension of Foucault’s internalised, Cartesian drive that lies “beyond” a range of Foucault’s self-understanding: Derrida’s thematic attention to Foucault’s internalised Cartesian rationalism as an enabling pre-condition for Foucault’s archaeological pursuit discloses the invisible presence of Descartes in Foucault.

To restate Derrida’s point of contention, in light of the implicit Derridian rule of thinking noted above, what Foucault did not acknowledge enough, in short, is Descartes the master who comes “before” him and lies “beyond” his reach, who thereby not only gives a definition of what Foucault does, but also delimits the range of what Foucault can do. By making this critical point against Foucault, the point Derrida makes about himself indirectly is that he is less of a Cartesian than Foucault is, despite the chain of implications, insofar as his critical self-awareness of such embedded Cartesianism makes it possible for him to create a certain “site” of thinking within the discursive constraints thus imposed. To this “site” of deconstruction, we will come back shortly in the course of argument, and yet, what needs mentioning here as a point of clarification is that, if it can be said, in the sense described so far, that Derrida does acknowledge Descartes *albeit* indirectly and implicitly, i.e. via the mediating figure, Foucault, what he does *not* acknowledge, nevertheless, is that the way in which this Derridian site of thinking can be constructed is also Cartesian, seen from a methodological point of view. This dimension of Derrida’s Cartesianism that remains un-acknowledged in Derrida, despite his “rigorous” act of acknowledgement, we will examine later in this section. My immediate concern here is to note that Derrida’s methodic tendency to pursue, in a paralysingly reflexive way, the “before” and “beyond” of thinking, as is manifest in this early essay at issue, becomes reinforced later, for example, in *Mémoires*

d'aveugle, where he legitimatises his own regressively reflexive tendency into something like a quasi-religious “law” of acknowledgement: “the acknowledgement *before* knowledge (*la reconnaissance avant la connaissance*) [MA 30/35]”;

It is a matter [...] of *observing* the law beyond sight, of ordering truth alongside the debt, or ordering truth from the debt, of giving thanks at once to the gift and the lack, to what is due, to the faultline of the “one must” (*il faut*), be this to be “*il faut*” of the “*il faut voir*” [“one must see”] or an “*il reste à voir*” [“it remains to be seen”], which connotes at once the overabundance and the *failure* (*défaillance*) of the visible, [...] the respectful *observance* of a commandment, *the acknowledgement before knowledge* (*la reconnaissance avant la connaissance*) [..]. [MA 29-30/35]

What is at issue here is the absolutised, fixed dimension of Derrida’s “law,” the law of “*avant*” or “*déjà*,” which cannot be de-constructed by virtue of it being an enabling condition for deconstruction. “To de-construct” a text, in this context, means to reflect meta-reflectively upon a set of constraining pre-conditions under which the self-same identity of a given text can be both constituted and deconstituted; the pre-conditions, recognised as such, give the text a definition of what it is about; the pre-conditions, acknowledged as such, force the text to recognise further the constitutive elements of the other within it which cannot be fully thought out. Derrida’s topological description of the “site” of deconstruction, which has been introduced earlier in Chapter 1, corresponds to my characterisation of deconstruction as a meta-reflective endeavour:

My central question is : *from* what site or non-site (*non-lieu*) can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself so that it can interrogate and *reflect upon* itself? [Kearney, interview with Derrida, 1984: 108]

A deconstructive movement of thinking given, philosophy as such can “appear to itself” and, at the same time, “as other than itself”; the moment when philosophy “appears to itself” is when it makes a meta-reflective move; the moment when it appears to itself “as other than itself” is when it recognises the higher order, i.e. the meta-level, of its self-reflection, in which the self-same identity of philosophy comes to be questioned and de-familiarised, i.e. “interrogated.”

The irreversible, upward mobility, characteristic of Derrida’s deconstruction taken as a self-inquisitive or self-analytic mode of thinking, resembles the reflective regressiveness, characteristic of the direction in which Descartes’s cogitation marches toward its zero point, towards its Archimedean point of ultimate reference. It is in this sense that one can argue, against Derrida, that what his law of acknowledgement “safeguards [Harvey 1986: 80]” is not so much “the invisible other” that remains un-interiorisable, and therefore demands a respectful “observance,” as the self of self-observation, the reflexive self, the self-referential self, the “I” of “I think”, in other words, the recursive force of reflexivity that maintains the self-same economy of meta-reflection. My point of contention, in short, is that Derrida’s law of acknowledgement is translatable into what Derrida himself describes - in a critical spirit and in a self-distancing manner - as a “trap” of the *cogito* “into which generations of servile fetishists will come to be caught, thereby *acknowledging* (*viendront se laisser prendre à connaître*) the law of the master, of I, René Descartes.”

When Derrida acknowledges the distant as well as “absent” master, Descartes, by way of undertaking his “absolute *self*-criticism [2],²⁸” what he does not acknowledge is that the way in which he responds to the call of his (self-critical) consciousness is also Cartesian - reflexive alertness is an attribute of the cogitational

²⁸ An innocence without naïveté, an uprightness without stupidity, an absolute uprightness which is also absolute self-criticism, read in the eyes of the one who is the goal of my uprightness and whose look calls me into question. It is a movement towards the other that does not come back to its point of origin the way diversion comes back [...] a movement beyond anxiety. [Recit. From Emmanuel Levinas (1968), *Quatre Lectures Talmudiques*, Paris, p.105; Annette Aronowicz, (trans.) (1990), under the title “Four Talmudic Readings”, in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, Bloomington; Indianapolis, p.48]

mind. If Derrida does acknowledge Descartes, he does so in the broad contextual sense that every thinker after Descartes, as he argues, is and must be Cartesian insofar as their philosophies are embedded in the Cartesian tradition of modern philosophy; when Derrida does not, however, acknowledge, in any explicit or positive manner, the pervasive presence of such Descartes in his texts, it is because he understands his deconstructive endeavour as an attempt to create and maintain a critical distance against the “logocentric” tradition of philosophy in which he finds himself located, in which something central, teleologically posited and implicated as such, is operative as the ultimate reference point of thinking, e.g. the self, reason, Being, God, etc. This way, Descartes, a seminal figure in the history of modern rationalism in the eyes of Derrida, appears in Derrida’s text as a hidden master, who was acknowledged in some ways, and yet, was not acknowledged fully; who had to be acknowledged in some ways, and yet, could not be acknowledged fully. Echoing Derrida in Oedipal trepidation,²⁹ I ask the following as the open-ended conclusion of this chapter: “to whom” does Derrida’s “hand return,” finally, if not to Descartes?

²⁹ What glues itself, along the winding staircase, to the truncated column’s body is indeed a son becoming father. Of his father, no doubt; of whom would one be the father? Yet his march, its step, it runs (*sa marche*) [...] “Watch out.” [...] I was a child being carefully led by his father. (Today I am a father led to love by his child.)” Today, between parentheses, is writing’s presently presenting: I am (following) a father. But, the “I was a child” of the preceding sentence, outside parentheses, belongs to the time of the same narrative (*récit*) according to which, a page higher or step (*marche*) lower, the child was the old Oedipus supported by his daughter to whom he gave a “confident” hand. Who lends a helping hand (*un coup de main*) to whom in this (hi)story? *To whom does the hand return? What sense does it have in trembling?* [...] [Glas 201-2/180-181]

3. Locating an Entry

3.1 Recapitulation

Chapter 1 and 2 offered an analysis of the specific ways in which Cartesian self-reflexivity is at work in Derrida's discourse. The aim of these chapters was to show that it is possible, and there are convincing reasons why we are led, to locate the putatively radical discourse of Derridian deconstruction *within* the conservative framework of traditional Cartesianism. The motive of Derrida's deconstructive project, in relation to that of Descartes's, can be said to be radical in the sense that deconstruction aims to dismantle, rather than solidify, the onto-theological basis of Descartes's foundationalist philosophy. The radicality of de-construction comes from its in-built scepticism, its destructive side, which is corrosive of any positive attempt to construct a philosophical "site" of thinking that can serve as an immovable foundation of knowledge in general. Derrida's thematic preoccupation with the impossibility to constitute ontology on the basis of reflective reason is a case in point. The method of Derrida's deconstruction, however, I have been emphasising, is still conservative in the sense that deconstruction, taken as a form of corrosive scepticism or rational self-critique, remains inextricably embedded in methodological Cartesianism, i.e. the cogitational mode of thinking. The problem I am pointing out is Derrida's excessive reliance on reflective rationality in the formation of his deconstructive project, the element which he himself problematises in the context of arguing the impossibility of reflective ontology. Insofar as the way in which the auto-self-deconstruction of the self unfolds is reflective (seen from a procedural point of view) and reflexive (seen from a consequential, compositional point of view), it can be argued that Derrida relies on the reflective mode of thinking and operates within a reflexively self-delimited terrain of thinking. Derrida's implicit commitment to methodological Cartesianism makes him a Cartesian thinker who thinks like the sceptical Descartes when thinking against the onto-theological Descartes. The key

points of contention established so far can be restated in the following way. Three points shall be rehearsed.

First, I provided a reading of Derrida in which his putative attempt to go beyond philosophy, his so-called “de-constructive” move against the Cartesian way of constructing philosophical terrain, is viewed as an extreme move within, rather than as a new move beyond, the Cartesian terrain of philosophy. Hence, a reading of Derrida’s Cartesianism, viz. his Cartesian impulse, his Cartesian ethos, his Cartesian hyperbolism, and his Cartesian extremism.

Second, Derrida’s putative radicality can be read, I suggested further, as a dramatic exaggeration or strategic extremisation of the formalistic self-referential paradox that is already implicit in the performatively self-involving structure of the *cogito* argument, which has brought to the modern Cartesian subject an anxiety, a problem, an aporia, namely, the self-reflexive predicament of hypercritical self-abnegation. Derrida remains, in this sense, more Cartesian than not. Hence, Derrida as a radical Cartesian.

Third, these views on Derrida, I emphasised, are still valid even when we pay extra attention to his firmly and consistently sustained undecidability thesis, the thematic position of which can be established only meta-logically, that is to say, only on the basis of the viability of the aporetic tension implicit in the mutually incompatible, twofold “gesture” he insists on making: one, an intra-philosophical gesture to retain the “logocentric” order of western philosophic reason, and the other, a trans-philosophical gesture to transgress the disciplinary and discursive boundaries that the logocentrism of philosophic reason both gives rise to and relies on. A “tension” of dilemma arises between these irreducibly different directions of thinking, one, a move that follows the dialectical order of interiorisation, of self-identification, therefore, of self-mastery, and the other, a countermove that resists the interiorising force of philosophic reason. This tension leads to, to use Derrida’s diction again, a “trembling” of the order of articulated logocentrism. An effect of this discursive disturbance is a philosophical experience of homelessness; Derrida finds

himself always already (dis)located in an “unheard-of” “margin” of philosophy. Now, our reading has been focusing on the strange centrality of the Derridian margin. In so far as this sense of displacement and loss can be “experienced” at all, and experienced only in a meta-logical sense, I argued, first, that what remains, after all, in the Derridian scene of deconstruction is the philosophical subject of experience, and second, that this residual subjectivity “spectrally” existing in Derrida’s text can be characterised as a derivative from the Cartesian subjectivity.

What has been offered in the foregoing chapters can be described as a deconstructive reading of Derrida. To deconstruct Derrida by using Descartes would mean, in this case, to render the transgressive gesture of Derrida intrinsically and fundamentally logocentric. I see his friendship with “margins” of philosophy - his intimacy with “the other” of philosophy, e.g. time and language as the unmasterable factors alienating the Cartesian reflective self from itself - as still logocentric for being, say, margin-*centric*; Derrida’s deconstructive mode of thinking is logocentrically margin-centric in the sense that there is an underlying, formalistic sameness and recursivity in the way in which his various texts thematise and locate the other of the Cartesian self - Derrida’s “other” is always already lodged in the meta-reflective dimension of his self-reflection rather than somewhere else. The key contention here, put differently, is that deconstruction’s passion for the other of thought, for the “the unthought (*l’impensé*) [Foucault 1966: 333-9/322-8],” is fundamentally epistemological or discursive, rather than ontological; it is always already moulded in a discursive structure of reflexion, which I identify as Cartesian. The way in which Derrida addresses the unthought is, I argued, always already pre- and over-determined by the proto-Cartesian force of self-reflexivity; not unlike Descartes, he cannot think the unthought unless in relation to the thought, the *cogito*. In short, Derrida’s starting point is, always already, Descartes.

The next section [3.2] offers a more detailed analysis of what I described in the above as the “formalistic sameness” of instances of deconstruction. Having established, in the previous chapters, the point about deconstruction being a Cartesian

trajectory, I will proceed to focus on the deconstructive techniques of thinking thus identifiable. Whilst trying to avoid an unnecessary violence of crude reductionism, I will nevertheless seek to identify a form, or put less strongly, a recurrent pattern, of deconstructive thinking. For this, a couple of examples will be examined in some detail; to acquire an “experiential” understanding of what the form of deconstruction would be is the aim of the next section. The working belief here, put in the words of Derrida who prefers double negation to single affirmation, is that it would be *not impossible* to give a “formal” account of what deconstruction is or what its economy amounts to.

3.2 The Form that Resists

Let us begin by looking closely at Derrida’s response to a question such as:

Q: What is the relation between deconstruction and critique?

J.D.: The *critical* idea, which I believe must never be renounced, has a history and presuppositions whose deconstructive analysis is also necessary. In the style of the Enlightenment, of Kant, [...] *critique* supposes judgement [...]; it attaches to the idea of *krinein* or *krisis* a certain negativity. To say that all this is deconstructible does *not* amount to (*ne revient pas à*) *disqualifying, negating, disavowing, surpassing (dépasser)* it, of doing the *critique of critique* [...] but of thinking its possibility from *another* border, from the genealogy of judgement, will, consciousness or activity, the binary structure, and so forth. This thinking perhaps transforms the space and, *through aporias*, allows the (*non-positive*) affirmation to appear, the one that is presupposed by every critique and every negativity. [...] this necessary *aporetics* [...]. [Poi 368/357]”

Therefore, when Derrida uses the word, “critique” or “critical,” by these he means something radically different from, and heterogeneous to, the traditional notions of

“critique.” Deconstruction, he claims, is neither a meta-critique in the ordinary sense of the word, i.e. “the critique of critique,” nor a transcendental critique in the Kantian sense; it is because, although, seen from a pragmatic point of view, deconstruction is to be considered as a critical endeavour, it involves a “genealogical,” and not a logical, critique of the very judgmental dimension of the “*critical* idea” or “critical dogmatics¹.”

For this reason, here, Derrida the deconstructive thinker, avoids any rashly “judgmental” - “positive” or naïve - forms of affirmation (or negation), in other words, reductive forms of thinking. Derrida formulates, and answers to, the question of what deconstruction does *not* “amount to,” as opposed to the question of what it does amount to. That is to say, deconstruction resists a propositional self-definition: it resists saying “deconstruction *is*² (not) X”;

All sentences of the type “deconstruction is X” or “deconstruction is not X” *a priori* miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false. As you know, one of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts “deconstruction” is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: S *is* P [LJ 391/4].

¹ [...] deconstruction is not a critical operation; it takes critique as its object; deconstruction, at one moment or another, always aims at the trust confided in the critical, critico-theoretical agency, that is the deciding agency, the ultimate possibility of the decidable; deconstruction is a deconstruction of critical dogmatics). [Poi 60/54]

²Another example:

[...] perhaps deconstruction would consist, *if at least it did consist*, in [...] deconstructing, dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjointing, putting “out of joint” the authority of the “is” [TOJ 25].

Let two points be noted. First, deconstruction is the resistance to the reductionism of “to be”; second, it however remains sceptical of the form of its resistance, that is, of the constructive force of the “dis-.” For this reason, here the possibility of resistance is only hypothetical or fictive, namely, hauntological; hence, “if at least it did consist.” Note that the avoidance of affirmation has taken place twice in a twofold manner: by negations (“dis-”) and by hypothesisation (“if”).

Any definition, whether positive or negative, of deconstruction is therefore to be *a priori* resisted, according to Derrida. To read the passage quoted at the start of this section, in light of the point Derrida is making here, what he problematises becomes clearer: it is a form of identity-thinking, *S is P*, adopted whether positively or negatively, in which one is led to say deconstruction “*is* (not) to (dis)qualify [...] the possibility of critique of critique.” What deconstruction is or is not, what it amounts to, what it is equated with, etc. - this type of questions demanding a definite self-delimitation of deconstruction, Derrida points out, “*a priori* misses the point,” because what deconstruction problematises is the very³ inadequacy of the form of identity-thinking and what it thereby thematises is that which exceeds, or “cracks” open, such self-enclosed form of thinking. Hence, deconstruction’s *a priori* impossibility, and refusal, to answer the question of its self-identity thus posed.

What is it, then, that deconstruction can show, in stead, in the face of its generic impossibility of propositional self-definition? Could it be anything other than the reflexive alertness of sceptical rationality? The thought behind this question is that, given that the logic or law of auto-deconstruction - not to think in the form of “*S is P*” - is such that any reductive move towards a propositional self-definition of deconstruction is to be automatically and recursively rendered impossible or inadequate, that by virtue of which such consistent resistance to self-definition is rendered possible is the reflexive application of self-critical and self-referential reason, which has been characterised as alert. That to which I am drawing our attention is not what Derrida and self-identified Derridians refer to as the very impossibility to define deconstruction, but the (very) idea of the “very” that gives rise

³See also Caputo [1996: 31-48, entitled, “1. Deconstruction in a Nutshell: The Very Idea (!)”];

Deconstruction in a nutshell? Why, the very idea!

The very idea of a nutshell is a mistake and a misunderstanding, an excess - or rather a defect - of journalistic haste and impatience, a ridiculous demand put by someone who has never read a word of Derrida’s works. Nutshells enclose and encapsulate, shelter and protect, reduce and simply, while everything in deconstruction is turned toward opening, exposure, expansion, and complexification, toward releasing unheard-of, undreamt-of possibilities *to come*, toward cracking nutshells wherever they appear. [31]

to such thought of aporetic impossibility, the “very” taken as an indicator - or a “marker”, to use Derrida’s diction - of hyper-reflexive reason at work. Derrida the auto-self-deconstructionist recognises such impossibility reflexively (as opposed to non-reflectively or non-reflexively) in the sense that what he experiences, when applying his rule of deconstructive thinking to a formation of the philosophical identity of deconstruction, is the impossibility, rather than anything else, to extricate himself from the “trap” of discursive, self-critical reason; to put the same point differently, what Derrida, the cogitational subject, experiences is, if nothing else, the necessity to follow the logic of self-abnegation prescribed as such by himself. That which becomes staged in deconstructive scenes of thinking, consistently and persistently, is therefore a thought that suffers from its envisaged fate, from the epistemological predicament of reflexive scepticism.

Two sets of the conditions of the possibility and impossibility of deconstruction are discernible. First, Derrida’s “perhaps transformative” reflection, which the current thesis characterises as formally meta-reflective, cannot but take places “through aporias.” In other words, what Derrida problematises is the fact that he cannot deal with aporias without, at the same time, rendering his structure of thinking already aporetic. Hence, the aporia is a condition of both the possibility of and its impossibility; the meta-discursive energy of aporia works for deconstruction, and the fatality of aporia, against deconstruction. Second, we, Derrida and his readers, can “observe⁴” the very happening of the aporetics, the very possibility of

⁴ Recently, in a rather standard, and yet quite close, analysis of the most cautious way in which Derrida uses the word, “is,” Wolfrey [1988: 56ff], following Derrida, argued emphatically that deconstruction cannot be equated with, or made into, a kind of methodology. It is because, Wolfrey explains, what Derrida “shows” or his sentences “mark” is the “the (very) movement of disjoining [...] which refuses or resists the authority of “is” [57, (my insertion)]”; he then goes on to say that “I am *observing* the dislocating of which Derrida has spoken; the dislocating of a desired meaning by the very event of trying to articulate that meaning [57].” This leads to another observation that Derrida’s way of using “is” can be understood as an application of Heidegger’s *sous rature*; “placing the word under erasure would mean writing the word and then placing a cross over it, while *keeping the word visible* [57-8].” When I use the word, “observe,” in this text, what I mean by it does not seem to be radically different from what Wolfrey has in mind when he uses it. In order for any act of introspection to be rendered possible, there has to “be,” or at least “remain,” an object of observation, whether real or fictive, namely, *the visible*, as he says, of the invisible; otherwise, a reference, or even an allusion, to a residual metalevel insight into the visible of the invisible would remain absolutely and unequivocally impossible. This is the

the impossible. Hence, again, the twofold thesis on the possibility and impossibility of deconstruction.

The aporetic of double bind is systematically disturbing, and at the same time, strangely stable; systematically disturbing because it paralyses the faculty of propositional judgement, and strangely stable because the deconstructive mode of paralytic analysis remains always already within the discursive structure of double-thinking. That deconstruction is, seen from a structural point of view, an act of “doubling” as opposed to singling (out) or tripling, as it were, is a highly relevant point. There is a formal reciprocity between the epistemology of aporetic and its cor-responding ontology, i.e. between the way in which Derrida deals with the aporia of double thinking in the course of his “perhaps transformative” meta-reflection and the way in which his milieu of thinking, as he emphasises passionately, is already constrained by the ontological origin of the double. This hypothesis of reciprocity gives rise to, and at the same time, renders incomplete or inadequate, Derrida’s “transformative” reflection: the hypothesis of reciprocity at stake enables the Derridian reflection to take place, and at the same time, limits the ambience of such kind of meta-reflection. This way, the reciprocity at stake comes to sustain the stability of the form of Derridian double-thinking.

The reflexive stability of the Derridian mode of thinking cannot, however, be neatly formalised, Derrida emphasises. In other words, according to him, deconstruction is not reducible to a set of “techniques”:

Q: Could one say that deconstruction is the techniques you use for reading and writing?

J.D.: I would say instead that this is one of its *forms* or manifestations. This *form remains necessarily* limited, determined by a set of open contextual traits (the language, the history, the European scene in which I am writing *or* in which I am

inscribed with all manner of more or less aleatory⁵ givens that have to do with my own little history, and so forth). But, *as I was saying*, there is deconstruction, there are deconstructions everywhere. What takes the *form* of techniques, rules, procedures, in France or in the West, in philosophical, juridico-political, aesthetic, and other kinds of research, is a *very limited configuration*; it is carried - and *thus exceeded-* by *much broader, more obscure and powerful processes*, between the earth and the world.

[Poi 368-9/357]

To rehearse Derrida's points, the reason why deconstruction is irreducible to an identifiable or objectifiable set of techniques is as follows: although deconstruction takes some "necessarily limited forms," such forms are numerous and open to temporality, and what generates such various forms of deconstruction is a kind of ahistorical, meta-form thus remaining both generative and elusive. What remains invisible, i.e. unknown, to a deconstructive thinker, here Derrida emphasises, is the very unfolding "process" of deconstruction's formal manifestations. This process, according to him, is so "broad, obscure, and powerful" to such an extent that it always already resists being objectified or formalised. (My reading of Derrida so far has been pointing to a possibility of gaining an objective and formalistic understanding of this level of obscure formality, and we will see shortly how this possibility can be further explored. At this point, we will continue to stay on Derrida's line of thinking.) Deconstruction therefore, he claims, is a global event rather than a local episode, the meaning of "global" and "local" taken in both the theoretical and pragmatic senses; the experience of deconstruction is deemed theoretically global in the sense that we cannot "step back," like Husserl the transcendental phenomenologist, from the domain where deconstruction takes place, inasmuch as we are "always-already-there"; it is also pragmatically global in the

⁵ This passage has been introduced earlier [1.32], where I discussed Derrida's use of the word "aleatory," as in "aleatory given" and "aleatory strategy."

sense that it takes place “everywhere” in every domain of worldly livelihood. This line of thinking naturally leads to the following thought:

Q: So deconstruction is not just the critical activity of a literature or philosophy professor in a university. It is a historical movement. Kant characterised his age as that of the critique. Can one say we are in the age of deconstruction?

J.D.: Let’s say the age of a certain *thematics* of deconstruction, which in fact receives a certain name and can *formalise itself up to a certain point* in methods and modes of reproduction. But deconstructions do not begin or end (*ne commencent ni ne finissent*) there. It is certainly necessary but still very difficult to account for this intensification and this passing into theme and the name, into this beginning of formalisation. [Poi 369/358]

It is, as Derrida affirms, difficult to account for the ways in which “the formalisation” of deconstruction begins. On this type of “formidable question [LJ 391/4]” that asks what “the form of deconstruction” is, which, as he says, “all his essays” attempt to address [LJ 391/4], I will, none the less, focus my attention; I will reflect on this formidably “difficult” problem, which, he allegedly endeavours to work out; I will focus on this blunt object of thought, on this formidably aporetic “*problema* [Pas 26-7/10⁶]” which “lies ahead,” which asks “head on” whether or not deconstruction is formalisable, deconstruction taken as a discursive system operated on the basis of a set of pragmatic and rhetorical strategies. Accordingly, our task that “lies ahead” is to disclose an ultra- or meta-formalistic dimension ubiquitously

⁶ “*What is at issue is the concept of... and knowing whether...*” What is implied by an expression of such an imperative order? That one could and one should tackle a concept or a problem frontally, in a nonoblique way. There would be a concept and a problem [...] that is to say, something determinable by a knowing (“what matters is knowing whether”) and that lies before you, there before you (*problema*), *in front of you*; from which comes the necessity to approach from the front, facing towards, in a way which is at once direct, frontal, and head on [*capitale*], what is before your eyes, your mouth, your hands [...], there, before you, like an *object* pro-posed or posed in advance, a question to deal with, therefore quite as much a *subject* proposed (that is to say, surrendered, offered up: in principle one always offers from the front, surely?, in principle.).

embedded in the structure of, and restricting the ambit of, Derrida's deconstructive practice of philosophy. The question that needs to be addressed is: to what extent can this ultra-formalistic dimension of deconstruction be, in turn, thematised or problematised, in other words, elaborated in an appropriately deconstructive manner?

In the course of pursuing this task further, what I intend to demonstrate is not that deconstruction, taken as a certain peculiar form of meta-critical discourse, is, after all, completely reducible to a type of modernist notion of "project," i.e. a project with a foreseeable end and a set of clear and distinct objectives, the kind that Descartes has envisaged; nor is it my intention to conclude that deconstruction, taken as a textual strategy of subversion, is, after all, a philosophical manual where logical techniques of complication are illustrated. My claim, less extensive than this type of "formidably" sweeping claims, shall be only that this question of formalisability of deconstruction is, after all, less "formidable," less threatening and difficult than Derrida seems to suggest.

What I would problematise to a certain extent, to be more specific, is Derrida's self-understanding of what he does with this "Derridian" thing, called "deconstruction"⁷. The problem I am pointing out is Derrida's heavy reliance on an axiomatised force of (double) negation; dominant in his discourse, as we have discussed it earlier, is the discursive force of self-reflexion which can be, in turn, decomposed into a certain set of the recursively applied, formalistic rules of negative thinking. I identified this force of formalised self-abnegation as the most crucial element in the deconstructive "turn" of thinking, which "rigorously" regulates its twofold movement, that is to say, which tightly supervises its own move "in the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end [MP 7/7]," i.e. its "aleatory" move. This move, every time it takes place, is therefore a carefully calculated, pre-meditated one taking place in a "bottomless (*sans fond*) chessboard [MP 23/22]";

⁷ Derrida renounces, and must renounce for a strategic reason, the intellectual ownership of "deconstruction" easily associated with a proper name, Jacques Derrida, [see TOJ 15 for Derrida's most recent and fierce denial]. However, my interest lies in specifying exactly what it is that which he refuses to name and claim. We will touch upon this topic shortly.

this, as I have been arguing, and will continue to argue, is a move of anticipation rather than precipitation.

Read in this context, the following remarks Derrida makes are highly problematic, and problematic in a very interesting way. When faced with a necessity to communicate, a necessity to define deconstruction in such a way that it can be translated into a foreign language, into a language (the Japanese language) completely heterogeneous to the Indo-European linguistic family, Derrida does the following: after having decisively and perhaps successfully eliminating all possible accounts of what deconstruction *is* by affirming that, “in spite of appearances [...] it is *neither* an analysis *nor* a critique *nor* a method *nor* an act by an individual *nor* an operation by any collective subject [LJ 391/3],” he suggests that it should rather be understood as an event, as a singular event that, by definition, merely “takes place.” From then on, he tests the following account, which is closest to, although not exactly *is*, his own idea of what deconstruction is supposed to be, or rather, what it is supposed to *do*.

Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organisation of a subject, of even of modernity. *It deconstructs it-self. It can be deconstructed [ça se déconstruit.]* The “it” [ça] is not here an impersonal thing that is opposed to some egological subjectivity. *It is in deconstruction* (the *Littre* says, “to deconstruct it-self [*se déconstruire*]... to lose its construction”). And the “*se*” of “*se déconstruire*,” which is *not* the reflexivity of an ego or of a consciousness, bears the whole enigma. [LJ 392/4]

Here is an enigma. This “enigmatic” passage of thoughts, however, can be used as a clear piece of evidence that shows again what Derrida thinks deconstruction is not. It is clear, from the passage above, that he definitely objects to the reading I am proposing in this study, namely, the contention that the kind of reflexivity operative “in” deconstruction can be reduced, to a certain extent, to “the reflexivity of an ego or

of a consciousness.” The whole enigma, this single word, “*se*,” bears and cherishes, as Derrida himself acknowledges, he does not know. Nevertheless, the range of this “whole enigma,” which, by definition, is unknown to the one who remains puzzled, is defined, albeit negatively, by Derrida’s single affirmation: what he does know in fact, as he says, is that, at least and in any case, the “*se*” of “*se déconstruire*” is not a marker of egological self-reflexivity. The claim Derrida makes here regarding the reflexivity of deconstruction is that the kind of auto-operative reflexivity that this enigmatic word “*se*” marks out is to be understood from some hitherto unknown perspectives other than from the banal and predictable perspective, i.e. from the perspective of egological subjectivity. Derrida’s message is clear: the reflexivity of deconstruction operative in deconstruction is *not* to be understood as the egological self-reflexivity: at least and in any case whatsoever, deconstruction is, “in spite of appearances,” *not* this type of an egological event.

Why “*in spite of appearances?*” One must ask head on: why not?, why this denial?, why this determination?, why this reservation? About the validity of this determinate move Derrida makes, about the soundness of this self-understanding of Derrida, I remain sceptical. I doubt that Derrida can sustain this position, for the set of reasons explained earlier in chapter 2 [2.2⁸], where I highlighted the organisational meta-reflexivity of his text in order to argue a case of Derrida as a contrived, playful, self-parasitic, and epistemologically-oriented writer. What is being pointed out here again, against Derrida’s claim, is that, insofar as his authorial control of the text, i.e. his egological self-reflexivity, plays a conspicuously crucial, if not completely decisive, role in the actual production of his self-reflexive texts bearing his proper name, his emphatic remark that the reflexivity of “*se*” of “*se déconstruire*” is not egological, is problematic; the fact that Derrida allows for all other possible readings but this reading, i.e. an egological reading of deconstructive reflexivity, can be interpreted, further in this regard, as another manifestation of his authorial

⁸See the concluding part of 2.2 which has already introduced some part of the paragraph quoted here.

self-reflexivity in the sense that Derrida the author shields his authorial identity from the probing gaze of his readers - to explore further down this rather political or even psychoanalytic path of reading Derrida is, however, beyond the narrow scope of the current study. By throwing a spotlight on the element of textual reflexivity pervasive in the writings of Derrida, what I aim to show is restricted to the following point of contention: in view of the authorial centrality of Derrida's "I" of "I write", the discursive position of deconstructive subjectivity, if locatable as such, can be said to be closer to the zero point of Descartes's "I" of "I think", i.e. the reflective subject, than to any other possible positions where "*unheard-of* thoughts (*pensées inouïes*) [VP 115/102]" have already gone "beyond" any absolute knowledge (*au-delà du savoir absolu*) [VP 115/102, "parenthesis in original"]."

One needs to "risk"⁹ looking naïve and banal, when there is no alternative to doing otherwise, that is to say, when one cannot but begin with meditations on this type of "pre-critical" appearance; Derrida himself emphasises this necessity from the beginning of his grammatological project [OG 90ff/61ff]. This necessity to brave pre-critical naïveté, on our part as well as on his, is justified in so far as the Derridian force of reflexion draws, as we have been pointing out repeatedly, on the reflecting subject's inability to differentiate between pre-reflective naïveté and ultra-reflective rigour, between pre-critical empiricism and post-critical transcendentalism; notably, Derrida's discourse is most sensitive to this very inability, to the consequential failure of philosophical self-reflection to reach its teleologically projected dimension - the transcendental ground where the reflective self remains self-identical and self-same.

Provided that "the very meanings of 'critical' and 'pre-critical' themselves emerge only from the history of (Kantian) transcendentalism [Watson 1985: 241]" [see also Krell 1988: 173], the question of how to differentiate, particularly after Kant, the "precritical" text, e.g. a psychologically ego-centric, in other words,

⁹ to which word, Derrida, for whom "everything is a matter of strategy and risk [MP 7/7]", would not have any fundamental objections; see also [VPT 20/16] where he stages a risk involved in an attempt to define deconstruction, that is, a risk involved in a double writing, a writing with(out) oneself.

“egologically self-reflexive”, text, from the critical or post-critical text, i.e. the transcendental, impersonal text that has got nothing to do with the empirical ego, remains a pressing issue for Derrida, of which he himself is very well aware. It is precisely this problem of undecidability that poses a problem to, and acts as a driving force behind, Derrida’s quest for the originary “ultra-text.” The word, “ultra-text,” has been taken from the inaugural part [OG 90/61] of *De la Grammatologie*, where Derrida articulates precisely this concern:

To see to it that the beyond does not return to the within is to recognise in contortion the necessity of a *pathway*(*parcours*). That pathway must leave a track (*un sillage*) in the text. Without that track, abandoned to the simple content of its conclusions, the *ultra-text* will so closely resemble the precritical text as to be indistinguishable from it. We *must* now form and *meditate upon the law of this resemblance...*the erasure of concepts ought to mark the places of that future meditation. [OG 90/61]

The “ultra-text” here, “the beyond that does not return to the within,” can be read as an irreducible meta-form of reflexive self-critique that haunts, if not necessarily “instituting” in the constructive sense of the word, the quasi-transcendental site of Derridian reflection; “quasi-transcendental” in the sense of being neither simply empirical nor strictly transcendental, but acting “as if” transcendental. To paraphrase what Derrida says, the dilemma with which he is concerned is the following: how to create a text without having its starting point already trapped in between the empirical naïveté of the “pre-” and the transcendental pretentiousness of the “beyond”. That is to say, the question Derrida addresses here is: how is it possible to understand the self-reflexivity of auto-deconstruction as something more than, and other than, merely egological, and at the same time as something less than, and other than, strictly and “purely” transcendental? Derrida’s suggestion [OG 90/61] is to allow the auto-deconstruction of philosophy to take place

between “a short-of transcendental criticism (*un en-deçà de la critique transcendente*)” and “a beyond of transcendental criticism (*un au-delà de la critique transcendente*),” which he locates as “the ultra-transcendental text.” The phenomenal resemblance between the putatively pure and impersonal kind of transcendental reflexivity and the egological and psychological kind of reflexivity - which has been referred to, in the passage quoted, as “the law of resemblance” - therefore, according to Derrida, becomes a pressing issue for him, i.e. the object of his “meditation”. An illusion, a mere appearance, whether it is a transcendental or precritical one, is the starting point of Derridian meditation, and Derrida’s starting point after Kant is nothing and nothing but this “risk” of dwelling upon the illusion. What needs to be dwelt upon, as Derrida suggests, is the very law of illusion, the very “law of resemblance” between the precritical discourse and the transcendental one, which manifests itself only through its phenomenal appearance.

In view of Derrida’s “must” appearing in “we *must* now form and meditate upon the law of this resemblance,” we cannot but ask the following question. Why then, in practice, does Derrida, the auto-self-deconstructive meditator, avoid dwelling on the very resemblance between the putatively ultra-critical logic of auto-deconstruction and its rather banal, egologically self-reflexive form, manifested as such in his text?, on the mimetic complicity between the ultra-critical force of deconstruction (which is supposed to govern any “future” meditations) and the pre-critical self-reflexivity of the ego (which appears to produce the egological scenes of meditations)? Why is it that Derrida refuses to dwell on this particular aporia of undecidability by affirming in a definitive - unreflective and assuring - manner that “the “*se*” of “*se déconstruire*” is *not* the reflexivity of an ego or of a consciousness”? Why does Derrida “turn away” from this question, not unlike his Valéry [MP 327-63/275-306]?

A vigilant reading of Derrida is required. Needed in particular, Derrida here taken not only as a thinker of vigil but as a strategic thinker in vigil, is a strategically polemical reading of Derrida. Much needed is a closely investigative reading of

Derrida. We ought to think like Derrida when thinking against Derrida, in order to expose, effectively, the strategic aspects of his thinking; if not necessarily like the Derrida who has a penchant for playful "complexification [Caputo 1996:32]" or "obscurantism [Po 435/429]", but like the "rigorous" Derrida, the seemingly obscure "traces" of whose thinking carry a certain internal, methodological consistency, to wit, like Derrida, the reflective rationalist.

Viewed in this regard, it come as no surprise that Derrida thinks like Descartes, i.e. as a Cartesian, when defending Descartes against Foucault's contention that Descartes's tightly reflective, rationalistic system of thinking does not leave a room within itself in which the incomprehensible kind of irrational madness can represent its madness in its own voice. Derrida, turning against Foucault, puts himself in the position of his Descartes, Descartes, the "ultra-critical" thinker who includes (rather than "excludes," as Foucault contends) the element of hyperbolic madness in his system of reflective cogitation by means of rationalising or economising it; to rationalise or economise madness in this case means to have it serve its discursive function, which is to keep pointing to a reflective thinker a meta-reflective dimension of a given thought. What underlies Derrida's inclusion of the element of madness in Cartesian rationality is therefore Derrida's positive evaluation of the regressive force of Cartesian cogitation. To follow Derrida in this line of reading Descartes, Descartes's hyperbolic concern with the hypothetical evil genius can be understood, for instance, as a manifestation of philosophical or philosophised paranoia, which is rigorous in itself, seen from a methodological point of view - the unstoppable, meta-reflective movement of Cartesian cogitation *is* maddening, Derrida emphasises. Surely, Derrida's philosophical alliance with Descartes on this particular point can be viewed as a strategic device facilitating his counter-attack on Foucault, but Derrida's strategy, deployed in this essay, of assuming a philosophical personae of Descartes, the self-critical, reflective thinker, is more than a useful tactic in the sense that it originates from a broader context of Derrida's Cartesianism, which the current study seeks to elucidate. The point to note

is that Derrida is always already a Cartesian, a thinker who privileges the hyper-critical rationality of vigil and reflexion over the lack of such reflective consciousness, and the Derrida-Foucault debate is only illustrative of this Derrida, effectively. The fact that what Derrida himself described as a certain “maddening” force of reflection becomes a basis of textual productivity¹⁰ is indicative of the extent to which Derrida internalised methodological Cartesianism as a norm of thinking.

What I am proposing in this study is a “Derridian” reading of Derrida, where one pays, as Derrida does, a knowingly “prejudicial [ED 53/32]” attention, a hypercritical and hyperbolic attention, to specific ways in which the Derridian law of cogitation produces and maintains a certain, formally constrained and materially prolific, Derridian project(s) of deconstruction(s). This way of being loyal to the author is also Derridian. This line of approach will not be unlike that of Derrida’s subversive reading of Foucault on Descartes, a reading in which Derrida detects the hidden “trap” of rationalist undercurrent that runs through, and determines the direction of, the Foucauldian anti-rationalist gestures. Following this Derrida, one needs to attempt to bring to the fore a fundamentally logocentric set of implicit presuppositions and originary values which gives rise to the consistently intrametaphysical, Derridian economy of anti-metaphysical gestures. Amongst those traditional metaphysical resources on which the Derridian economy of writing appears to draw, what I am singling out in this project is the metaphysical value of Cartesian self-reflexivity, and what I have been analysing is the Derridian mode of appropriating “reflexive and appropriable essence of the *cogitatio* [Carraud 1987: 79].” Although there is a wealth of analyses of reflexive elements in the writings of

¹⁰The key theme of an interview article, “A “Madness” Must Watch Over Thinking” subtitled, “Refusing to build a philosophical system, Derrida privilege experiences and writes out of “compulsion” [Po 348-395/ 339-364, “the scare quote in the original”],” is the following: “[...] madness, a certain “madness” *must* keep a lookout over every step, and finally watch over thinking, as reason does also. [374/363]” Derrida’s positive evaluation of a reflexive kind of madness can be read as a point of contention implied in the following remarks: “To say madness without expelling it into objectivity is to let it say itself. But madness is by essence what cannot be said; it is the “absence of the work (*l’absence d’œuvre*)” as Foucault profoundly says [ED 68/43].”

Derrida, deconstructive readings of Derridian reflexivity seem to be still much needed, not to mention a Cartesian reading of Derrida. The next section [3.3] where the secondary literature relevant to the key concerns of the current project is reviewed, addresses this issue.

3.3 Literature Review

What deconstruction is not? Everything of course!

What is deconstruction? Nothing of course! [LJ 5/392]¹¹

David White's short article [1992] on a form of analytic or logical complicity between the Aristotelian rule of non-contradiction and the Derridian deconstructive strategy, is insightful. White's central question is carefully formulated and well to the point: "what would a Derridian critique of the formal aspect of reason have to address in order to be persuasive? [120]" The same question can be asked differently in the following manner: what would be the minimal rule, the ultimate formal-logical presupposition, which renders the Derridian form of arguments intelligible? The upshot of White's answer, which I fundamentally endorse, am simplifying crudely, and will develop further, is this: the "deconstructionist must presuppose the (Aristotelian) principle of contradiction [125]" in order to perform self-contradictions, in other words, in order to render the paradoxicality of deconstructive performance intelligible. This thought can be linked to the following working hypothesis of the thesis: central to any typical deconstructive (non-)thought is the Cartesian experience of self-fragilisation, which is acquired through repeated acts of self-negation or self-contradiction.

In a curious manner, White's point bears significant relevance to some well-established views regarding the Derridian "form" of thinking, stated by a group

¹¹ "*Ce que la déconstruction n'est pas? Mais tout! Q'uest-ce que la déconstruction? Mais rien!*"

of commentators, which I would designate, for the sake of convenience, as the second group of Derrida readers. Well argued, in common, by the commentators comprising this group, which includes Karl Apel, Andrew Bowie, Peter Dews, Manfred Frank, Rodolphe Gasché, Irene Harvey, and Christopher Norris¹², is the thesis that Derrida appropriates the formal resources of deconstruction broadly from the German idealist tradition of speculative dialectics in which the pervasive image of the self is the reflective subject reflecting upon an object. A “curious” thematic connection, as I said earlier, between White’s insight and some opinions articulated by the second group of thinkers thus clustered, is found in that what generates the problem of self-reflexivity, viewed from a formal-logical point of view, is the Aristotelian axiom of non-contradiction; observe that the aporia of self-reflexive self-negation arises as soon as one aims to gain an absolute self-understanding by means of performing *and* overcoming self-negation in a totalising manner. The problem of “understanding” the enigmatic thesis such as “my thesis is that there is nothing in what I am saying,¹³” can be made purely formal, in the sense that one needs nothing other than the very sentence in order to see the structural or formal problem of semantic paradox involved in stating the proposition. The aporia here is structural or formal, first, in the sense that the “I” that performs self-negation by putting the same “I” in the double bind of equivocation does not have to rely on the external world in order to either verify or falsify the truth claim it makes in such a sentence, and second, in the sense that the consequential undecidability of the truth value of the sentence is therefore not an empirical problem but a logical one. Put simply, involved here is a “syllogistic rationality [White 1992: 125]”: at stake is a logical dilemma¹⁴ rather than an

¹² see Apel [1993], Bowie [1993: 67-81], Dews [1995: 1-33], Frank [1989, 1992: lecture 15-18, 26-27], Gasché [1986], Harvey [1986a], and Norris [1987].

¹³ Refer to the opening quotation of this chapter.

¹⁴ In an illuminating discussion of Derrida’s deconstruction as a mode of literary criticism, Maria Ruegg [1979] makes a similar point;

Derrida, at the very least, offers the possibility of a non-mystical literary criticism, capable of nonetheless dealing with the logical anomalies so characteristic of literature. The logic of “deconstruction” [...] is [...] a relatively sane, workable logical paradigm, roughly analogous [...] to the indeterminate logic that underlies the development of modern science. [203]

empirical uncertainty. The Derridian rule of equivocation puts the “I” in a double bind, and as we have been seeing repeatedly, this rule is recursive throughout, and generative of, his performatively self-contradictory sentences. In a similar manner, as have discussed it earlier in chapter 1 [1.31], Descartes’ *cogito* argument, demonstrated as such, also points to the performative dimension of this type of self-implicatively self-destructive utterances. Between Aristotle and the German Idealists there is Descartes, and after the German Idealists, Derrida is staging a Descartes again, albeit in an oblique way.

Given that it is with this formal-logical paradox of the infinite regress of the self that the German idealists were preoccupied, given the history of the metaphysics of the Cartesian abyss¹⁵, any re-staging of the self-inflicted, discursive trauma of self-reflexivity would hardly be an original endeavour, particularly in the late twentieth century, unless something new is presented in the exposure of that metaphysical malady of the self. It appears to be no coincidence, seen from this perspective, that the second group of Derrida commentators focuses on the affinity, both logical and genealogical, between the German Idealists and Derrida. To indexicalise their subtle and rich analyses, in accordance with the particular and unique focuses of their delicate deliberations, several sub-branches of this group could perhaps be mapped out in the following way:

- (1) A parallel has been drawn between contemporary francophone “Derridian” thinkers and the German Idealist thinkers by Karl Apel [1993], who points to some shared, “formal” problems involved in the “totalising critique of reason” that they undertake in a similar manner. Apel sees deconstruction as a form of immanent critique of reason in which reflective reason attempts to overcome its idealist

Also interesting to note is her next point [204]: the fact that Derrida plays a relatively safe game makes him rather a “conservative thinker” “despite his revolutionary logic”; This view, as we have seen already in the previous chapter, corresponds to mine.

¹⁵ Steven Watson [1985] has provided a useful and comprehensive survey on this topic.

limits by using its self-critical resources. And the problem Apel highlights is that of paradoxical self-implication: the hyper-critical dimension of the self-critique of reason cannot be posited outside the totality of reason thus criticised. Insofar as this aporia of self-implication, which one can also find in the German tradition of transcendental idealism (Fichte or Schelling, in particular), recurs consistently in Derrida's deconstructive trajectory of thinking, deconstruction remains, Apel argues, thus implicated in that tradition.

- (2) Both Irene Harvey [1986a] and Christopher Norris [1987], in a similar way, highlighted Derrida's Kantian affiliation by disclosing the transcendental or meta-critical motif found in the major writings of Derrida. According to these commentators, both Kant and Derrida engage in an internal formal critique of reason in that both of them are concerned with explicating, by means of delimiting, "the conditions of the possibility of metaphysics." The difference between Kant and Derrida, however, lies in that the latter goes on further to point out the conditions of the "impossibility" of metaphysics as well; a case in point is Derrida's sustained attempt to show how the ideals of "pure" metaphysics or "pure" reason are "always already" "contaminated" by the empirical conditions of its historical possibility - e.g. the inevitable use of empirical or figurative language for an articulation of putatively trans-linguistic, pure metaphysical ideas such as self-presence or self-consciousness.
- (3) Derrida's complicit alliance with, and yet, more importantly, simultaneous break with, the thinker of "absolute spirit," Hegel, has been brought into light, as a result of Rodolph Gasché's reflections [1979¹⁶, 1986] on the "quasi-" transcendental infrastructure of the Derridian quasi-dialectic, which, he emphasises, is not reflexive. Gasché locates Derrida in the Hegelian tradition of dialectical thinking in which the relationship between the self and other are

¹⁶ Critical responses to this position have been voiced by a host of commentators, who, in common, articulated the fatal risks involved in Gasché's attempt at a philosophical contextualisation of the elusive and un-thematisable Derridian discourse; for example, see Bennington [1988: 11-60], Norris [1988: 213-227], and Dews [1995: 115-150].

conceived on the basis of the “subject-object” model of thinking; it is the unifying force of absolute spirit that ultimately resolves the constitutive conflict between the subject and the object. Gasché’s interpretation of Hegel is idealist and subjectivist (as opposed to materialist and objectivist) in that he sees Hegel as a thinker of self-same identity, and therefore, Hegel’s “absolute spirit,” as a manifestation of reason’s self-same reflexivity. While arguing the case of Derrida as an ambivalent thinker who relies on, and at the same time calls into question, this idealist tradition of dialectical self-reflection, Gasché stresses the point that, insofar as Derrida is more concerned with the conditions of the “impossibility” of self-same reflection than with those of the possibility, he is to be viewed as a thinker of “heterology,” of “the other” - first, as a thinker of difference who attempts to go “beyond” the phenomenological terrain of self-same thinking, and second, as a thinker of originarity who attempts to go “deep” into the constitutively heterological infrastructure of self-same reflection. Derrida’s recognition, however, of the impossibility to think the other in suitably “heterological” terms (impossible, due to the unavailability of a suitably radical, new vocabulary that can represent this “un-heard of” thought, put otherwise, due to the inevitability to rely on the pre-existing, traditional vocabulary of self-reflection, which, however, cannot “properly” convey the irreducible and unique otherness of the other) forces him to borrow the theoretical and tropological resources from the traditional, Hegelian model of self-reflective thinking that institutes the self-other relationship in a tightly dialectical way. Hence, the “quasi”- dialecticity or transcendentalism of Derrida’s heterological trajectory: Derrida has no choice, here Gasché emphasises, but to lay out his deconstructive thesis, “as if” it were a kind of dialectical or transcendental discourse, describable in traditional philosophical terms and identifiable as such, when, in fact, it is not.

- (4) Andrew Bowie [1993: 67-81] and Peter Dews [1995a: 1-33, 1995b: 115-148], in common, have articulated some formalistic similarities between Derrida’s

solution and Post-Kantian solutions to the problem of the infinite splitting of the reflective self, for example, between Derrida's *différance* and Schelling's Being of identity: *différance*, insofar as it is "a difference that is different from *itself* [VP/SP 129 (trans.)],” presupposes the ultimate reference of self-same identity, i.e. a deferred being, which is a derivative from Schelling's notion of Being. In this sense, they argue, Derrida's deconstructive thinking can be regarded as a variant of Schellingian identity-thinking, according to which differences are seen as manifestations of the self-differential movements of being.

- (5) Both textually substantial and analytically disciplined are Manfred Frank's illuminating thematisation of Derrida's blind adherence to the Husserlian model of reflective self-consciousness [1989, 1992: Lectures no.15-18, 26-27] and David Wood's powerful critique [1988, 1989: 118-153, 1990] of Derrida's implicit commitment to Husserlian transcendentalism, Derrida's impassioned "folly [1988: 67]." Both Frank and Wood see Derrida as a Husserlian phenomenologist, and criticise Derrida for not being critical enough in "overcoming" the Husserlian tradition of phenomenological thinking of the self; although Derrida's subversive reading of Husserl [VP] - in which Husserl's "pure," transcendental ground of the self are "contaminated" by Derrida's linguistic empiricisation of such ground - appears to be an anti-Husserlian, counter-transcendental move, what makes Derrida a fundamentally Husserlian phenomenologist, nevertheless, is the fact that he systematically clings to a reflective, and more specifically, meta-reflective mode of thinking, which underlies Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, i.e. Husserl's method of transcendental "epoche" by which all the affirmative judgements are suspended. An important implication of this line of reading Derrida is that his thematic preoccupation with the motif of empirical contamination can be viewed as a paradoxical expression of his irreducible, philosophical desire for purity: that is to say, from Derrida's point of view, and by his standards of rigour, Husserl's transcendental self is not pure enough. It is the

demand of this level of purity, implicitly staged in Derrida's aporia-driven, meta-reflective move, that Wood describes as a "folly".

- (6) Simon Critchley's reading of Derrida [1992] in line with, and at the same time, set against, the Husserlian trajectory of phenomenology, more sympathetic than Frank and Wood's, analyses ways in which Derrida problematises the self-reflexive circularity of the proto-Hegelian movement of Spirit. In this reading, Critchley focuses on the concept of "closure (*clôture*)," which, he argues, Derrida appropriates from Heidegger's notion, "the end of metaphysics." This analysis traces the genesis of Derrida's deconstruction back to the phenomenological tradition¹⁷ that starts from Hegel and Husserl, and ends with Heidegger; and then it explores the possibility to read Derrida's meta-reflective move as an attempt to break out of such modern, metaphysical tradition of subject-oriented thinking in which the image of reflexive closedness of the self-same self prevails. As a way of highlighting the non-reflexive aspect of Derrida's deconstructive endeavour, Critchley makes a thematic connection between Derrida and Levinas, taking them as thinkers who attempt to think infinity as something other than a dialectical negation of totality.

A third¹⁸ camp can be set up alongside the second. A more ahistorical and formalistic reading of Derrida also suggests - without failing to mention Derrida's

¹⁷ rather than to German Idealism; see (4)

¹⁸ It needs mentioning, albeit briefly, that there is also a literary approach to Derrida's self-reflexivity, "literary" not in the sense of being non-philosophical, but in the sense of dealing with the topic from an ostensibly rhetorical or textual point of view. Notably, early Paul de Man [1978, 1979a: 119-131; 135-159, 1983: 102-141, 1984] identified the literariness of deconstruction as the textual effect of self-reflexivity at work. Deconstruction is, therefore, for de Man, a "tropological" movement of self-reflexivity. The self-reflecting subject is, he argues, inextricably entangled with the narrative structure [1979: 28ff] so that the impossibility of the subject to posit its locus outside the intralinguistic structure of text becomes the very theme of literature; hence, de Man's definition of literature as a self-reflexively delimited, self-deconstructive totality. Notably, Romantic discourse, as he also suggests, is an example to which this concept of literature is applied. Consequently, he highlights the epistemological failure of the reflective subject; he says "[...] the self-reflexive moment of the *cogito*, the self-reflection of what Rilke calls "*le Narcisse exhausté*," is not an original event but itself an allegorical (or metaphorical) version of an intralinguistic structure, with all the *negative* epistemological consequences it entails [1979: 152]." Amongst recent writings on Derrida's self-reflexive strategy, studied from a literary or rhetorical point of view, outstanding works are, to name a few, Marian

thematic affinity with the German idealists in one way or another - that something resembling the Russellian problem of meta-set theoretical paradox [Lawson 1985: 90-124, and Priest 1994, 1995: 235-245] or, put more loosely, the second-order awareness of self-referential paradoxes [Bennington 1993: 19ff, Kearney 1991: 170-211, Wood 1980, Luhman 1993] generates the “postmodern,” “self-reflexive predicament [Lawson 1985],” which the Derridian discourse shows performatively [Lawson 1985]. A kind of formal-logical analysis of Derrida’s “logic of supplement” has been undertaken splendidly by Dupuy [1990, 1994], who I quoted at length earlier in the introduction; his reading focuses on the fundamental self-referentiality of Derridian mode of self-deconstruction which renders the Derridian discourse structurally “autonomous.” Most recent commentaries touching on the formalistic aspects of Derrida’s texts, to name a couple of outstanding works, are M. J. Devaney’s perceptive criticism of the Derridian brand of “postmodern logic” as “the innocuous logic of both/and [1997: 13-06],” and Hobson’s analysis of the Derridian subjectivity caught up in a *mise en abyme* [1998: 67-83]. Also illuminating is Dews’ discussion of some cases of “destructive self-implication” staged in Derrida’s performative writing [1995b: 92, 90-114].

3.4 Stepping In : Why Descartes?

What all these commentators mentioned above have already shown in common is this: if my point about Derrida’s self-reflexivity is banal, so is Derrida’s programmed excuse to draw on self-reflexivity¹⁹. None the less, although there is a

Hobson on Derrida’s replications [1998: 59-106], Julian Wolfreys’ reading of Derrida on Valéry [1988: 119-137]. Also interesting is Wolfrey’s analysis of the hauntological moments in Iain Sinclair and Joseph Conrad [1998: 138-184].

¹⁹ For example, consider the critical import of the following series of questions, which, firstly, underplays the philosophical or ontological significance of Derrida’s deconstructive endeavour, and secondly, raises doubts about its novelty value as a philosophical enterprise: what would be the philosophical worth of Derrida’s self-reflexive style of writing? Why does he have to “perform” self-contradictions?; what does he achieve by taking a risk of entering into a realm of nothing and nothing but a “narcissistic,” “complacent”, “baroque,” “banal,” romantic discourse of outdated semantic paradoxes [some words quoted from Bennington 1993: 19-20]? What does his self-referential play with

wealth of commentaries addressing the question of how to make out strategic aspects of Derrida's self-reflexivity, still needed is a more detailed map of reading, a more elaborate analysis of the uniquely Derridian mode of self-reflexivity and its textual functions as a marker of authorial presence. In the words of Derrida who says, when faced with a charge of nihilism, that "this interest needs to be deconstructed *in their turn* [Kearney, interview with Derrida, 1984: 124]," in the words of Derrida who repeats, "this misinterpretation (of deconstruction) ... its interests must be deconstructed *in their turn* [1984: 124]," I should like to say, following Derrida, that Derrida's interest in exploiting his own self-reflexive habit of thinking, in turn, is to be deconstructed; after all, as Derrida reminds us, "you will never have done (*fini*) with that suspension itself [Sur 121/77]." Simply, my study intends to chart a rather detailed map of Derridian labyrinth of thinking, slightly more detailed than those already available.

If this approach sounds already and still banal, a stronger motive behind this way of reading Derrida can be found in the second, and more specific, concern of the thesis, which is to discover the unique form of a textual alliance or affinity between Descartes and Derrida. A general groundwork for this reading has been established in the foregoing chapters, including introduction, and a more elaborate analysis of Derrida's reading of Descartes will be offered later in Chapter 5, after a detailed study of Cartesian reflexivity, which I will undertake shortly in the next chapter. The rest of the current chapter shall be concerned with showing how a parallel reading of Descartes and Derrida can be located within the existing map of Derrida scholarship, in other words, where the gap is and why it needs filling.

As a way of gaining a formal understanding of that which gives rise to the uniquely Derridian "traces" of reflexive thinking, I began with a cluster of working hypotheses [two propositions in 1.2] which suggest that there is a formal-structural

words show apart from the player's serious self-indulgence in an aesthetic pleasure of vertiginous regression into the self? What is so un-classic or un-banal about this seemingly anachronistic, traditional move? What is old, and what is new, in Derrida, in this ageless child "caught up in an abyssal thought of inheritance [FM 191]"?

affinity between Derrida's practice of deconstruction and Descartes's performance of the *cogito*. This observation itself cannot be claimed as solely mine. The same kind of argument has already been put forward by, for example, Calvin Schrag [1985: 25-32], who pointed to a significant thematic link between the Cartesian subjectivity and the deconstructive subjectivity; his concise and illuminating remarks on Derrida's Cartesian affiliation, which he made in the course of thinking through the problem of spotting the discursive locus of deconstructive subjectivity, touch exactly on the key issues with which I have been concerned. To quote him at some length:

[...] This invention of the subject, orchestrated as an argument for the ego-cogito, proceeds within the framework of a strategy of systematic doubt [...] The strategy of systematic doubt allegedly delivers an indubitable cogito, intuitively grasped in *every performance of thought reflectively directed to itself*. Thought presupposes a "who" that is thinking; doubt presuppose a "who" that is doubting.

There is, we suggest, a similar play operative in the strategy of deconstruction, yielding not the truth of Cartesian subjectivity, the "I think, therefore I am", but rather *a deconstructionist modification - "I deconstruct, therefore, I am"*. In dismantling subjectivity as a positional centre and a zero-point consciousness, peeling away the sedimented layers of philosophical construction, some species of claim upon *the subject remain in force*. The very strategy of deconstruction *serendipitously* reinvents the subject. [...]

[...] One is compelled to ask and re-ask the question about the "who," that the Cartesian way founders. And it founders principally because the inquiry standpoint is still geared to a search for a *res, a residuum*, a centre of consciousness, *a stable presence* that somehow supports the processual stream of thought. [26]

One of the key points I have established in Chapter 1 and 2, and will labour again in Chapter 5, is that the discursive locus of Derridian subjectivity, as Schrag also argues, is characteristically Cartesian. None the less, again as Schrag observes it, this does not either automatically or straightforwardly imply that the former is strictly or completely reducible to the latter; inevitably, a deconstructive “modification” of the *ego-cogito* argument, as he put it, is bound to take place in the Derridian version of the *ego-cogito*. Up to this point, I am with him.

The point I do not share with Schrag, however, is regarding the mode of Derridian modification: “I deconstruct, therefore, I am.” This formulation is subtly, and yet deeply, misleading. To use Schrag’s mock-Cartesian formula again, my alternative suggestion would be to say, instead, that “there is something (*res*) that deconstructs, thereby, there is something (*res*) that remains haunted,” or, put more straightforwardly, that “I deconstruct, there(fo)re, I remain haunted.”

This is to imply, the further question I address in this project, unlike Schrag, is why Derrida still remains “Derridian” as opposed to Cartesian, despite his implicit loyalty to the Cartesian establishment of philosophy; the question I am focusing on here is why the understanding of this “implicit,” Cartesian dimension of deconstruction has to be an extremely nuanced one. By characterising Derrida as a “radical” Cartesian [chapter 2], I argued that there is a significant thematic continuity, and a unique form of complicity, between Derrida and Descartes. This unique form of textual alliance between the two thinkers - an intriguingly entangled, therefore, inevitably *complicated*, relationship between the two - has not yet been clarified to a satisfactory degree,²⁰ in my view and to the best of my knowledge. This

²⁰ In fairness, it needs mentioning that there is a wealth of discussions surrounding Foucault vs. Derrida debate on the status of Descartes’ madmen. To name a few, Christopher Johnson offered a reading of Derrida’s notion of infinity in this context [1993: 45-48], which is, more or less, directly relevant to my project, and particularly to Chapter 4. McKenna, as I have introduced him earlier, briefly discussed the presence of the Cartesian demon in Derrida’s discourse [1992: 54ff]. To introduce a substantial work of scholarship in which Foucault-Derrida debate is dealt with as a central topic, there is Roy Boyne’s socio-political approach to the otherness of “the other side of reason,” i.e. the problem of madness [1990], and an article by Deborah Cook who contends that Derrida’s reading of Foucault is deeply flawed and perverted [1990: 164-174]. Although all these commentators, in various ways, have touched upon the issue with which I am concerned, none of them has specifically or exclusively focused on the

“aporetically” inseparable link is what my reading of both thinkers seeks to uncover, and a survey of relevant literature suggests to me that still in demand is a textual explication of this particular dimension. Accordingly, I locate my study of Derrida somewhere between the first [White 1992] and the second group of Derrida scholarship.

I make, however, no claim of the ownership of this site. By marking the locus of my discourse this way, I am not implying that this site of reading has been overlooked in Derrida readership; what I am pointing out is rather that it has not been looked through enough, and certainly not thoroughly enough. The Descartes-Derrida link has been much alluded to rather than fully articulated. Derrida’s thematic affinity with (what they now mostly perceive as dead-end) philosophies of self-consciousness, and notably with Husserl’s phenomenology of self-consciousness, has already been well pointed out. For example, my reading may well be taken as a small sequel to a couple of powerful readings by Frank and Wood, who alert us, the gullible readers, to the Derridian trap of self-reflexivity, namely, the trap of transcendental privacy or solipsism; as Wood says, Derrida’s problem is that, at the most fundamental level, he takes the risk of merely repeating “Husserl’s most logocentric commitments to transcendental solipsism...in *Cartesian Meditations* [1990: 124]²¹.” Apparently hinted, and yet only hinted in this line of reading, is a further, and arguably more originary, homological link between Descartes and Derrida. However, Wood has not dwelt upon this particular branch of thought in that text, nor elsewhere, to the best of my knowledge. A very similar point regarding the Husserlian legacy in Derrida has also been made in Frank’s powerful critique of Derrida’s adherence to the proto-Cartesian Husserlian model of reflective self-consciousness [1989: Lecture 15-18: 229-294, 1992: 218-234] and his concomitant preoccupation with the Husserlian “pure self-referentiality [1989: 230],” the absurdity or inappropriateness of which, according to Frank, Derrida “demonstrates [1992: 232]” well, but does not

direct Descartes-Derrida alliance, which this study is investigating.

²¹ I introduced this phrase earlier in 1.323.

problematise radically enough [1992: 234]. Again, here in this picture, Descartes is present, and yet, only implicitly so.

Interestingly enough, in a short survey of the Cartesian tradition of self-introspection where “the optical model of the spiritual eye reduces Being to being an object [Frank 1992: 222]” for the cognitive subject to see, Frank emphatically talks about “a *step* taken by Descartes [1992: 222]” which, as he rightly observes, determines the subsequent path of proto-Cartesian philosophies of self-consciousness. Yet, again, this had to be mentioned only as a passing remark, as Frank’s destination lay elsewhere. To stop, however, at a passage that holds particular relevance to our thematic concern:

A future candidature of the subject is already prepared by the *announcement* of the optic model (Being discloses itself in its truth to an ideational gaze): if being true depends upon the “view,” upon awareness, then it is only one more *step* to the subjectisation of philosophy; the view must be thought as *self-reflexive* and attributed to a subject as its owner. This is *the step* taken by Descartes. For him, thinking (*cogitare*) is the deed of a thinker: of an I that thinks. Thinking acquires the indubitable evidence which is peculiar to it only in the first person singular form of inflection: *cogito* [...] The thought of the self-reflexivity of thinking makes evident the *transition* from the subject of thinking to the nominalised “I”, as Foucault rightly saw. [222-223]

What interests us is this single “step” Descartes has taken. The self-reflexive attribution of the ownership of the world *of* the I *to* the I *by* the same I that thinks, as is indicated by the triple appearance of the I, Frank also points out, is characteristic of Descartes’s shift to cogitational mode of thinking: this move amounts to the Cartesian “turn” to the self. The whole world, once transposed into the realm of self-consciousness, is at the risk of being consumed -“reduced to being an object”- by the *cogito*, therefore, also destroyed - reduced to nothing - by the *dubito*, a derivative

from the *cogito*. This *turn* to the self, this *reversion* to the self, has given rise to the methodological consolidation of the reflective model of self-consciousness. With this inward turn of the Cartesian mind, Western metaphysics saw the herald of its Cartesian epoch. At this point, let us then turn to, and step into, Descartes.

4. Self-reflexive Economy of Descartes's *Cogito*

The aim of this chapter is offer a detailed and descriptive account of the self-centredness of Descartes's cogitational model of thinking; accordingly, all the other remaining, and more comprehensive, aspects of his *cogito* argument - e.g. the onto-theological basis of Cartesian cogitation which Descartes himself expounds particularly in the second half of *Meditationes*, the historical context in which he proposed the argument, the impact of his thought on the epochal formation of philosophical modernity, etc. - will be excluded from the object of analysis. The following account of Descartes is concerned strictly with the descriptive analysis of the methodological aspects of the movement of the *cogito* isolatable as such, and neither with the evaluation of the method of cogitational thinking in relation to its historical precedents nor with the comparison of the method with other possible, non-cogitational modes of thinking. Consequently, no historical claim or reference will be made regarding the significance of the *cogito* argument, except for occasional references to Husserl, who, notably, saw Descartes's cogitational model of thinking as the "prototype of philosophical self-reflection [1931]".

The focus of analysis, thus limited, is the inaugural inwardness of the *cogito*, i.e. the initial mode in which Descartes "steps" into a private realm of reflective self and consequently makes a reflexive move towards the *ego* of *ego-cogito*. A step-by-step explication of the reflexively constituted, interiority of Descartes's cogitational self will be undertaken in the belief that it will lead to a further clarification of the meta-reflective, and in this sense structurally Cartesian, dimension of Derrida's deconstructive trajectory, which the thesis as a whole seeks to show in the end and has already been explored in part I.

4.1 Descartes's Turn: An Opening-up of the Site of the *Cogito*

4.11 An Inward Turn: Reversion to Self

< 4.111 Looking >

For a Cartesian meditator, to meditate is to “look,” to look rather than to listen or feel, for instance. One does not necessarily take this meaning in a metaphorical or metaphysical sense; the literal or physical dimension of the meaning of the word, “look,” is also to be noted. For example, *De la Dioptrique* begins with the following passage, in which Descartes confers an exceptional status on the faculty of sight above all the other sensory perceptions: “the conduct of our life depends entirely on our senses, and [...] sight is the noblest and most comprehensive (*le plus universel*) of the senses [Op, AT VI 81/CSM I 152].” Descartes’s passion for independent observation and his love of travels as an urban modern man, depicted in *Discours* [especially Part I, AT VI 6-11/CSM I 113-116, and Part II, AT VI 16-18/CSM I 118-119], also illustrate the avid interest he took in the business of “looking” in daily context. Also, in the preface to the French edition of *Principia Philosophiae*, he expounds the virtues of his philosophy of “clear and distinct” ideas and principles. He draws the readers’ attention, as well as his, to “the benefits of *this* philosophy [Pri, AT IXB 2/CSM 179]” by using the following simile: “living without philosophy is exactly like having one’s eyes closed without ever trying to open them [Pri, AT IXB 3/CSM 180].” What is there in his version of philosophy, to which we are urged to reopen our eyes? What kind of vision is being referred to here? What is it that can be beheld by the other kind of eyes, i.e. “an inner eye”? This question is to be kept in mind, as we move on.

Let us begin with the difference between worldly knowledge (*la connaissance*) and philosophical wisdom (*la Sagesse*) that Descartes recognises. *La connaissance* is practical or informative knowledge [Pri, AT IXB 3-4/CSM I 180], the kind of knowledge that a blind man, when deprived of his stick or tactile access to external objects, would not possess [Op, AT VI 84-87/ CSM I 152-153]; *la Sagesse*,

the kind of knowledge that a blind man can also possess, is the “knowledge of the truth through its first causes, [...] of which philosophy is the study [Pri, AT IXB 3-4/CSM I 180].” What matters in the acquisition of *la connaissance* is the mind’s sensitivity towards, and its receptivity of, “differences” in the world. The more differentiated one’s knowledge about things in the world, the more learned one becomes. The encyclopaedic possession of knowledge, that is, the acquisition of worldly knowledge of differences *per se*, however, does not interest Descartes so much as the right application of, or the ultimate worth of, the body of knowledge thus gained. For Descartes, the knowledge about the Other, the Other taken as a totality of empirical world thus objectified, is useful or meaningful when it contributes to the reflecting subject’s acquisition of wisdom, *la Sagesse*, which includes self-knowledge. For example, if there is any virtue either in the acquisition of worldly experiences or in encounters with other human beings, according to him, this virtue can be assessed in terms of its level of contribution to the increase of “the knowledge of the truth through its first causes.” Accordingly, he suggests that it is not only desirable but, more importantly, necessary for a man of experience to expose himself as much as possible to alien environments other than his own familiar habitat [Dis, AT VI 16-19/CSM II 118-120]. He argues for this necessity on the grounds that the worldly knowledge of multifarious forms of life delivers one from the pitfall of partial knowledge and prejudices; this type of ignorance, often encapsulated in the form of cultural parochialism, leads to a more serious blindness to the truth of universal humanity. In a similar vein, for a man of learning, to have more than one teacher is a necessity; it is a sure way to cultivate a mind of one’s own, to become intellectually independent of any particular schools of thoughts.

The distinction between *la connaissance* and *la Sagesse* thus given, we will then narrow down the focus of our reading on self-knowledge, taking it as that which contributes to the acquisition of what Descartes means by philosophical wisdom. The point to be stressed in the course of analysis is the economy of self-reflexion operative in Descartes’s reversion to the reflective self. By the economy of

self-reflexion in this context, I mean the following: in Descartes's case, the knowledge of the other, the knowledge about the world as a whole, matters insofar as it contributes to the economy of the same; the one whose interest lies in searching for the truth, e.g. in acquiring secure self-knowledge, Descartes's exhortation goes, ought to make good use of this type of worldly knowledge. The telos here is self-knowledge, therefore, to know the other is only a means to this end. Satisfaction of the desire for self-knowledge involves, in the Cartesian model, the active engagement with the other rather than the passive withdrawal into the world of selfhood in the face of an encounter with the other. The explicitness of the way in which Descartes articulates his desire to make a project of his life by using - digesting or consuming, metaphorically speaking - the other, is illustrative of the fundamental self-interestedness of Cartesian discourse. That which becomes pronounced in this picture of metaphysics is then the subject of the metaphysical desire, i.e. a voice of the metaphysician, rather than metaphysics per se.

Observe, in the passage quoted below, that Descartes uses a motif of "excess" in presenting his version of philosophy. With this, a point worth noting further is that the difference between "pleasure" as the gratification of bodily needs and "satisfaction" as the visio-mental fulfilment of desire for philosophy parallels that between *la connaissance* and *la Sagesse*. Descartes invites us to open our eyes to the Cartesian theatre of philosophical desire, active and insatiable:

[...] Living without philosophy is exactly like having one's eyes closed without every trying to open them; and the *pleasure (le plaisir)* of seeing everything which our sight reveals is in no way comparable to the *satisfaction (la satisfaction)* accorded by knowledge (*la connaissance*) of the things which philosophy enables us to discover. [...] The study of philosophy is *more* necessary for the regulation of our morals and our conduct in this life than is the use of our eyes to guide our steps [...] The brute beasts, who have only their bodies to preserve, are continually occupied in looking for food to nourish them;

but human beings, whose most principal part is the mind (*l'esprit*), should devote their principal efforts to the search for wisdom, which is the true food of mind. [...] No soul, however base, is so strongly attached to the objects of the sense that it does not sometimes turn aside and *desire some other, greater good* [...], a *higher* good, [...] this supreme good [...] is nothing other than the knowledge of the truth through its first causes, that is to say wisdom, of which philosophy is the study. [Pri, AT IXB 3-4/CSM I 180]

< 4.112 Looking Again: Searching >

For Descartes, “to philosophise” means to “start with the search for first causes or principles,” the one who can be called a philosopher in the “proper” sense of the word, according to him, is the one who begins with this “search¹” [Pri, AT IXB 2/CSM I 179]. What interests us, specifically, is the meaning of the word, “search.”

Descartes’s “search” for *la Sagesse* is an “inward” move in the sense that *la Sagesse* is to be found in the mind; “First, the first causes or principles must be so clear and so evident that the human mind cannot doubt their truth when it attentively concentrates on them [Pri, AT IXB 2/CSM I 179].” For Descartes the sceptic, it is possible that, after all, he may not even have the physical eyes with which to see things, for the faculty of sensory perceptions is, after all, unreliable; and what makes it possible to entertain this sceptical thought is a hypothesis of the existence of an inner eye, a kind of eye that looks mentally as opposed to physically. His meditation on the wax is a good example:

What is this wax which is perceived by *the mind alone*? It is of course the same wax which I *see*, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the

¹ Also take note of the title of his incomplete dialogue, “*La recherche de la vérité par la lumière naturelle (the Search for Truth by means of the Natural Light)*” [Rch, AT X 495-527/CSM I 400-420]

same wax which I thought it to be from the start. And yet, and here is the point, the perception I have of it is a case *not of vision* or touch or imagination [...] *despite* previous appearances - *but of purely mental scrutiny*; and this can be imperfect and confused, as it *was* before, or clear and distinct as it is *now*, depending on how carefully I concentrate on what the wax consists in. [Med, AT VII 21/CSM II 31]

In a similar way, the third *Meditatione* opens with the wilful elimination of the senses, which leads to the deliberate isolation of the mind in self-regard. The inward turn of the mind gives rise to a model of thinking that is introspective, therefore, self-referential. With this move, an act of self-intimation becomes more violent and explicit. Here, self-harm and self-love take place at the same time in the unfolding of self-will;

I will now shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw all my senses. *I will* eliminate from my thoughts all images of bodily things, or rather, since this is hardly possible, *I will* regard all such images as vacuous, false and worthless. *I will* converse with myself and scrutinise myself more deeply; and in this way *I will* attempt to achieve, little by little, a more intimate knowledge of myself. [Med, AT VII 34/CSM II 24]

In order to fulfil this “will,” Descartes looks *again*, and, this time, looks *into* himself. With this unique force of the “again,” the external world, in its entirety, comes to be transposed into the meditator’s consciousness. With this great *turn* to himself, the whole world becomes folded within the “inner space²” inherent in the

² Richard Rorty [1979: 49-50] points out that Descartes (and Locke) described an observer fundamentally different from anything in Greek and medieval thought. Rorty pays a particular attention to the meta-space of self-reflection secured in the Cartesian mind, describing it as “an inner space in which *both* pains and clear and distinct ideas *passed in review before an Inner Eye*,” he adds that “the novelty was the notion of *a single inner space* in which bodily and perceptual sensations [...] were *objects of quasi-observation*.”

single gaze of the meditator. The “entire earth is to be shifted” into the world of the mind; and what makes this “shifting” possible is the hypothesis of an immobile point, a zero point of departure-cum-destination, a vantage point of view, from which the interior world of the self (as opposed to the world of exteriority and the other) can unfold. Accordingly, Descartes is led to identify and characterise this point of necessary fiction as an “Archemedian [Med, AT VII 24/CSM II 16]” view-point. What Descartes narrates in his autobiographical versions of philosophy, notably in *Discours* and *Meditationes*, is that which happens in, and appears to, his mind, the moment he reverts to himself, the moment he turns to his version of philosophy.

4.12 A Circular Turn: Return to Self

< 4.121 Directing >

The Cartesian version *of* the “I”, most minimally defined, can be conceived as an introspective reversion *to* the “I.” What remains as a tropological effect in this act of turning is a sense of “direction,” initial and minimal. The “directed-ness” of the pure ego is also what Husserl points out as the first aspect or effect of the *cogito*:

[...] after the manner of the *cogito*, the subject “directs” itself within it towards the intentional object. To the *cogito* itself belongs an immanent “glancing towards” a directedness which [...] springs forth from the “Ego,” which can therefore never be absent. [Husserl, *Ideas* §37, 109]

The mental object, toward which the ego is directed, is, in Husserl's term, the “intentional object.” In a similar manner, Descartes also, for example, in *de la Diaoptrique*, brings to the fore this dimension of intentionality; I am referring to the section where he discusses the “inner” vision man is capable of possessing [Op, AT VI 84-86/ CSM I 153-154]. “Intentional forms” in the mind, he argues, are present in the minds of both the sighted and the blind. Therefore, conceived as the metaphysical

being's meta-physical capacity to look into and inside itself, this form is considered to be ubiquitously inherent in all human minds. This form, accordingly, is that which configures "the imagination of the philosophers." This peculiar capacity of the human intellect, according to Descartes, enables one to direct one's attention to the inner world of self-consciousness away from the external world;³ it is in this way that a blind man can "see" without his physical eyes. Husserl's view on this matter is not much different from Descartes's in its basic contention: "[...] one's mental eye [...] belongs to the *essence* of the *cogito*, to the act as such [Husserl, *Ideas* I §37, 109]." The Cartesian turn to the "I," characterised this way, is initially an act of pure intending, of "inward directing." The *cogito* is, firstly, a "turning-towards." It is a mental event that happens in the mind, when the mind actively turns towards itself, to which the intentional objects correspond correlatively. In this sense, it is an "objectifying turn of thought", as Husserl defines it accordingly [Husserl, *Ideas* §37, 110].

Arguably, the problem of "direction", i.e. where to turn to?, is the most central and pressing issue for Descartes, whose central interest lies in gaining self-certainty, metaphorically speaking, in protecting himself from the risk of precipitation. Descartes in a dream finds himself reading a line from an ode of Ausonius: "*Quod vitae sectabor iter?* (What road in life shall I follow?) [*Cogitationes Privatae / Observations*, AT X 216/CSM I 4fn]." The centrality of this dream experience to the life of Descartes is reflected, almost directly, in his articulation of the key question of *Discours*: what is the "right way to conduct my reason"⁴?

³ Perceptual activism is one of the most distinctive features of Descartes's introspective model of thinking. If positivists' or empiricists' eyes are that which only "sees" passively, the Cartesian eyes, in contrast, are that which "looks" actively. Ian Hacking summarises this difference in the following way: "Cartesian perception is the active rendering of the object transparent to the mind. Positivist seeing is the passive blunting of light rays on opaque, impermeable "physical objects" which are themselves passive and indifferent to the observer. [Hacking 1975: 33]"

⁴Read also:

[...] the diversity of our opinions does not arise because some of us are more reasonable than others but solely because we *direct* our thoughts along different paths and do not *attend* to the same things. For it is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to *apply it well*. [...] Those who proceed but very slowly can make much greater progress, if they always *follow the right path*, than

[...] A single man is much more likely to hit upon truths than a group of people.
 [...] Unable to choose anyone whose opinion struck me as preferable to those of all others, I found myself as it were *forced to become my own guide*. Like a man who walks alone in the dark, I resolved to proceed so slowly, and to use such circumspection in all things, that even if I made but little progress, I should at least be sure not to fall. [Dis, AT VI 16-17/CSM I 119]

Descartes's man, "a single man," a master of himself, is the kind of person willing to brave the night of epistemological abyss, and to do so by himself; he turns against the public, and turns, instead, to himself, looking for a single direction leading to a good life. Where is the single light, "the natural light of reason," which will illuminate the "darkened intellect (*caligantis ingenii*)" of mine? [Med, AT VII 52/CSM II 36], asks Descartes.

< 4.122 Idio >

A turn of the ego towards the "non-absence" of the *ego cogito*, as Husserl puts it, is singular, first, in the numerical sense of the word; the ego involved in this turn is numerically singular, although its derivatives can be made plural, as in alter-ego, for example. Despite the numerical singularity, this ego is not *yet* "a person", i.e. a unit of protected privacy, a publicly numerable human entity. At this inchoate stage of subject-formation, the singularity of Descartes's "a man who thinks" is conceptually closer to the idiotic individuality or idiosyncrasy of Deleuze's "idiot," "the conceptual personae (*le personnage conceptuel*) [1991: 60-81/61-85]" than to the solitude or autonomy of a reflexive being;

those who hurry and stray from it. [Dis, AT VI 2/CSM I 111]

[...] The idiot is the private thinker, in contrast to the public thinker (the schoolman [*le scholastique*]): the teacher refers constantly to taught concepts (man-rational animal), whereas the private thinker forms a concept with innate forces that everyone possesses on their own account by right ("I think"). Here is a very strange type of persona who wants to think, who thinks for himself, by the "natural light." *This idiot is a conceptual personae*. The question "are there precursors of the cogito?" can be made more precise. Where does the persona of the idiot come from, and how does it appear? Is it in a Christian atmosphere, but in reaction against the "scholastic" organisation of Christianity and the authoritarian organisation of the church? Can traces of this persona already be found in St. Augustine? [...] In any case, the history of philosophy *must go through* [*passer*] these personae, through their chances according to planes and through their variety according to concepts. Philosophy constantly brings conceptual personae to life; it gives life to them. [Deleuze 1991: 60-61/62]

The *first* entertainment of the idea of *cogitare* separates the "I" of "I think" from the world. The *first person* conjugation of the verb, *cogitare*, separates the "I" from other persons; it is the "I" that "*cogitat*," and no body else. The "I" that makes this utterance is not even solipsistic or solitary yet in any active senses the 'solo-' conveys. In other words, this "I" that appears to the reflective self as a "strange type of persona," not yet as "me," remains as yet a third person, an "it." The "I" as an "it" is merely being "idiotic" as opposed to "solitary" or "autonomous," for solitude or autonomy requires self-identity, while idiocy does not. The thought behind this distinction is that to be solitary and autonomous, minimally defined, is to be in a self-identified state of one's separation from the world. The ego's solipsistic concerns with itself will occur, therefore, only after this type of "idiotic" being can be self-identified as such. Having not yet been self-identified as such, at this seminal stage of cogitation, the idiotic ego remains merely idiosyncratic; it has not yet become autonomous. In other words, it does not yet appear to itself in any "clear and

distinct" forms of self-understanding. The "idiot" is a figure that, whilst being alienated from the reasonable public, is not yet capable of deliberative self-alienation.

< 4.123 Auto >

What the "idiotic" ego lacks, in comparison to an individual ego, is temporal awareness. The first person *present* conjugation of the verb, *cogitare*, separates the *present* "I" from all the other "I"s of the past and future. This act of self-eventuation takes place in the *present* tense. This particular moment of self-presence, this moment thus singled out, is the "now-point" of self-reflexion. At this stage, the ego of *ego-cogito* is no longer passive; it is active. It is not merely or passively alienated from other beings in the world; rather, it actively alienates itself from the world, and converts its worldly alienation into a particular instance, into a particular event in the new world of interiority, in a new world "of its own." The moment when a self is present to itself, coincides with, and corresponds to, the moment when it actively presents itself to itself. Each moment the *cogito* is pronounced by the speaking subject, there occurs an irreducible act of self-presencing. The first person present conjugation of *cogitare* leads the grammatical subject to recognise the moment of self-presence in the very experience of conjugation. In this sense, we can characterise this move the *cogito* effects as a move from the pre-reflexive presence of a self to the reflexive self-presence of a self to itself, which corresponds to a move from "idio" to "auto."

This particular, or rather particularising move is that which automatically singles out the moment of conjugation, the moment of reflective curvature of *cogitare*. In this sense, this act of "singling out" is an act of singularisation, in other words, a move to self-authenticate one's particularity. This move of automatic self-authentication marks out the unique force of the *ego-cogito*: each time *cogitare* is conjugated in the first person present-tense, the *ego-cogito* is truly and always a self-reflectedly and self-closedly authentic event. A movement of self-reflexivity can be traced here: it is that which bridges and underlies the passage from presence to

self-presence, from the idiotic presence of a self to the automatic self-presentation of such a self.

Thereby, the word, “self-reflexion,” can be understood in the following twofold manner. First, self-reflexion is a descriptive name for that which the self-reflective self experiences procedurally at the time of its first person present-tense cogitation: it is a procedural notion, signifying a “movement” of thought. Second, it also marks the happening of a constitutive experience, an experience that constitutes and completes the circular movement of a dialectic of reflexion: it refers to a constituted phenomenon of thought-effect. In Descartes, particularly in his *Regulae*, these two aspects are clearly differentiated from each other, articulated as such in two different sets of terms.

To note the two different senses of self-reflexion is important in that the conceptual “shift” from *idio* to *auto*, along with the consequential movement of the self from presence to self-presence, can be further clarified on the basis of that difference. This section [4.123 Auto] will be devoted to an elaboration of the difference at stake. The aim of the analysis is to gain a structural understanding of the way in which Descartes uses, as I will show towards the end of this section, the automaticity of self-reflexion as the justificatory basis of his *cogito* argument.

When the self-reflecting ego pursues the task of self-identification, what the ego experiences, as Deleuze puts it, is an experience of “passing through.” There is an experience of passing through a series of steps of thinking. Descartes describes the steps of thinking involved in self-reflexion as “a train of reasoning [...]” where “a long chain is connected to the first [R, AT X 369-370/CSM I 15-16].” Note that self-reflexion takes the form of an inferential or deductive “chain.”

The necessity for a thinker to follow these steps of thinking is what Descartes emphasises in *Regulae*, particularly in the opening pages. When undertaking a project, Descartes emphasises, one needs to have an aim, a set of clearly laid out objectives [Rule 1], which, as he continues to argue, needs to be accompanied by the right application of the appropriate methods [Rule 3-4]. Having introduced the word,

“step,” in Rule 5,⁵ he then continues to use it with a notable frequency [Rule 5-6] until he stops at Rule 7, where he suddenly decides to recast this series of “attentive” and “careful,” “detailed,” and “discriminating” reflections [R, AT X 384-7/CSM I 23-24] into a “wholly uninterrupted sweep of thought [R, AT X 388/CSM I 25]”; again in Rule 8 he says, “we must stop at that point [R, AT X 392/CSM I 28].” Then, he continues to dwell on this fixed thought until he reaffirms in Rule 11⁶ the need to discontinue the inferential reasoning when the necessity arises. Following Descartes, we will dwell on this necessity to discontinue, on this moment of completion.

Interestingly, in Rule 11, which acts as a summary account of the preceding ten rules, Descartes expands on the irreducible difference between “a movement of the mind” as a “passage” in the mind and the “completion” of the movement;

[...] inferring one thing from another involves a kind of *movement* of our mind. In that passage, then, we are justified in distinguishing intuition from deduction. But, if we look at deduction as a completed process, as we did in Rule Seven, then, it no longer signifies a movement but rather the *completion* of a movement. [R, AT X 407/CSM I 37]

Cogitation, understood as a procedural term, is a dynamic “movement” of reflection; in contrast, when viewed as a mental entity thus acquired, it is a “completion” of the movement, therefore, a static moment of reflexion, self-identified as such by means of a higher level self-reflexion. If the mind “*passes*

⁵ The whole method consists entirely in the ordering and arranging of the objects on which we must concentrate our mind's eye if we are to discover some truth. We shall be following this method exactly we first reduce complicated and obscure propositions *step by step* to simpler ones, and then, starting with the intuition of the simplest one of all, try to ascend through *the same step* to a knowledge of all the rest. [R, AT X 380/CSM I 20]

⁶ If, after intuiting a number of simple propositions, we deduce something else from them, it is useful to *run through* them in a *continuous and completely uninterrupted train of thought*, to *reflect on their relations to another*, and to *form* a distinct and, as far as possible, *simultaneous* conception of several of them. For in this way our knowledge becomes much more certain, and our mental capacity is enormously increased. [R, AT X 407/CSM I 37]

through” the steps in the first phase of cogitation, in the second phase, it “*runs* through [R, AT X 407/CSM I 37]” at once, at one go, “at one glance [R, AT X 370/CSM I 15],” “as if it were at a single glance [*Second Set of Replies*, AT VII 110/CSM II 110].” The discursive space held between Rule 5 and 7 is different from that between Rule 7 and 11: the former is concerned with the opening up of the space of reflection, and the latter, with the reflexive closure of the same space. To explain this more, the former kind of reflection is possible as the mind has the capacity to go through deductive steps of reasoning. Then, it must “stop” at a certain point where the movement becomes “superfluous,” as Descartes says [R, AT X 392/CSM I 28] in Rule 8; it must stop when the thing appearing in the mind turns out to be “something which the intellect is *unable* to intuit sufficiently well”; in other words, this process of reflective reasoning must stop where the intellect cannot perceive any longer the thing at stake at a “single” glance. The train of thoughts must return to its station, to its destination, to its conclusion, to its envisaged end of project; this necessity, in turn, marks out the intellect’s inability to pursue transgressive or infinite reflections. We will return to this moment of failure shortly after.

What renders possible the first movement of reflection is the force of deduction; in turn, the second movement of returning becomes possible, when guided by the instant spark of intuition⁷. The “steps” which deduction follows are inferential, “botched together [R, AT X 368/CSM II 14],” thereby, multiple and complex; and by contrast, the step which intuition takes is im-mediate and simple, in other words, singular. As Stephen Gaukroger observes,

⁷ In what follows, my discussion of Descartes’s intuition focus exclusively on the first intuition, *I exist*; accordingly, the second intuition, *God exists*, will not be dealt with. I will confine my discussion to a set of problems pertaining to the existence of the thinking “*I*,” the problem Descartes formulates and deals with before deciding to involve God in his human drama. The second intuition: *God exists*, he claims, is inextricably linked to the first. The rationale for this is the deductive derivability of the second from the first. I borrowed the distinction between the first and second intuition from Gueroult and Grene [Grene 1985: 18]

Descartes tells us that in the case of lengthy inferences we must go through the inferential steps more and more quickly so that in the end we grasp the premises and conclusion in one instantaneous step. In doing this we assimilate inference to the canonical case of *intuitus*. [1989: 58]

With the mind's deliberative act of delimiting its own terrain of self-reflexion, describable as an act of reflexive closure as opposed to an act of reflective opening, the clarity, distinctiveness, unity, and simplicity of self-reflexivity becomes privileged over its shadow, obscurity, elusiveness, and complexity⁸. Prescribing the Rule 7, Descartes re-directs his attention to "the obvious transitivity of connections [Gaukroger 1989: 58]" amongst ideas within that closure, not to the complicated contiguity amongst ideas thus related to each other in infinite branches of the Porphyrian tree⁹.

This decision, this turn, this return to the starting point, this reflexive closure of the mind, is not without a justificatory basis. We will now look briefly at how Descartes justifies this need for reflexive stability, in other words, in what way he is led to the conclusion that the reflexive closure of the self, as opposed to the experience of "stepping" beyond, is to be the last step to take. In short, the question is: why this return, this rush to the starting point? Why rush, now? The task is to

⁸ For example, take note of the opening passage of the Rule Four which issues the following warning: "So blind is the curiosity with which mortals are possessed that they often direct their minds down untrodden paths, in the groundless hope that they will chance upon what they are seeking [R, AT X 371/CSM I 15]."

⁹ Eudoxus: [...] If, for example, I were to ask even Epistemon himself what a man is, and he gave a stock reply of scholastics, that a man is a "rational animal," and if, in order to explain these two terms (which are just as obscure as the former), he were to take us further, through all the levels of which are called "metaphysical", we should be *dragged into a maze from which it would be impossible to escape*; [...] you see immediately that the questions, like the branches of a family tree, would rapidly increase and multiply. Quite clearly, the result of all these admirable questions would be pure verbiage, which would elucidate nothing and leave us in our original state of ignorance.

Epistemon: I am sorry you despise *the tree of Porphyry*, which the learned have always admired [...].

[Rch, AT X 515-516/CSM II 410, see translator's footnote]

elucidate the justificatory basis of his argument: what needs to be analysed is the self-supporting aspects of his trajectory. For this, I suggest we turn to the distinction Descartes makes between intuition and deduction *prior to* the prescription of the Rule 5. Already in Rule 3, he says,

By “intuition” I do not mean the fluctuating testimony of the sense or the deceptive judgement of the imagination as it botches things together, but, the conception of a clear and attentive mind, which is so easy and distinct that there can be no room for doubt about what we are understanding. Alternatively, and this comes to the same thing, intuition is the indubitable conception of a clear and attentive mind which proceeds *solely* from the light of reason. Because it is simpler, it is more certain than deduction, though deduction is *not* something a man can *perform wrongly*. Thus everyone can mentally intuit that he exists, that he is thinking, [...] The self-evidence and certainty of intuition is required not only for apprehending single propositions, but also for any train of reasoning whatever. [...] Hence, we are distinguishing mental intuition from certain deduction on the grounds that we are aware of a movement or a sort of sequence in the latter but not in the former, and also because *immediate* self-evidence is not required for deduction, as it is for intuition. [R, AT X 369-371/CSM I 14-5]

In the above, the distinction between intuition and deduction is clearly articulated, and there seems to be nothing fundamentally new in this passage that we have not noted earlier. None the less, those words I emphasised seem to invite further reflections. A threefold account of the conceptual elements of intuition shall be given: automaticity, infallibility, and immediacy - the aim of the analysis is to see how these notions are interconnected.

To begin with the automaticity or autonomy of intuition, intuition proceeds “solely” from the light of reason. Elsewhere, Descartes also stresses the autonomous aspect of intuition by affirming that it relies on nothing but the light of reason, which

“operates on its own [Rch, AT X 521/CSM II 415]”; then, he immediately adds that an argument based on good sense and intuition, with which the natural light of reason provides the human, is “less liable to go wrong” than an argument relying on a set of arbitrary “rules” of thinking, which tends to generate a long chain of reasoning, which, thereby, is more prone to errors. This shift of emphasis from the automaticity of intuition to the infallibility of it is exactly what takes place again in the passage quoted above. What I am highlighting here is Descartes’s discursive move in which he assigns an epistemic value to the automaticity of intuition: his point is that deduction, when properly based on intuition, can “not” go “wrong.”

The infallibility of intuition is, in turn, further explicated on the basis of the “immediacy” of intuition’s self-manifestation. Intuition is evident, according to Descartes, neither in view of, nor on the basis of, another piece of more fundamental evidence, but already evident in itself, therefore, self-evident. There are things that cannot be “explained” or “logically defined” further on a more fundamental axiomatic ground than on its own, but, can only be “demonstrated” solely by virtue of the natural light of reason, for they themselves are the products of solar reason [*A Letter to Mersenne*, 16 October 1639, AT II 596-7/ CSM III 139]; included in these “things which are very simple and known naturally” is intuition.

Note that, here again, Descartes’s gives the name, intuition¹⁰, to that which marks the limits of discursive meta-explanation. Similarly, he says, “I have no criterion for mine (my truths) except for the natural light [...] there are many things which can be known by the natural light, but which no one has yet reflected on [*A Letter to Mersenne*, 16 October 1639, AT II 596-7/ CSM III 139].” Observe further that what interests Descartes is an economy of delimitation rather than the problem of

¹⁰This is far from claiming that Descartes was the first one who discovered this truth about intuition, namely, intuition as a solution to infinite regress. (For a summary account of the historical background - the Platonic-Augustinian, in particular - that heavily informs Descartes’s ocular notion of “intuition,” see Cottingham [1993: 94-96]). In explicating the manner in which Descartes falls back on intuition and identifies it as the reliable and irreducible, epistemological ground of self-knowledge, the point I am making is, however, regarding neither the novelty of his move nor the banality of it; the point I am stressing here concerns the economic dimension of Descartes’s act of marking out the locus of intuition as such. What is meant by the economy of designation in this context will be shown shortly.

the limits. The limit-consciousness itself, for Descartes, is an epistemological resource for self-knowledge, not an ontological or existential predicament of the self: an experience of the limits, of the failure, gives him a chance to convert the very awareness of the limit into notions such as the axiomatic and the self-evident, namely, the “intuition” that cannot be negated further. Blaise Pascal’s rather sarcastic remark on the Cartesian economy of thinking sums up the line of argument we have been pursuing. He says:

In addressing itself only to the simplest things, this worthy science renders them *incapable* of definition by the same gesture that their simplicity makes them proper as its objects, *in such a manner* that their lack of definition is an *asset* (*une perfection*) rather than a drawback.¹¹ [Recit. Judovitz 1989: 95]

The Cartesian version of economy of reflexion operates on the basis of the primacy of intuition. The role of Cartesian intuition is regulative rather than generative; it allows Descartes to return to that which remains as one and the same, namely, the self-evident, every time the necessity arises to delimit the totality of referential chain of reflective reasoning. The need Descartes articulates here is a need for “a divine or transcendental referent to buttress the axiomatic [Judovitz 1988: 96],” as Dalia Judovitz puts it. This necessity to “buttress the axiomatic” by means of drawing on the natural light of reason, arises inevitably in Descartes’s system of cogitation, for his goal-oriented project requires that the ultimate threat of the regressive infinity of reflections be excluded. In order to ensure that, first, a reflective “train” of reasoning stops at a certain point, and second, the stationary point, in turn, acts as a secure starting point of projective regression, Descartes, in the end, has no choice but to appeal to a notion of truth conceived and defined in terms of what

¹¹ Pascal, Blaise, L.Lafuma (ed.) (1963), *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris; Seuil, p. 351

Gaukroger described as “a psychological clarity experienced by the knowing subject [1988: 55]”;

Truth must be taken as primitive in some context, but not in all, and this much can surely be *accepted with accepting reductionism*. Descartes's account *blocks off* further elucidation because it establishes the primitiveness of truth in too strong a way. Consequently, when we are asked to justify something fundamental, such as an inferential principle, we are *forced back* ultimately on to *a form of psychological clarity experienced* by the knowing subject.

With this appeal, the automatic becomes the simple and primitive, the simple and primitive becomes the obvious, and the obvious, the axiomatic¹². In this way, the act of self-clarification leads to, and amounts to, an act of self-validation. To volunteer to “accept” the necessary reductionism at a certain point is to acknowledge the failure of further reflection at that point. Seen from an economic point of view, this moment when the reflective self *acknowledges* its failure to move on is precisely the point where the self *knows* its limit, where it delimits its own reflective territory; thereby, this self becomes self-reflexively authentic to itself.

An act of performative self-delimitation - via reflexion - where the self performatively authenticates the founding value of its own intuition, cannot, however, be perceived as a valid discursive move by the other, unless there is already a communal consensus regarding the epistemological value of self-evidence and its concomitant, demonstrative powers. The fact that what comes to the fore at the beginning of *Discours* is the community of people with “good sense,” i.e. the

¹² For Descartes, intuition is the place where psychology meets logic, where the former is conflated with the latter. David Weissman [1996: 148, Essay 3] points out, rightly, that Descartes encourages “a *psychological* reading of his notion of truth: clarity and distinctness imply that the mind's eye is perfectly focused, and that truth is achieved when the matters to be known are presented, without meditation, to our inspecting minds”; however, as Weissman also goes on to argue, “confidence in their truth requires that clarity and distinctness should *also* be a *logical* test. We defend ourselves from error only as an idea of judgement is counted true because its negation is a contradiction.”

community that shares the natural light of reason, rather than a member of the community, i.e. Descartes himself, is telling: the delimitation of the community of the reasonable public is a discursive trap with which he later catches himself. When Descartes literally marks the limits of his discourse by saying that “I have no criterion for my truths except for the natural light¹³,” what he does discursively is therefore to affirm the powers of demonstrative reasoning; what he shows or “demonstrates” is that the human capacity for demonstrative reasoning is that which is “already” there in the intellect in the form of “natural light of reason.” The self-evident automaticity of demonstrative reasoning is what he axiomatises in order to validate his self-reflexive reversion to the thinking subject.

What Descartes's system necessitates, in this regard, is the last referent secured against the threat of the infinite regress of the reflexive self. That with which Descartes finally identifies this referent is intuition or self-evidence. The example of the intuitive understanding of the self he offers is the *ego-cogito*. What validates the *cogito* argument, “*cogito ergo sum*,” is the irreducible self-referentiality of the first person singular present act of self-reflexive cogitation, namely, I think (of myself as that which thinks): the validity of the *ego* of *ego-cogito*'s leap into its *sum* is maintained on the self-evident basis of the *ego*'s phenomenological adherence to its own awareness of self-presence, or rather, on the basis of the *ego*'s impossibility of being otherwise, that is, of the impossibility of it being self-absent. This force of natural reason, to which, as Descartes emphasises, the human reason cannot but be subject, guarantees and sustains the epistemological supremacy of the first person singular reflexive act of cogitation. Thereby, what remains, what remains for the self-reflexive *ego* to appropriate, is the self-reflexively “given” temporality, the now-point of the *cogito*, or to be more precise, the hypothesis of self-presence “taken” as a now-point, which corresponds to the grammatical time of the linguistic expression, “*cogito*.”

¹³ another example: “our mind is of such nature that it cannot help assenting to what it conceives clearly [A Letter to Regius, AT III 64/CSM III 147].”

This way, the self-reflexively economised hypothesis of a now-point endures; it endures whilst being sheltered in the “as long as.” Conclusively, what Descartes’s *cogito* argument shows and shows performatively boils down to this: as long as I am aware of myself, as long as I am capable of turning towards myself, I *cannot* be made *nothing*; *nobody*, *no* evil genius, can “bring it about that I am nothing *as long as* I think that I am something (*ut nihil sim quamdiu me aliquid esse cogitabo*). [Med, AT VII 25/CSM II 17],” Likewise, Derrida argues, as long as there is the “I” that is clearly aware of the ideas presently appearing in its mind, these ideas are something, “even though they may not exist anywhere outside me, (they) *still* cannot be called nothing [Med, AT VII 65/CSM II 45].”

To conclude: when the “I” of the *ego-cogito* performs the reflexive act of cogitation by attempting to articulate its ineluctable will to self-presence¹⁴, by attempting to substantialise the unavoidable hypothesis of self-presence, the “I” is converted from an “un-self-identified idiot” into “a self-identified idiot,” namely, into an individual, a singular person, an autonomous entity of thinking. In this sense, this type of self-conversion amounts, firstly, to the performative self-identification of the numerical distinctiveness of the ego, and therefore, secondly, to the automatic self-authentication of the self-same identity. The Cartesian process of self-transformation is irreversibly regressive: it is a process of rescuing oneself from the abyss of idiocy (the first move), from an “abyss of vacuity [Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 9],” as Hegel would put it; and in the course of overcoming the first threat, it increases the risk of falling into another abyss (the second move), the abyss of solipsism. The automaticity of self-reflexive closure increases, rather than precludes, the latter possibility.

¹⁴ For an illuminating discussion of the conceptual relationship between *reflexivity* and *will* in Descartes, see Weissman [1996: 149-150, Essay 3], where he explains the irreducible duality in the Cartesian model of thinking in terms of the differential order of self-awareness. According to Weissman, one way to translate the *cogito* would be to say, “I *discern* myself, *reflexively*, as I think of other things [149],” in other words, “First-order thinking is provoked by whatever things are presented for inspection. Second-order thinking [...] does not occur without the other: *performance* or control of some vital mental function and self-awareness [150].”

< 4.124 Concentric >

The Cartesian mind is structured like a machine, a doubling machine, the originary structure of which is that of recursivity. A recursive doubling of the self gives rise to the infinite transcendence of the self. What the reflexive machine does is to split the domain of the self into two, immediately in a split second. This doubling happens in such a way that the dualised self is inevitably led to experience an instant experience of otherness in itself, an experience of self-doubt. What the ego of *ego cogito* experiences in the split-second is a paradox of successful failure: the "I" succeeds in bringing into awareness the failure of self-mastery. Hence, the transcendence of the self that takes place infinitely.

Descartes's genius, in this regard one can say, lies in having created his alter ego, the evil genius, in other words, in having formulated sharply and economised effectively, if not solving satisfactorily, this paradox of successful failure. When the "I" of "I think" fails to capture the infinite transcendence of the self, the very awareness of it by the same "I" renders the event of self-reflexion productive. Hence, the Cartesian "economy" or machinery of reflexion. The novelty value of Descartes's method of reflexion is found in that it establishes the mechanically reciprocal relationship between the finite and the infinite in such a way that the possibility of the infinite, God, can be secured on the basis of the finite, and vice versa; in a similar way, the elusive self - the idiotic self or the abyssal self - is also forced to participate in the economy of self-reflexion. For Descartes, to resolve the paradox of self-transcendence of the self means to hypothesise the recursivity of the moments of transcendence, in other words, to formalise the mode of transcendence. Descartes's specular ego is the cognitive subject, who sees the "form" of this happening by turning and returning to itself, and does so repeatedly.

The point of departure in the *cogito* argument, to which Descartes ultimately returns through repeated movements of reflexion, enfolds, and at the same time, unfolds itself; it "enfolds" itself in the sense that the steps of thinking he needs to go

through in order to get to the end point, are already implicit in the starting point; it “unfolds” itself in the sense that it is only through an experience of going through these implicit steps of thinking that the point of departure can be discovered anew. This point, a point of both departure and arrival, is where the self finally finds itself self-present. This point is to be grasped in such a way that it can secure the path of self-knowledge. It is these twofold, dialectical “steps” of self-overcoming that Descartes exhorts us to follow, and to follow along with him.

What does Descartes usually do in order to hold tight this point in his sight? Notably, he “concentrates”; he “reflects upon matters at stake more attentively [Med, AT VII 55/CSM II 38],” for example. The hypothesis of a concentric point of thinking is a necessary condition for the possibility of concentration. Concentric movements of repeated thinking are what the Cartesian thinking machine follows and must follow. Could Descartes have thought “*cogito*” without, at the same time, allowing himself to be surrounded by an image of circle? Descartes on the verge, on the verge of abyssal collapse, concentrates, and concentrates again, lest he lose the very tension of circular thoughts in which his thinking being is held, and held hostage.

Concentration does not diverge; it converges. The self that departs has to be identical to the self to which the departing self finally returns. The Cartesian self, to stay with the analogy of a circle, is the self that occupies the focus of a circular self; it thereby “watches over,” - to put it in the words of Derrida - and directs, all the egological movements happening within its phenomenological space thus opened up. Concentration is a way to control the phenomenological excess of the self. In Descartes's model of thinking, the thinking ego, every time it attempts to think, even when attempting to transgress the very order of the circular, is always already bound to return to this originary point of departure; hence, a return to the very self, the self that exceeds itself by thinking more than what it thinks (of)¹⁵. With Descartes's

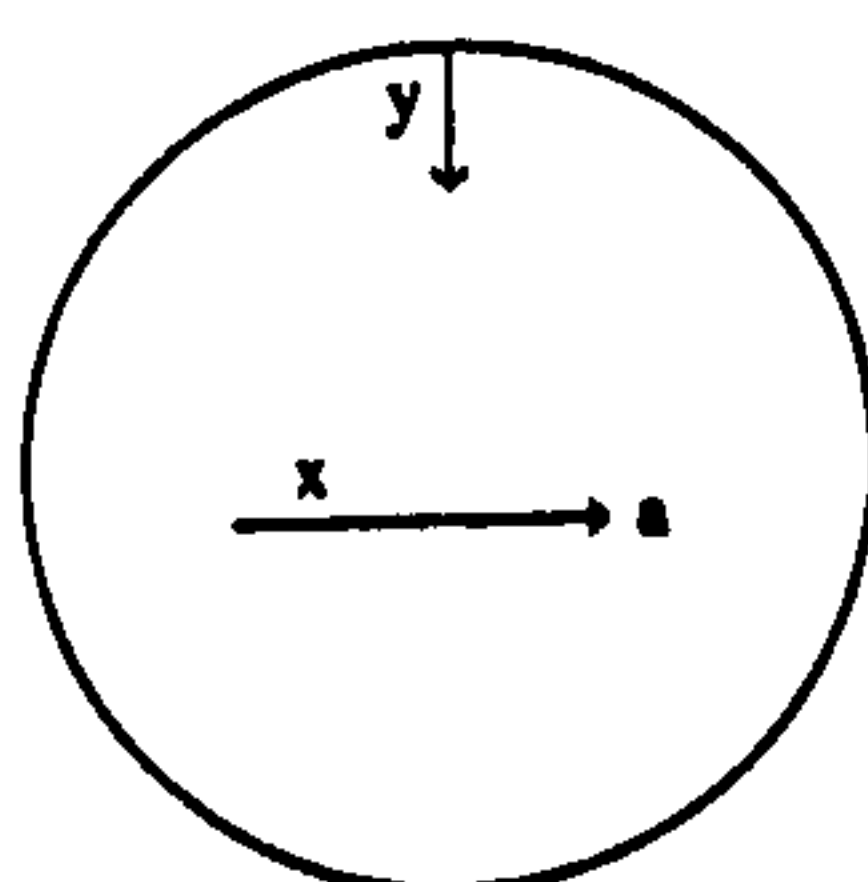
¹⁵To introduce Weissman's diagram of the Cartesian self-reflexivity, the structure of the Cartesian mind [1996: 330-331, Essay 7]:

concentric movements towards the *res cogitans*, the milieu of speculative cogitation becomes circumscribed as such.¹⁶ Once all the faculties set about col-laborating in the phenomenological construction of this circular site of philosophy, what is bound to happen to the self on the verge of metaphysical collapse, according to Descartes, is a miraculous event of self-resuscitation; miraculous, because this event amounts to a leap into a good faith in the “good sense,” in the “natural light of reason.” When this experience of self-conversion takes place, one is led to overcome self-doubts. And the overcoming of scepticism, Descartes suggests, is a necessary condition for the possibility of a new beginning. In what follows, we shall concentrate further on this Cartesian way of beginning.

4.2 Descartes's Trope: A Passage to the *Cogito*

4.21 A Way of Beginning

Self-doubt is a unique form of criticism. Given that to criticise is to “find fault with” thoughts or statements others have made, when one allows this ordinary sense



“The structure that Descartes ascribed to mind may be represented as two acts of awareness focused by some content. In the figure, *a* is any content of awareness, *x* any act of first-order awareness, [...] and *y* is second-order, reflexive awareness. Every *a* and every *x* are accessible to *y*: but more, each of them is only if it is or can be perceived by *y*.”

16

[...] The *Cogito* as a beginning: it expresses the unity of all faculties in the subject; it thereby expresses the possibility that all the faculties will *relate to a form* of object which will *reflects* the subjective identity; it provides a philosophical concept for the presupposition of a common sense; it is the common sense become philosophical. [Deleuze 1968: 174/133]

Chapter 3 of Deleuze's *Différence et répétition* [1968: 167-217/129-167] analyses “*the image of thought*” in Kant and Descartes. In the beginning part of this chapter, Deleuze also characterises the Cartesian model of thinking as circular [see 167ff/129ff].

notion of “to be critical” as a starting point, the self-reflexive form of self-doubt, in turn, comes to pose an intriguing problem. To doubt oneself is an intriguing form of criticism in that there is no easy telling which one, that is to say, which self is the winner or loser, when the self-critical self is facing the moment of self-doubts. The problem is this: the moment the self in self-doubt subjects itself to the critical force of self-investigation, the thinking subject is both defeated and defeating: defeated in so far as the self is put in doubt and, equally, defeating in so far as it is, after all, the very self that is capable of doubting. It is in view of this equivocal undecidability of the polemical position of a self-doubter that doubting oneself is often characterised as a “self-refuting” act of the mind. Self-doubter is an auto-critic, and the paradox of self-doubt arises in an automatic manner; one is most fragile when in extreme self-doubt, but, again, in turn, most guarded at the ultimate point of self-fragilisation. By setting out to doubt oneself, the auto-critic begins to enter into the labyrinthine field of self-refutation.

Descartes the auto-critic, who argues for and against himself, again, is the case in point. The Cartesian self, emerging in his philosophical dramas such as *Meditationes* and *Discours*, is a kind of self that is at war with itself. In these autobiographical texts, Descartes exemplifies a way in which one overcomes various threats of self-doubts. He demonstrates a way in which he finally comes to obtain a secure sense of selfhood, i.e. reflexive equilibrium. For him, to become a critical thinker means, first and foremost, to change from a self-doubter to a survivor of self-refutation: it is to convert himself from the former to the latter.

The rest of this chapter [4.2-4.3] will offer a reading of the way in which this change takes place in Descartes' texts: we will be looking closely at the pivotal moment when a fragile ego becomes the assured subject, the moment when the ethos of his discourse changes from being sceptical to being affirmative. The analysis aims to explicate, firstly, the way in which self-reflexivity is operative in the Cartesian discourse, and secondly, the way in which the self-reflexive movement of thoughts, finally, effects the critical transition at stake, namely, “the turning point” in the

Cartesian discourse. In short, those “turns” of the Cartesian mind shall be analysed from a procedural or experiential point of view, on the one hand, and as a constituted event, on the other. The present section [4.2 Descartes's Trope: A Passage to the *Cogito*] focuses on the first theme, transition; the second theme, the Cartesian experience of conversion, shall be discussed later in next section [4.3 Descartes's Curvature: *Cogito*, instead].

This section explores a double reading of *Discours*, the text taken as both an autobiographical narrative and a dogmatic treatise. The broad concern of the analysis is to explicate the relationship between the logical process of overcoming self-doubt and its rhetorical effects. The specific task, accordingly, is to give a close reading of a certain textual tension existing within *Discours*: the tension between *Discours* as a *de facto* treatise and *Discours* as a *de jure* “story,” between a discourse of dogma and a discourse of confession. My aim here, in examining the rhetorical and logical machinery behind Descartes's double discourse, is not to “find fault with” the internal rupture and incoherence thus detected within the text. We will not be concerned with a question such as whether this sudden transition is a legitimate move; the question of genre shall not be dealt with here directly, if only addressed indirectly. Rather, our immediate concern lies in looking at the critical, turning points in *Discours* from both logical and rhetorical points of view. Accordingly, what is to be analysed is the way in which Descartes uses his technique of self-reflexive thinking to the effect of maintaining the aforementioned double discourse within the text; with this, the methodological relevance of this technique to his life-long project of self-discovery shall be discussed at the end of this section. Simply, we will begin by following the self-reflexive movement Descartes initiates at the beginning of *Discours*.

4.22 Only a Fable: “What I Seem to See”

Famously, Descartes said:

My present aim, then, is *not to teach the Method here* (*ne pas d'enseigner icy la Méthode*) which everyone must follow in order to direct his reason correctly, *but only to show* (*mais seulement de faire voir*) how I have tried to direct my own...I am presenting this work *only as a story* (*une histoire*) or, if you prefer, *a fable* (*une fable*) in which, among certain examples *that one can imitate*, you will also find many others that you would have no reason to *follow*; and so I hope it will be useful for some without being harmful to any, and that everyone will be grateful to me for my *frankness*. [Dis, AT VI 4/ CSM I 112, translation revised]

When Descartes states that *Discours* is a “fable,” the authorial intention is clear: this text is not to be taken as a theory or an academic treatise but rather as a literary narrative. What the text aims to achieve is a demonstrative exposition of a method that can be, thereby, “shown” as a sample, as opposed to the dogmatic imposition of a method that is to be “taught.” What Descartes intends to show in the text, in other words, is not the universally valid, one and only method of true sciences, i.e. “*the Method*”, but *a* method his experiences in the past have led him to adopt as the most practical and useful guideline in his life-long pursuit of the truth.¹⁷ Therefore, “a fable” here does not mean a fictitious story; it rather signifies an autobiographic narrative, authentic stories authored by the person who claims to be identical to the “I” appearing in the text.

Given this distinction, two different ways of reading the text can also be prescribed, in a correlative manner. On the one hand, we can approach *Discours* as

¹⁷ It is important to note that Descartes made it clear that he intended to present *Discours* as a discourse rather than as a treatise. When Mersenne raised a question about the title, *Discours*, Descartes replied in his letter as follows:

I have not put *Treatise on the Method* but *Discourse on the Method*, which amounts to the same as *Preface or Note concerning the Method*, in order to show that I do not intend to teach the method but only to speak about it. For, as can be seen from what I say, it consists much more in practice than in theory. [A Letter to Mersenne of 27 February 1637, AT I 349/CSM III 53]

an autobiographical narrative, a “fable,” documented by a concrete and empirical person, therefore, a historical and personal text, which, as Descartes insists, has the temporal flow of a narrative. This is the direction of reading the author exhorts the readers to follow. On the other hand, the other direction of reading, which Descartes has advised the readers not to follow, is this: one can approach *Discours* as an impersonal, theoretical “treatise,” constructed upon some axiomatic grounds of the “Method,” devised in an argumentative framework. Following this alternative line of reading, the readers will then be expected to identify the discursive position of the theorist within the theory; they will, consequently, examine the validity of truth-claims made in the text, and test the universal applicability of the method adopted therein. Accordingly, in this type of reading, the presence of the empirical personae of the author will have to be effaced to a certain extent, and to such a degree that the impersonality of the discourse becomes an indicator of the level of its universal validity and applicability. Now, clearly, Descartes did not want his *Discours* to be read this way, its practical benefits to be evaluated this way. The point he highlights is that *Discours* is a historical narrative inasmuch as it is a piece of writing appearing in the 17th Century, and that it is a personal narrative inasmuch as it is the autobiographical record of a historical man, René Descartes. Given the authorial intent clearly articulated from the beginning of *Discours*, it would be therefore most natural as well as appropriate to approach Descartes as a thinker who is interested in simply displaying *his* own way to discover the truth of *his* existence in *his* version of philosophising over *his* problems in *his* life. The voice of this particular individual is immediately heard when we pay attention to the autobiographical and narrative style of *Discours*; exactly the same point can also be made regarding Descartes, the author of *Meditationes*, a literary self-portrait.

As a preliminary consideration, it would be necessary to introduce a couple of relevant cases in point in order to ensure that we fully register Descartes's intention on this matter. The inaugural part of *Discours*, for example, is self-effacingly humble. The readers are invited to recognise the presence of a modest writer who not only

“has never presumed his mind (*esprit*) to be in any way more perfect than that of the ordinary man...(but also) indeed, has often wished to have as quick a wit, or as sharp and distinct an imagination, or as ample or prompt a memory as others [Dis, AT VI 2/CSM I 111-112].” The writer’s modesty comes from his “frankness.” Descartes’s self-exposure is full-blown to such an extent that the author discloses to his readers his innermost, private feelings of incompetence and envy. There are also repeated emphases on “his” experiences that are not necessarily generalisable as “the” model of human experiences in general. Also in *Meditationes*, we often come across passages where Descartes expresses an inexplicable, and yet, ineluctable necessity to “confess,” as opposed to a desire to assert, as it were; he confesses that there is an irresistible, internal force of self-persuasion which leads him to believe in certain things, despite his scepticism;

I cannot but confess (non possum non fateri) that it is easy for Him (God), if he so desired, to cause me to err, even in matters in which I think I see utterly clearly with my mind's eyes. And, on the other hand, when I direct my attention to things which I believe myself to perceive very clearly, I am so persuaded of their truth that I spontaneously declare [...] [Med, AT VII 36/CSM II 25, translation revised]

Here, the watchword is “cannot but,” a linguistic marker of ineluctability, by which indicated is that a certain intellectual force of persuasion is at work. Accordingly, what needs to be recognised by the readers is the ineluctability of the philosophic impulse. Ineluctable is the double failure (“cannot but”); therefore, by implication, ineliminable is the very force of the intellect. Note that, at this point, the ineluctability becomes the discursive basis of the constructive experience of failure. Observe here the dialectic of recuperative double negation, subtly operative in the expression, “cannot but.” Similarly, Descartes says,

When I say that I am so instructed by nature (*me ita doctum esse a naturâ*), I merely mean a *certain spontaneous inclination which impels me to believe* (*spontaneo quodam impetu me ferri ad hoc credendum*) in this connection, and not a natural light which makes me recognise that it is true. There is a big difference here. [Med, AT VII 38/ CSM II 26-7]

In a similar manner, an apologetic tone of ineluctability - which, however, does not weaken the prevailing sense of confidence - is clearly audible, particularly in the introductory part of *Discours*, again, where he says,

[...] Nevertheless, I have already reaped such fruits from this method that I *cannot but feel extremely satisfied* (*je ne laisse pas de recevoir une extreme satisfaction*) with the progress I think I have already made in the search for truth, and I *cannot but entertain* (*je ne laisse pas de concevoir*) such hopes for the future as to venture the opinion that if any purely human occupation has solid worth and importance, it is the one I have chosen. [Dis, AT VI 3/CSM I 112]

Consequently, if there is any virtue in these texts, according to the author himself, it is nothing but this type of self-avowed ingenuousness¹⁸. The good readers of Descartes, those who recognise the good intention of the author, are then supposed to believe in the pedagogical benefits of reading *Discours*. We the readers are encouraged to read this text not because it teaches us the one and only truth, or the

¹⁸ To introduce another example, at the end of *Discours*, Descartes says:

Should anyone be shocked at first by some of the statements I make at the beginning of the *Optics* and the *Meteorology* because I call them 'suppositions' and do not seem to care about proving them...I have called them 'suppositions' simply to make it know that I think I can deduce them from the primary truths I have expounded above...I do not boast of being the first to discover any of them, but I do claim to have accepted them not because they have, or have not, been expressed by others, but *solely because reason has convinced me of them* (*seulement parce que la raison me les a persuadées*). [Dis AT VI 76-77/ CSM I 150]

one and only Method leading us to the promise land of truth, but because the writer is truthful to himself in referring to himself, in other words, truthful in that he shows to us his own small path leading to his own simple truth. It is in view of these exemplary or demonstrative values that Descartes says that his readers ought to be grateful to him not for the unfailing verity of his doctrines, but for the unadorned veracity of his story. The virtues of *Discours* are to be found in its un-fictitious authenticity, the text taken as a work of the first-person narrative of first-person experiences rather than as an academic treatise designed for the purpose of indoctrination. The humble writer says something like this: what I present here as a method is only a suggestion, therefore, it is up to you readers to decide whether or not to follow my footsteps. Likewise, the frank writer says something like this: I hide nothing: I am confessing: I am completely revealing myself. Here, Descartes the writer does not assume the authorial authority of theorists; he does not demand or command.

Instead, Descartes simply shows, and shows honestly. He writes in such a manner that, whilst writing, he appears to be “displaying”, as if he were “painting”, a series of exact and complete scenes generated by the reflective turns of the mind. He opts for this descriptive writing style as an appropriate means to achieve his aim to represent his experience exactly, veraciously, and authentically.

(1) *However (Toutefois)*, I may be mistaken; perhaps what I take for gold and diamonds is nothing but a bit of copper and glass... (2) I shall be glad, *nevertheless (mais)*, to reveal in this discourse the paths that I have followed, and to *represent my life in it as in a picture*, (3) so that everyone may judge it for himself; and thus,...(4) I shall add a new means of self-instruction to those I am accustomed to using. [Dis, AT VI 4/CSM I 112, numbers (1-4) added]

Thereby, the descriptive range of his self-exhibition becomes expansive; as the narrative unfolds, it extends to such a degree that, as one can see from the example above, he is forced to show the readers, by force of his own reflection, the moment of

intense hesitation, that is, the moment when he could not come up with a definite answer to the question he has posed to himself: the question of the possibility of self-deception. Whether or not he himself can tell whether he is mistaken in taking A for B at a given point, regarding this question that asks the (im)possibility of self-deception, he has not yet given a definite answer.

Instead, what Descartes does, subsequently, is to turn to the other side of this problematic event of self-reflection; he reflects on the very happening of the question. The second turn to the “nevertheless,” taken as a certain “movement” of reflexion, effects a return to the questioner. To shift the focus of representation from the “what” of the question to the “who” of the questioning, this is a strategic decision the questioner makes, the questioner in intense, and more importantly, strategically intense, self-questioning. What matters to the questioner at this point is not so much the burden of going forward with the question thus posed to himself, as the necessity to stop there and show the readers as well as himself that it is nobody but him, *himself*, who is now facing the *self-imposed* question, namely, that it is Descartes himself who advances the question. With this turn to the interiority of the questioner, the question becomes a hostage to the questioner, but not the other way around. Maurice Blanchot also takes note of this move, of this turning point in the Cartesian scene of reflection; he characterises this method, unique to Descartes, as “the mode of holding oneself and of *advancing of the one who questions* [1969: 2/4].” What Descartes aims to demonstrate here is this movement of a search, of a research, in other words, the movement of a methodologised reflexion: he shows, first, a way in which self-doubt takes place, and second, a way in which the self-doubt can be overcome, if not resolved completely. A possible solution he puts forward here, by way of performative demonstration, is to force the self-imposed question to be finally redirected to the questioner himself. The force of reflexion is such that there arises a need to avert the probing gaze of the intellect from the abyss of self-doubt, and this metaphysical need is what Descartes fulfils at this point. This point of strategic a-verting is a discursive point where his self-doubt becomes economised.

Let us then look, in detail, at this economy of self-doubt, the economised reflexivity in Descartes. (1) illustrates Descartes's obsession with the metaphysical threat of global *trompe l'oeil*; at first, he only "seems" to see. His initial anxiety is about the possibility that a set of things he seems to see clearly and distinctly might be, after all, "mere shadows" of reality, not the reality itself; the metaphysical worry here is that it might be "pictures of perceptions", not the direct perceptions *per se*. Therefore, it is impossible for Descartes, the sceptic, to rule out the possibility that the whole of *Discours* itself as "a fable," might be not only a story regarding *trompe l'oeil*, but a story written in a state of *trompe l'oeil*, after all. This, of course, is a pure possibility, but, at the same time, an unavoidable threat by implication, given this: (1) "*Toutefois, il se peut faire que je me trompe, et ce n'est peut-être qu'un peu de cuivre ou de verre que je prends pour de l'or et des diamants.*"

4.23 Only a Fable?:

A Rhetorical Move in the Articulation of the "Seeming"

(3) "*afin que chacun en puisse juger, et qu'apprenant du bruit commun les opinions qu'on en aura,*" - to paraphrase it: I merely represent my internal experiences, as if in a picture, and present this pictorial writing as the most truthful representation of the states of affairs constituting my mental reality. The readers can "imitate," in turn, my method of representation I have applied in my writing, so that they also can represent the truths of their experiences in their own writings. As long as our self-representations are perfect in such a way that, in each case, they represent most accurately and exhaustively what we have experienced, as mine does, the veracity of the represented, in each case, will be guaranteed. Now, it is advisable for the readers to begin by imitating my work. Of course, it is only a suggestion; it is up to each reader to decide whether my examples are "worthy of imitation [Dis, AT VI 4/CSM I

112].” None the less, it is expected that, as long as my technique of mirror writing remains the most useful means by which to reflect the truth about the self, one will not be able to resist following the path I have drawn in my work, in the same way that I could not but follow the path that had been revealed to me. It is in this regard that I have chosen the method of exhaustive self-representation as a new means of instruction not only for others, but also for myself. Hence, (4) “*ce soit un nouveau moyen de m'instruire, que j'ajouterai à ceux dont j'ai coutume de me servir.*”

On this critical note, we have reached the point where “frankness” becomes a “method” of science; seen from a rhetorical point of view, it is a transitional point where the autobiographical “fable” begins to claim the status of a doctrine. The textual ethos of frankness is appropriated or “invented” by Descartes as a sound criterion by which the reliability of doctrines can be measured up. In other words, as Jean-Luc Nancy says, “very curiously, Descartes’s proof is limited to a high degree of credibility (*le degré d'une forte crédibilité*) [Nancy 1979: 25].”

Let us look again in more detail into the way in which the transition or conversion takes place. The below (A-E) is an argumentative version of the passage quoted [(1)-(4)];

A: I am now writing only that which is being revealed to me:

what I am writing is what I seem to see at the moment of writing rather than what I can definitely say that I see.

B: *But*, what I seem to see may be an illusion.

C: In this regard, I cannot say that what I am writing represents the true states of affairs.

*

D: *None the less*, I cannot deny either that, at least, I “seem¹⁹” to see.

E: Thereby, I am “certain” of the fact that I seem to see while I am writing.

When the writer's authorial ingenuousness is combined with his epistemological indecisiveness (A- C), the narrative contents cannot be claimed as theoretical or doctrinal, simply because there is no intention on the part of the writer to justify the truthfulness of the statements thus made. In contrast to the move made up to this point, when the transparency of the confessional self serves as the discursive grounds of self-assurance (D - E), the writer can then begin to validate the claims made in his writing by attempting to “show” that there is a certain degree of truthfulness or “credibility” in them. Put simply, with the second turn to the “but” as in D, Descartes's suggestions, his exhortations, have already become, *de facto* doctrines or treatise. The justificatory basis for this furtive upgrading of the status of his proposed method from “a method” to “the Method,” from an example to an exemplar, is the authenticity of the first-person experience of reflexion; the result coming out of, and remaining after, the methodological self-doubt, is after all an experiential truth that becomes indubitable by virtue of having undergone the test of a self-reflection. This way, the methodological value of reflexivity becomes dear to Descartes; this value itself has never been subject to the Cartesian doubt.

It is in view of this critical “turn” or “trope” of thinking in Descartes that one is led to observe, following Nancy, that Descartes's lack of certainty displayed in the inaugural parts of the text is, after all, a “feigned rhetoric.” As Nancy goes on to point out, “the rhetorical character of this “however(*toutefois*)” [...] - it is clear that this hesitation is feigned. Yet it is precisely the status and the function of the feint that must be examined [1979: 66].²⁰”

¹⁹In a similar manner, Descartes concludes his second *Meditatione* with the following note: “[...] Yet, I certainly *seem* to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false [...] [Med II, AT VII 19/ CSM II 19]

²⁰The “however” that Nancy refers to is the one in (1), the kind that appears in (D). Not a small number of commentators explored the rhetorical aspects of Descartes' texts. For a general review of the literature dealing with the rhetorical elements in Descartes's texts, particularly in *Discours* and

The rhetoric of this type of “however” disguises Descartes' authorial assertiveness. If the first turn of “but” in B²¹ negates his certainty about the objective reality of his own perceptual contents, the subsequent second turn of “but” as in the “none the less” that opens D,²² reinforces his self-certainty about the veracity of his perceptual experiences. Consequently, the first type of “but” will not carry its negative significance any further after having been negated again by the second turn to the “but”, in other words, after having been strategically used as a generator of the positive grounds of transparent self-consciousness. The initial display of epistemic instability [A - C] is a rhetorical investment, which retrospection economises later; to “economise” means, in this case, to reflect upon a thought by recasting it into a hermeneutical structure of self-doubt. Consequently, with this turn of reflexion, the virtue of intellectual honesty becomes an epistemological asset, a metaphysical value. In other words, Descartes invents the negative value of pre-reflective naiveté in order to construct a theory on the basis of the clean consciousness of acknowledgement. Likewise, he feigns his innocence in order to hide his desire to assert. In this way, the narrative status of *Discours* changes, furtively, if not illegitimately, from a story to a theory, and from a fable to a treatise.

4.24 A Critical Transition: From a “Fable” to the Method

At this point of critical transition, arises an authorial certainty; at this point, solipsistic conviction turns into, or rather converts itself into, universal indubitability. The point of the absolutely irrefutable is the pivotal point of Cartesian reflection, where the epistemological self-doubt comes to an end, where Descartes, the empirical person, the writer of *Discours*, becomes an exemplar of the cognitive subject [see

Meditationes, see Judovitz [1989: 86-136, chapter 3: theory of the subject as literary practice].

²¹ as in (1) “*however[toutefois]*, I may be wrong; perhaps what I take for gold and diamonds is nothing but a bit of copper and glass.”

²² as in (2) “I shall be glad, *nevertheless[mais]*, to reveal in this discourse what paths that I have followed, and to represent my life in it as in a picture.”

Judovitz 1989: 3-38, *from self to the subject*]. Where a humble writer disappears, there emerges a self-assured author. At this point, Descartes becomes an epistemologically reliable subject. The authenticity of confessional consciousness can be warranted, as is exemplified in *Discours*, when the confessor is self-identified anew as the reflecting subject, an impartial witness, entitled to be certain of the veracity of what (s)he sees. The subject in reflexively “discursive” confession, the one who does not fail to articulate what needs to be negated, this kind of confessional subject, becomes epistemologically reliable.

The important point to note for us, the readers, is that epistemological reliability, achieved in this way, renders the author of *Discours*, in fact, contrary to the author's overt intent, more of a discursive theorist than of an autobiographical writer. The author of this type of double discourse, in fact, acquires his discursive authority by actively subjecting his selfhood to the discursive position of the knowing subject. With this movement of self-subjection, namely, the subjection of a discursive self to the subject position, the epistemological status of “the being that thinks” changes from a self into the subject, from a doubting self to the infallible subject.

Two conclusive points shall be noted.

Firstly, the foregoing analysis [4.21-23] of Descartes's usage of “but” as in “cannot but “ and “but (*toutefois, mais*), and but again” suggests that Descartes's consequential turn to the epistemologically critical subject position, which takes place after a couple of “turns” of his argument, is a tropological movement as well as a logical event. The thought underlying this suggestion is that the logical acts of self-negation generate rhetorical effects of affirmation; in Descartes, for instance, the infallible subjectivity of the thinking self cannot be established without the same self's acknowledgement of its generic *inability to negate* itself.

Secondly, Descartes's drama of self-doubts exemplifies the paradox of epistemological zero point: precisely at the most vulnerable point of relentless self-doubt, the fragile self becomes the invincible subject: the sharper the zero point is, the stronger the subject position becomes. The experience of this paradox,

Descartes believes, can be shared amongst members of the community of the “reasonable” men, in so far as they are willing to follow the passage to the Cartesian self, to the self that is, as Kolakowski puts it, “self-closedly and self-reflectedly [1988: 67]” authentic to itself. With Descartes’s turn to the interiority of reflexive self-consciousness, philosophy experiences an uncanny experience of stepping into the heart of the riddle of self-reflexivity. However, also with Descartes, this move has been economised; the experience of the *cogito* is highly self-regulated, and closely controlled, in the sense that what he demonstrates with the *cogito* argument and demonstrates performatively is, after all, the necessity to submit himself to a rigorously dialecticised, rhetorical force of tropological cogitation. Through these steps and turns of thinking, Descartes comes to find a way to overcome himself²³. To be critical is, first and foremost, to be self-critical: this is Descartes’s lesson, which philosophical modernity takes as a lasting legacy. To be self-critical, as Descartes showed with his examples, is to appropriate, and at the same time, fight this puzzling force of self-reflexivity.

4.3 Descartes’s Curvature: *Cogito*, Instead

“When we turn *inward* upon ourselves, we turn *aside* from truth”: when Gaston Bachelard [1964: 15, trans.] says this, quoting Heracleitos, this statement is meant to be addressed to a host of modern philosophers of self-consciousness, the Cartesian fire-watchers. Although decisively simplistic, arguably for that very reason, this proposition contains something insightful; what it shows and shows effectively is the fatality of Cartesian reflection, its irreversibility. In so far as the inaugural move

²³ Analysing Descartes’s “inner man” from a historical and biblical point of view, Kolakowski [1988] makes the following remark:

It took up and radicalised the Augustinian attack on self-will as the seed of evil [...] Augustine looked into himself only to find God, rather than himself. Descartes, however, discovered the inner world not in order to transubstantiate it into the divine ground of being; it was supposed to be *the final step itself*. [66-67]

of “turning towards” oneself takes place as a move away from the true *qua* true, against the other *qua* the other, the irreversibility of the direction of this turn is an inevitable effect. The reason why the question of “the true *qua* true” is not raised as such [Benjamin 1987: 10] in the Cartesian discourse can be seen, when one looks at the economic dimension of the Cartesian model of cogitation.

The economy of *cogitata* is operative in the Cartesian discourse. One can find a strikingly vivid example in the Second *Meditatione*,

What then did I formerly think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say ‘a rational animal’? No; for then I should have to inquire what an animal is, what rationality is, and in this way, one question would lead me down the slope to the other harder ones, and *I do not have the time to waste* on subtleties of this kind. *Instead (Sed hic²⁴)* I propose to concentrate on what came into my thoughts spontaneously and quite naturally whenever I used to consider what I was. [Med, AT VII 25-26/ CSM II17]

Instead, Descartes turns to himself. The force of the “instead” opens up an alternative route leading to truth. Therein, the very nature of truth is altered; in turn, that which is to be disregarded, for the reasons of economy of thinking, is therefore the radical alterity of the true *qua* true. Reflecting upon his own thought, Descartes turns away from the true *qua* true. With this turn, the true *qua* true becomes the other, “the other harder question.” With this turn, truth becomes, figuratively speaking, domesticated within the house of philosophy; philosophy, in turn, becomes domesticated within the house of the philosopher. To “domesticate,” in this case, means to internalise the external, to put things in an egological or human perspective. As Jean-Luc Marion points out, “the ego exists before and more certainly than any other being, because and *uniquely* because no being exists except *in so far as* it is an

²⁴ *Sed*: back to the main theme, *hic*: here in, here upon, in this matter, at the present [see OLD]

objectum, thus as *cogitatum* [1982: 79].” In this line of reading, what needs to be clarified, as Marion goes on to suggest, is “the nature of the “-logic” in Cartesian thought”; in Cartesian logic, “ontology envisages being as such *qua cogitata*, *curvature of thought* [80].”

Instead, Descartes turns to himself. The force of the “instead” effects the automatic self-institution of selfhood. This originary turn of a self to the reflected self is equivalent of the Archimedean “rolling back.” That is, the Archimedean revolution in philosophy results in the conversion of the nature of truth, the interiorisation of truth. Descartes’s concern here is therefore to locate the immovable anchor-point of reflexive movements, within which the entirety of the universe can be enfolded [Med, AT VII 24/CSM II 16]. With this inward turn of a self to the self-same self, “clear and distinct” become dichotomies between one and the other, in and out, or here and there, now and then, etc. Unquestioned binarism, which sets a priori the “I” in opposition to the “non-I,” underlies the Cartesian desire for self-understanding. In *Meditationes*, for example, where a dramatic unfolding of these logical folds of binarity takes place, what is staged is a way in which the self-preservation instinct of the Cartesian mind confronts various threats of the otherness of the world, in other words, a way in which “whatever is in my own thought” is jealously guarded against “whatever is not mine.” Cartesian egocentrism finds its philosophical expression in the diction of introspective reason. “Clear and distinct” is the irreducible primacy of, although not necessarily the exact location of, the egocentric self in the Cartesian landscape of thinking.

Instead, Descartes turns to himself. The force of the “instead” causes the disregarding of the true *qua* true, on the one hand, and the registering of the truth as *cogitata*, on the other. With this turn, with this economic decision, the Cartesian “I” braves its consequential blindness to the true *per se*; this decision amounts to the “othering” of truth, to the distancing of the “myself” from the true *qua* true. The radical alterity of the true *qua* true, the infinite transcendence of the other *qua* the other is to be ignored and bracketed off in the interests of the “I” that questions: “I do

not have the time to waste on subtleties of this kind,” on questions that generate an interminable, therefore un-economic, series of thoughts, Descartes affirms, subtly as well as straightforwardly. The ego's announcement of the *ego cogito* secures an exclusively territorialised site of thinking, where the thinking self in self-reflexion resists disappearing, and thereby persists in adhering to itself.

“Descartes,” let us not forget, “arrived at the minimal, fundamental truth of his existence curled up by himself in soliloquy in the corner of a warm room [Bluhm 1996: 308].” Returning home by venturing out²⁵, “finally at home with itself [Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol.1: 227],” the modern philosopher frames himself, finds himself, within this milieu of philosophy. The modern epistemological subject subjects himself to this reflexive force of self-framing; Descartes's venturing into the inside of the frame of self-representation, a variant of which Foucault analyses in his study of Velázquez [1966: 19-31/3-16],²⁶ marks the birth of philosophical modernity. To open this site of self-reflection is to let the natural light of reason “flood²⁷” in, to let it shed its light upon the “darkened intellect [Med, AT VII 52/CSM II 36].” The “pregnant [Husserl, *Ideas*, 104]” ego thus born into the new world of interiority, the ego “in great labour,” the “dormant ego” thus “reawakened (*wiedererweckt*)” [Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 6/45], announces its entry into its own property, into its own labyrinthine field of self-representation.

²⁵ For example, Maurice Merleau-Ponty says: “thought must be defined in terms of that strange power which it possess of *being ahead of itself*, of launching itself and being *at home everywhere*, in a word, in terms of autonomy [1945: 371, trans.]”

²⁶ I am referring to Foucault's analysis of the modernist motive of “entering” and “framing” in his essay on Velázquez's *Las Meninas*.

²⁷ In an illuminating exploration of the thematic relevance between Descartes's interests in Camera Obscura and the birth of the modern, observational subject, Jonathan Crary [1990] makes the following remark, which is highly relevant to our discussion of the Cartesian “economy” of reflexion: “the orderly and *calculable* penetration of light rays through the single opening of the camera corresponds to the *flooding* of the mind by the light of reason, not the potentially dangerous dazzlement of sense by the light of the sun [1990: 43].” Descartes's appropriation of the natural light of reason, in this sense, is calculated: it is an economic investment, not a blind indulgence.

5. Self-reflexive Economy of Derrida's Hauntology

5.1 Derrida's Starting Point

The Cartesian space of philosophical reflection is a site reflexively inscribed, and recursively fortified, by the self-same movements of the *cogito*. It is from within this site of Cartesian interiority that Derrida's philosophical adventure begins. The foregoing analysis of Descartes emphasised the irreducible self-referentiality of Cartesian discourse, and its discursive force of self-entrapment. Derrida's attempt to articulate the irreducible or constitutive otherness of the self appears to challenge the Cartesian order of self-referentiality. However, this is a deceptive move - the current chapter aims to give a close reading of the Cartesian undercurrent in Derrida's (non-)project of deconstruction. A specific point which I have already argued [introduction, chapter 1, 2, and 3] and will go on to elaborate in this chapter, relevant to the larger theme of Derrida's Cartesianism, is that Derrida's phenomenological attention to the irreducible otherness of the self does not have a therapeutic function; his deconstructive phenomenology of the self does not provide an alternative framework of thinking in which the egocentric folly of Cartesianism can be corrected. Instead, his commitment to methodological Cartesianism, implicit and unwavering, results in an exacerbation of logocentric symptoms of reflexive thinking. Derrida, in this sense, is par excellence a faithful victim of Cartesian rationality.

Derrida's thematic interest in time and language - the key elements of his "other" - does not help him extricate himself from the snare of cogitational reflexivity; on the contrary, it leads him to a further reflexive path of thinking. To recall, at this point, Derrida's diction of "self-contamination" may be necessary. Derrida recognises the elements of time and language as some of the key enabling conditions for self-reflection - which is to say, self-reflection takes place at a particular point of time and cannot take place without the language of the self being used by the reflective subject. And in this sense, for Derrida, time and language are

the mediating grounds of self-relation. With this thought, the problem he seeks to point out is that the recognition of the temporal and linguistic dimensions of self-reflection - such ineradicable dimensions interpreted as the markers of the irreducible presence of the other in the self - leads to a contamination of the ideal of atemporal and alinguistic, i.e. pure, self-presence. The conclusion Derrida draws from this line of thinking, an aporia, is that there is, therefore, no such a thing as the "pure" self. Derrida's thought here, put otherwise, is that the self is originally contaminated, i.e. heterogeneous to itself; time and language are "hetero"geneous to the pure self in the sense that they are self-alienating forces - albeit already implicit in the self - which prevent the self from having an unmediated, "auto"union with itself. Directly relevant to this point concerning the presence of the heterogeneous (or simply, alien) other in the self is Derrida's thematisation of the differential force of time as that which delays the union of the self with itself - his talk of *différance* as that which "differs from itself [VP/SP 129 (trans.)]." Also noteworthy, in this regard, is his textual staging of the inscriptive force of *écriture*, e.g. his marking of "*Je - marque*" [1.323], which shows a way in which the self-splitting force of the language of the self is at work. Now, the reason why this thought of the irreducible otherness of the self, articulated or staged as such, is aporetic for Derrida - as opposed to, say, therapeutic or liberating or even enlightening - is that his philosophical pathos is incurably self-centred, and his philosophical ethos, irreversibly puritanical; to put the same point more philosophically, a desire for the pure, un-mediated, and self-present self is the driving force behind his talk of the inevitable self-contamination of the self. Hence, what remains is despair; the shadows of self-reflection [MA]; the ashes that there are [C]. In the world of oneness, there is always already, contends Derrida, the other which remains as an irreducible threat to the world of "the one" of self-same identity. This thought of *de facto* contamination posed against *de jure* purity concerns Derrida. This concern, in turn, forces another movement of cogitation to take place; and this time, the Derridian movement actively involves "the other", the kind of other that Descartes's model of cogitation focusing on self-consciousness

tends to leave aside as minor concerns, e.g. the differentiating force of time that disturbs the punctuality of *cogito*, and the structural¹ dimension of the language of the self over which the linguistic self, the implicated user of that language, cannot have mastery. The difference, seen in this regard, between Descartes and Derrida, both taken as reflective thinkers, lies not so much in the direction in which their reflections unfold as in the extent to which they recognise the constitutive otherness of the self; if both of them pursue the zero point of self-reflection, i.e. the point where the self recognises its undeniable self-identity reflexively, Derrida is more “patient” or “circumspect” than Descartes in following the process of getting there, in the sense that he sees more obstacles in the way. The reason why Derrida is still to be regarded as a reflexive thinker, despite his explicit thematisation of the otherness of the self, is that the way in which he recognises these constitutive forces of self-alienation - forces of time and language - is reflexive. What Derrida stages in his texts is what Valéry describes as “a reflex action of the man [MP 351/295],” in the sense that he constantly and persistently forces himself to remain alert to the ineradicable threats of time and language, which he defines as something alien and heterogeneous, i.e. external, to what is traditionally conceived as the pure self; by Derrida the thinker of *différance*, the pure self, rendered instantly “different from itself”, is therefore infinitely “deferred”, pushed ahead somewhere towards its zero point of reference, without being grasped as such. What makes Derrida a radical Cartesian rather than an anti-Cartesian, despite his recognition of the “heterogeneity” at stake, is that his fundamental concern is with the impossibility of being a perfect Cartesian, in other words, the impossibility of resolving the constitutive problem of contaminated auto-affectation. The Derridian warning, *avertissement*, issued reflexively, is such that the thinker is forced to pay attention to that which “in advance contaminates, pre-occupies, and inhabits [SpecM 255/160],” his own ambience of thinking. Here, the philosophical worry itself is characteristically Cartesian.

¹See the first three paragraphs of 1.322 (pp. 58 - 59) for a further explanation.

The “other”-involving movement of Derridian cogitation, which takes place explicitly rather than implicitly (Descartes's case), can be described in the following way. Derrida turns the Cartesian ambience of reflection into either a haunted house of epochal metaphysics², the Heideggerian kind, or an arid biblical desert, the image of which comes from “the despairing “messianism” [SpecM 267-8/169, “scare quote in original”].” In a similar manner, he turns the autobiographical impulse of Descartes into the rigorous passion for “heterology [Gasché 1986: 79-105],”- “heteroportrait³ (*l'hétéro-portrait*) [MA 69/68]” or “hetero-biography⁴ (*l'hétéro-biographie*) [D 604/8],” for instance - and Descartes's wax into “cinders [C].”

Derrida refuses to “convert⁵” himself to a good metaphysician, i.e. a metaphysician with a good faith. Instead, he re-verts; he reverts to the sceptical phase of Cartesianism, where the hypothetical presence of the evil genius still hampers the full-blown self-manifestation of the good metaphysics. This reversion is justified in the name of methodological rigour. Derrida therefore risks staying evil; he remains as a Cartesian sceptic, and a radical one. In Descartes, the ultimate expulsion of radical evil synchronises with the minimal, and yet substantial, resistance of the good reason. Descartes's reversion to the reflecting self effects a resistance to the infinite regress of reflection. This reversion is justified in the name of a good faith, a faith in the God-given “natural” reason. Now, Derrida's role is to allow the bad genius to replay his role, therefore, to delay the eventual resuscitation of the good faith, or rather, to leave the climactic tension as it is; the “coming” of the good Cartesian thinker is, thereby, deferred. Derrida is suspicious of the onto-theological founding values of the first person present-tense experiences, namely, the metaphysical values of

² Mark Wigley [1993] offers a brilliant discussion of the sense of “frustration” haunting the house of Derrida [1993: 162-174, section on “Haunted Houses” in Chapter 6: Doing the Twist], which, he shows, comes from the sense of “indigestibility” of the interior. Also relevant to this point is his discussion of Derrida's house in relation to Heidegger's [1993: 35-59, Chapter 2. Unbuilding Architecture].

³ Here, Derrida makes reference to the issue of irreducibility of sexual difference exemplified in Pablo Picasso's relationship to Gertrude Stein.

⁴ reference to Lacoue-labarthe

⁵ I am referring to the Cartesian experience of “conversion,” which I discussed in 4.3.

“self-presence.” None the less, following Descartes, Derrida still sees an epistemological value in the first person cogitation; I have repeatedly emphasised the point that, without an implicit and minimal acknowledgement of this cognitive value, the Derridian economy of performative writing would not work. In other words, the logocentric subject of first-person experiences still reigns supreme in the Derridian world of ruptured interiority, the world of double selves. Hence, an elliptical form of reflection, more ostensibly *complicated* than the Cartesian version, is necessitated.

Unlike Descartes, Derrida focuses on the alienating otherness of the self, the “I” experienced as “*moi*” as opposed to “*Je*”; and this otherness of “me” is the source of metaphysical schizophrenia.⁶ Instead of taking for granted the intimate and immediate familiarity of the natural pre-critical I, Derrida treats it as an object of phenomenological analysis, the Husserlian “I” caught up in “the double horns [VPT 5/2]” of a “general sucker (*ventouse*) [Poi 6/7]” of “the madness *itself*, *Itself* [ED 56/33-4].” One must begin, Derrida insists, by subjecting oneself to the maddening force of “*entre crochets* (between brackets) [Poi 17, 13-36/9, 5-29],” “this hook (*le crampon*) [Poi 14/5]” “that just won’t let go [FM 174]” of the word itself. One must, Derrida emphasises, pay a “vigilant” attention to the happening “around” the word, “I”, the “I” taken as “it (*ça*),” around the Freudian “id/it,” which “gets unhooked (*ça décrochette*), like hooks that unhook, like pliers or cranes [...] that grab in order to loosen the grasp [...] [Poi 17/9].” Derrida’s point is that an “immediate adherence to [Poi 17/9]” the “I” that both hooks and slips, this type of act must take place.

What the “I” experiences here, as Derrida says, is a certain “Cartesian *experience* [ED 55/33] of madness.” To insist upon the necessity to repeat this type of Cartesian experience is to express an inability, on Derrida’s part, to do philosophy without repeating a certain kind of Descartes, Descartes the “adventurous, perilous, enigmatic, nocturnal, and pathetic [ED 55/33, “enigmatic” omitted in the

⁶ In the sense that the writings of Derrida draw, for its textual production, on the self-distancing force of “*moi*,” rather than the self-unifying force of “*Je*,” one can say that he is closer to Montaigne than to Descartes, Montaigne who was plagued by the inability to negate the possibility that he might be, in fact, mad [See Judovitz 1988: 8-38].

translation],” founding Father of modern philosophy; Derrida has no choice, he seems to imply, but to make a Cartesian attempt to meditate upon the very mad punctuality of “here and now,” upon the very event of cogitation. What he affirms here is then that he prefers the form of first person reflexive self-introspection to other possible options.

5.2 Derrida's Turn to the *Cogito*

Once, Derrida, interestingly enough, emphasised the absolute necessity of the “narcissistic reappropriation [Derrida 1987: 16⁷]” of the Cartesian self in the face of the other. The destination of this line of thinking is clear: what the subject ends up experiencing in that absolute self-criticism is a repetitive experience of the *auto*, namely, the auto-deconstruction of the self. In another text [SpecM 161-2/98], more interestingly, Derrida confirms the validity of this reading: the aporia of narcissism, “the decentering (*le décentrement*) [...] of the *ego cogito* [...] is the explicit theme of deconstruction.” However, his agreement with us is only partial; his emphasis here is on the *aporias* of narcissism, namely, narcissism “decentered,” and not on the *aporias* of *narcissism*. None the less, again, we are not ready yet to shift our accent of reading. Let us read, in some more detail, the passage at issue:

The century of “Marxism” will have been that of the techno-scientific and effective *decentering* of the earth, of geopolitics, of the *anthropos* in its onto-theological identity or its genetic properties, of the *ego cogito* - and of *the very concept of narcissism whose aporias are*, let us say in order to go too quickly [...], *the explicit theme of deconstruction*. This trauma is endlessly denied *by the very movement* through which one tries to cushion it, to assimilate it, to interiorise and incorporate it. In this mourning work in progress, in this

⁷ “I believe that without a movement of narcissistic reappropriation, the rapport with the other would be destroyed and absolutely, destroyed in advance.”

interminable task, the *ghost remains* that which gives one the most to think about - and to do. Let us insist and spell things out: to do and to make *come about*, as well as to let come (about). [SpecM 161-2/98]

The “movement”: highlighted here⁸ is the movement of interiorisation, bound to fail, which therefore causes “mourning work in progress,” as the “denied” trauma recedes endlessly and violently into its own source of malady. For Derrida, the experience of the *auto* remaining “ghostly” in the subject that auto-deconstructs, is irreducibly “infinite,” for it involves a certain infinite paradox that troubles the subject bound to fail to be completely “narcissistic” in its idealised sense of the word.

The constitutive and structural problem Derrida faces repeatedly is the irreducible presence of the other in the pure interiority of the narcissistic self [Pass 31-2/12];

It is consequently impossible to construct a noncontradictory or coherent concept of narcissism, thus to give a univocal sense to *me* (*donner un sens univoque au moi*). It is impossible to speak it or to act it as “*me*.” (comme “*moi*”). [Pass 33/13, translation revised]

In this passage again, the Cartesian form of reflexion retains its undisturbed, self-same configuration. The Derridian form of reflexion problematises the Cartesian possibility of self-same thinking; it programmatically points to the hauntingly residual elements of the other found within the putatively self-same form of “the one.” However, this does not necessarily imply that the reflexive elements such as recursivity and automaticity are lost in the Derridian form of reflexion. On the contrary, these elements reappear, albeit hauntologically, in Derrida's scenes of reflections which, as I have been arguing, unfold on a level of self-consciousness

⁸ A spectral emergence of the figure of Marx in the post-Marxist era

higher than that of Descartes. In other words, what Derrida formalises in a meta-reflective manner is the impossibility of securing a formality of that “pure, non-contradictory, and coherent” kind of narcissism. For this reason, we often come across the recurrence of the same “Derridian” aporia throughout his texts: As Frank says, in Derrida, “the aporia is always the same [Frank 1992: 231].”

Let us then ask: how can there be such a thing as the Derridian aporetics, identifiable as such, provided that his aporias are, presumably, the aporias of non-identity, of non-unity, of non-conformity, in other words, of the absolutely unexpected “coming” of the other? Why is it that one can even be justified in conjecturing that, for Derrida, the aporia will (have) always be(en) the same?

An answer to the questions raised in the above can be formulated in the following terms. Most of the typical Derridian problems of double bind share one homological trait: the structure of *dilemma*, the antinomical structure of *on-the-one-hand-and-on-the-other*. Seen from a narrative point of view, both the Cartesian discourse and the Derridian are constructed upon the internal rupture caused by the two contending selves; the phenomenological structure of double thinking, which finds its proto-type in the discursive structure of the *cogito*, is again duplicated in the pre-critical dimension of Derridian discourse. The empirically predictable, formal automaticity, characteristic of the way in which the Derridian *cogito* becomes always-already-irreducibly “contaminated,” invites the following reading: Derrida’s discourse strives for a meta-level purity, a formalistic function of which is, particularly in his case, to compensate for the empirical “dirtiness,” to use the idiom of *Signéponge*. In short, the meta-dimension of Derrida’s texts is, “auto-immunised [SpecM 224/141],” for his discourse constantly aims to formalise the mode of its own empirical contamination. Derrida makes these “quasi-”metalogical “feint” turns of splitting, of distancing, and of doubling, along with a hypothetical Descartes, and against the historical Descartes, at the same time; Derrida does this as a fallen Cartesian, and yet as a failed Cartesian with a blind faith in the methodological security or “auto-immunity” of the Cartesian-Husserlian

reflexivity, which, as he himself rightly points out [SpecM 224/141],” guarantees the viability of “the living ego.” Derrida is a “hypercritical (*hypercritique*) [Pass 50/21]” Descartes.

A more specific point implicated in this line of argument that highlights Derrida's methodological commitment to the proto-Cartesian, self-reflexive mode of thinking - in which the other, “the unthought,” is thought always in relation to the one that thinks - is that Derrida's other cannot but lose its unthinkable originality or foreignness; it becomes, ironically enough, *one* of Derrida's “other”s, *a* case of the typical Derridian other. Being aware, however, of the same kind of criticism Derrida makes of Foucault, of the thinker [ED 56ff/34ff] who allegedly made a grave mistake of neutralising the originality of pure madness by attempting to arrest it with a “trap” of “a restraining and restrained language of reason [ED 56/34],” we should perhaps rephrase the same thought by putting our point of criticism less strongly.

The revised thought should, nevertheless, include this: at best, Derrida's other is describable as the traumatic source of intrasubjective anxiety as opposed to as a generative ground for the intersubjective possibility of the other-involving ego. The other thus placed within the speculative landscape of the subject who thinks, is forced to participate in the intrasubjective economy of the same, in the sense that it acts as a “remaining” reminder that prompts the thinker to register the constitutive lack in the system of his thinking that strives for completion. In so far as Derrida's other serves this function of threatening a unity-oriented system of thinking, the thinker of the remainder cannot be said to think against the system of the one. As long as Derrida prefers to face this kind of discursive suffering and turbulence, he remains Cartesian, he remains a metaphysical insomniac, just like Descartes the sceptic.

In the following two sections of the final chapter, we will set about reading Derrida's reading of Descartes. For a specific analysis of the way in which Derrida's reflexive alertness produces a proto-Cartesian *mise en scène* of egocentric

predicaments, I have chosen “*Cogito et Histoire de la Folie* [ED 51-97/31-63]⁹,” in which Derrida counter-poses, not surprisingly and yet still interestingly, a sympathetic reading of Descartes and Descartes's madmen against the dismissive one offered by Foucault. Derrida's interpretation of the discursive status of Descartes's madmen is, in my view, correct in itself and consistent with his own philosophical positions. The question that interests us here is regarding the very correctness of Derrida's reading of Descartes and its consistency with his broader philosophical commitment to methodological Cartesianism¹⁰; we shall be concerned with the questions of why Derrida could not have gone wrong on this particular point and why Derrida cannot but read Descartes in the way he did. Derrida reads Descartes's madmen, as I will argue, as a Cartesian (madman). To anticipate the key contention of my reading, Derrida's defence of Descartes against Foucault's problematisation of Cartesian rationality is a (madly) rational, Cartesian one.

For a close reading of Derrida, I will concentrate only on the passages directly relevant to the key concerns of this study. My analysis focuses on the way in which Derrida deals with the reflexively “haunted,” Cartesian self, a modern man in self-afflictive¹¹ reflection, a man in a philosophical or metaphysical madness.

⁹ From here, all the page numbers referenced shall be those appearing in this essay, unless noted otherwise.

¹⁰ Therefore, the question of whether he misreads both or either of Foucault and Descartes is rather a secondary concern in this enquiry, although not irrelevant.

¹¹ In an illuminating exploration of the “masochistic” dimension in postmodern or poststructuralist discourse on desire, some typical examples of which can be found in Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*, and Foucault's *Care of the Self*, Nick Mansfield [1997, see particularly 78-87] identifies this poststructuralist personae as the “masochistic subject” “engaged in an endless process of self-destruction and self-expression [87].” I would locate the origin of this movement in the *cogito* argument, to the highly regulated rationalist order of which both Foucault and Derrida *subject* themselves. In so far as both of them acknowledge the difficulties in breaking away from this historically constituted, Cartesian mould of thinking, they remain Cartesian; and yet, and in so far as Derrida has some fundamental doubts about the viability of Foucault's “pathos” which explores a non-Cartesian path of thinking, which desperately attempts to break this silence, which emphatically gestures towards the “other” of Cartesian Reason, Derrida remains, I would argue, more masochistically faithful to the philosophical patriarch, Descartes, than Foucault does. Interestingly, Mansfield also mentions the Derridian subjectivity as a variant of the Barthes-Foucauldian [78]; also of interest to us, in line with this psychoanalytic reading of the philosophical impulse of auto-criticism, is a similar study on “masocriticism” by Paul Mann [1994: 3-29] which discusses, mostly, Deleuze's treatment of masochism.

Accordingly, the object of analysis is limited¹² to the ways in which Derrida, in his defence of Descartes against Foucault, uses his strategy of reflexive thinking, closely similar to those reflective “turns” of thinking we have discovered in Descartes [chapter 4].

Following the argumentative order of Derrida's essay, the first phase of discussion [5.3 A Turn That Maddens], offers a reading of Derrida's rationalist violence exercised on Foucault's path-breaking “pathos [60/37].” The suggestion underlying this scheme of reading is this: given that it is Foucault, and not Derrida, who problematises the Cartesian violence of exclusivist rationalism, Derrida's effective defence of Descartes against Foucault can be read as a Cartesian revolt against a (pathological) kind of philosophical romanticism, against a pathos-governed way of thinking; a good example of philosophy's romantic naïveté Derrida brings to the fore in this essay is Foucault's nostalgic pathos for some “non-Cartesian” madmen, the kind of men that Descartes has to ignore, forget, and exclude, for the sake of the constitution of the reasonable world of autonomous subjects. Section 5.3 will therefore show Derrida as a staunch defender of Cartesian rationalism.

The second phase of discussion [5.4 The Narration Narrating Itself], the last section of the thesis, concerns Derrida's direct engagement with Descartes. In particular, the analysis focuses on Derrida's understanding of Cartesian reflexivity, i.e. Derrida's interpretation of what it means for Descartes to “reflect”; the focus of reading shall be laid on one particular, lengthy paragraph where Derrida allows Descartes to appear onto his own stage of reflexive thinking as a madman in reflexive affliction, as a man in metaphysical madness, precisely as the kind of man that, according to Derrida, Foucault wrongly argues Descartes has excluded from his discourse. This section will therefore present Derrida as radical Cartesian thinker who explores the hyperbolic dimension of Cartesian trajectory. My aim in having

¹² Other directly relevant texts - Foucault's direct reply to Derrida [Foucault 1972] and Derrida's indirect response to him via Freud [Derrida 1992] - will not be discussed in the text; my central concern here is to read Derrida and Descartes.

Derrida encounter Descartes this way, i.e. both through Foucault and directly, is to elucidate the deeply proto-Cartesian dimension of Derrida's deconstructive project.

5.3 A Turn that Maddens

The "subversive" force of the Derridian "logic of interruption" lies in the fact that it discloses an inevitable and constitutive impurity in any philosophical trajectories, philosophy here taken as a rigorous science, the kind that both Descartes and Husserl have envisaged. Derrida's "hypercritical"¹³ move uncovers the hypocrisy of philosophy. According to Derrida [57ff/ 35ff], "Western reason" has been hypocritical, and, more importantly, cannot but remain so, or, to be more precise, cannot rule out the possibility that it will remain so, inasmuch as it has been constructing, and cannot but construct, its founding values on the basis of the other of logos being necessarily eliminated; and this act of elimination, "the act of force (*coup de force*) [69, 71, 84/43, 44, 45, 54]" cannot but remain un-critical or pre-critical inasmuch as Western reason cannot overcome, in principle, this constitutive inability to incorporate madness within it, madness taken as an "other" of logos. Judged in a higher court of reason, i.e. seen from a higher-level position, self-critical, modern reason is particularly guilty of hypocrisy, because its self-identity is constituted through a pre-critical elimination of the uncritical; hence, by implication, the hypercritical force of Derridian reason is less guilty, less impure, insofar as it is hyper-aware of the ineluctability to repeat this metaphysical guilt. Whence does then, one may be led to ask at this point, the hypercritical force of Derridian reason come, if not from the hyperbolic force of Cartesian reason? We will keep this question in mind as we move on.

¹³ Dupuy [1994] aptly characterises this hyper-move of Derridian auto-deconstruction as the "self-deconstruction of every pretension to autonomy [93]."

Derrida, accordingly, interprets Foucault's reading of Descartes as a most complicated and sophisticated example where the violent and ineliminable force of logos is at work. What Derrida aims to reveal is Foucault's "hypocrisy,¹⁴" which runs deep in his seemingly friendly gesture towards the other of Cartesian reason. We must see, Derrida stresses, the other side of the Foucauldian archaeology of madness, which turns out to be *de facto* another Cartesian project. Derrida's message, in other words, is this: at a most fundamental level, at the level Foucault's self-consciousness has not reached, and cannot reach, he is no stranger to Descartes, the founding father of modern rationalism. Derrida's allegation is that Foucault repeats the same kind of rationalist crime against madmen that Descartes committed earlier.

Derrida's strategy, thereby, is to ironise Foucault. His tactic is to make it possible to interpret his "master's [51-2/31-2]" attempt to articulate the "silent murmurs" of madmen, i.e. to capture "the silence *itself* [58/36]," "the madness *itself* [56/33-4]," as the most subtle and underhand suppression of pure madness. The mistake the master has made, most subtle and yet fatal, which the disciple is at pains to point out, is that Foucault has mistaken A for B, A being a *de facto* "maddest [56/34]" rationalist project to re-silence the pure madness, and B, the *de jure* Foucauldian "archaeology of silence" which putatively allows the pure silence to "speak for *itself*": the master thinks he is doing B, but in fact, he is doing A, argues the disciple. The problem, allegedly, is that Foucault either pretends dextrously or believes naïvely that he engages in the latter, a genealogy, when, in fact, what takes place, regardless, is the former, a project. Foucault's aporia Derrida highlights is that his inescapably "rationalist project" attempts to render possible an impossibility. Of this aporia, as Derrida notes very carefully [59-60/36-7], Foucault himself is very well aware. None the less, Foucault's awareness of this aporia is not exhaustive or extensive to the paralytically hypercritical degree, to which Derrida's is: this is the claim Derrida is making here implicitly, which the readers ought not to miss.

¹⁴ See Boyne [1990: 58-59] for a similar interpretation.

According to Derrida, Foucault is playing an inevitably losing game by trying to overcome, by reason, reason's constitutive inability to face or experience the otherness of its other, in this case, to experience the "madness *itself*." Foucault's irony Derrida brings to the fore is that Foucault neutralises the originality of madness by attempting to articulate the very unutterable¹⁵ originality; in other words, Foucault repeats the same logocentric sin that he himself accuses Descartes of having committed, by allowing himself to be involved in the same old rationalist crime as Descartes's, albeit in a less direct and more deceptive manner than Descartes did. Thereby, the only solution Derrida can think of [58/36], in his less pretentious agony over the terrible and interminable "misfortune of the mad," is either just to shut up completely or to mumble away silently, "following the madman down the road of his exile."¹⁶

If, as Derrida insists, the following is indeed the case:

All (tout) our European languages, the language of *everything (tout)* that has participated [...] in the adventure of Western reason - *all* this is the immense delegation of the project defined by Foucault under the rubric of the capture of objectification of madness. *Nothing (rien)* within this language, and *no one (personne)* among those who speak it can escape the historical guilt [...] which Foucault apparently wishes to put on trial. But such a trial may be impossible, for by the simple fact of their articulation the proceedings and the verdict *unceasingly (sans cesse)* reiterate the crime. [58/35]

¹⁵ "To say madness without expelling it into objectivity is to let it say itself. But madness is by essence what cannot be said; it is the "absence of the work (*l'absence d'œuvre*)" as Foucault profoundly says [68/43]."

¹⁶ *Either* do not mention a certain silence (a *certain* silence which, again, can be determined only within a *language* and an *order* that will preserve this silence from contamination by any given muteness), *or* follow the madman down the road of his exile. The misfortune of the mad, the interminable misfortune of their silence, is that their best spokesmen are those who betray them best; which is to say that when one attempts to convey their silence itself, one has already passed over to the side of the enemy, the side of order, even if one fights against order from within it, putting its origin into question. [58/36]

If “*nothing* within this language,” *nothing* in the philosophical language of the West that forms the basis of the hypocrisy of “Western reason,” can represent the true interests of the madmen, therefore, if we, the Western men, are all “guilty” of this silent crime that crushes another silence, then, the one who speaks *of* this truth and nothing but this truth is, at least, less guilty than all the others who merely and silently “reiterate the crime.” Derrida, as he insists, is also one of “us”; he is bound to fail to retain a clean consciousness. None the less, as he implies, his consciousness is more sanitised than all the others, for he has taken the quasi-transcendental step of thinking, i.e. for at least he attempts to step outside the tradition in which we are all implicated. In short, what Derrida does here is to claim that his ethical consciousness is the least contaminated of all, if not the purest. In the absence of absolute purity, the higher court of Derridian reason rules that what matters now then is the degree of impurity, the less, the better.

In the interests of sanitation, Derrida then *must* go insane in a certain sense, insanely clean, as it were. Mental sanitation requires, in Derrida's case, a certain kind of metaphysical insanity. This is the force of Derridian reflexion; as Derrida says, emphatically, “a “madness” *must* watch over thinking [Poi 349-75/339-64¹⁷, “scare quotes in original”].” Reflexive reason's impossibility of going mad, of dealing with natural or clinical madness, in turn, generates a thought afflicted by its own self-inscribed limit, a reflexively reiterative thought that remains “maddening,” metaphorically speaking. The point where clinical madness comes to mark out an impossibility of reason to be otherwise or the “inadmissibility [74/47]” of the other of reason into the order of reason, this point where the other is to be excluded from the order of reason “by decree [74/47],” in turn, is precisely where philosophical madness becomes a necessity, a must. It is at this point that philosophy must actively

¹⁷ In French original, this interview bears a short interesting description that reads, “*Refusing to build a philosophical system, Derrida privileges experiences and writes out of “compulsion.” A dialogue concerning traces and deconstruction.* [Poi 349]”

hypothesise another madness, *as if* in madness - therefore, in *quasi*-madness -, in order to “keep distance [84/54]” from the actual or real, clinical madness which is definable as the lack of reflexive self-awareness. Therefore, as Derrida rightly points out [85/55], the truth and act of the *cogito* is valid, “at its moment, under its own authority, *even if I am mad*, even if my thoughts are completely mad¹⁸,” i.e. even if my senses are incorrigibly deluded. Thereby, two different senses, levels, and forces of madness, empirical and meta-physical, are to be registered [see 81ff/50ff]; and the philosophical madness takes place in the meta-level self-consciousness. In this sense, when Derrida insists ““madness” *must* watch over thinking,” the act of quasi-madness he advocates can be understood as an act of Cartesian reflexion, a Cartesian adventure into the night of meditations, a Cartesian staging of the experiences of insomnia, namely, the Cartesian vigil.

Apparently, a tenaciously constitutive problem remaining in Derrida's move, in his quasi-transcendental move that “must” absolutise the force of reflexion, is his “imperative,” i.e. the “must (*il faut*)”; and this problem, Derrida's system of thought cannot and must not tackle head on, for a structural reason. The Derridian imperative pursues the Derridian thinker like a torment, a torment that becomes, thereby, an obsession¹⁹; Derrida, the Cartesian thinker, is again pursued by the evil genius, a generic foreigner to the world of pure interiority. The question we are to raise, in turn, is whether the Derridian force of reflexion can override this force of affirmative imperative, namely, the blinding force of reflexion itself. Earlier [2.3], I argued that there is always already in Derrida's system of thinking a final and focal point that remains un-deconstructed, and I identified it as the Cartesian “law” of thinking; this point of absolute self-certainty, of absolute resistance, which refuses to collapse into

¹⁸ “*Dans son instant, dans son instance proper, l'acte du Cogito vaut même si je suis fou, même si ma pensée est folle due part en part.*”

¹⁹ Before asking whether insanity must be excluded or mastered - that is to say, domesticated - by philosophy, one must try to think its *obsession with* (obsessive fear for; *la hantise*) madness: a certain way in which philosophy is regularly *visited, haunted, inhabited (habitée)* by madness. There is a domesticity of “philosophical madness.” [D 611-2/16]

a nothing, is a point where the auto-critical force of Cartesian reason comes into play. Now, Derrida's use of the typically Cartesian diction of extreme binarism in the passage above, i.e. "all" or "nothing," indicates, again, that there is a certain gestural movement towards meta-level mastery of the text, which remains unarticulated, therefore, which remains operative and operative only as a blindingly "maddening" force of reflexion. This implicit meta-level discourse acts as the fundamental, and yet invisible, philosophical ground upon which Derrida's injunction to us to become rigorously "mad" can be justified. In other words, the Derridian discourse that characteristically employs the self-implicatively totalising words of "all" or "nothing," indistinguishably resembles a transcendental phenomenological discourse where totalising words such as "all" and "nothing" are privileged for its ultimate and pure self-referentiality²⁰ over empirical words such as some. Such an upward movement of reflexion generates a meta-logical space of thinking which renders a totality of thoughts incomplete in relation to that which remains to be thought, namely, the unthought. This type of meta-thought of incompleteness remains vague and obscure²¹ for it, by definition, defies a clear-cut definition.

I suggested earlier that the Derridian reflection's "upward drive" can be read as a quasi-transcendental move of self-consciousness towards a kind of meta-purity, a purity that in-corpor-ates empirically contaminated thoughts of the limits within its interiority. To incorporate the empirical into the transcendental through formalisation is not so much to allow the discourse to be actively contaminated as to protect the

²⁰ See Fink [1988: 13-19, § 3. The "Self-reference" of Phenomenology]

²¹ This level of meta-awareness cannot but remain vague, since it cannot be defined as such, cannot be defined otherwise than as that which defies phenomenal objectification. D.M Armstrong's analogy of the "unscanned scanner" is a good illustrative example that explains why this level remains constitutively and structurally obscure:

If we make the materialist identification of mental state with material states of the brain, we can say that introspection is a self-scanning process in the brain. The scanning operation may itself be scanned, and so on, but *we must in the end reach an unscanned scanner*. However, the unscanned scanner is not a logically unscannable scanner, for it is always possible to imagine a *further* scanning operation. Although the series logically must end somewhere, it need not have ended at the particulate place it did end. [1968: 110]

Between Derrida's "sun" as in the "hyper-impossibility (of complete reflection) [...] in the singular obscurity of this sun [SN 35/45]" and Armstrong's scanner, there seems to be a conceptual intimacy.

meta-systematicity of the discourse from being further contaminated. In Derrida's economy of thinking, incorporation, therefore, amounts to a meta-level act of sanitisation. In this sense, de-construction is de-contamination, if not purification. One method by which Derrida sanitises the empirical "dirtiness" of the signified, I argued, is to formulate the inevitable aporia of contamination by using a tightly structuralised, and formally recyclable, diction of the *double* bind, i.e. the Derridian grammar of "two texts, two hands, two visions, two ways of listening. Together simultaneously and separately [MP 75/65].²²"

Now, let us then look at the way in which Derrida's "mad" commitment to preserve the meta-purity of contaminated thoughts, his meta-move to place them within a securely inscribed, meta-reflexive discourse, generates a voice of authorial certainty in his discourse, which one can identify as a voice of Descartes [see 4.2]. Why this meta-assurance has gone, and more importantly must go, unnoticed by the thinker of vigil himself, in spite of, and more importantly by virtue of, the vigil - this question that explores the paradoxical nature of Derridian vigil is what the next couple of pages shall address. The relevance of this specific question to our broader concern in reading Derrida, Derrida taken as a committed Cartesian, as a thinker with a blind commitment to the Cartesian method of vigil, shall be also shown in the course of analysis.

The point I would problematise, following Roy Boyne [1990], is simply that "Derrida's reason *assures* him that reason-in-general cannot be surpassed [1990: 60]." Derrida says, and says emphatically,

There is no Trojan horse unconquered by Reason (in general). The *unsurpassable (indépassable)*, irreplaceable (*irremplaçable*) and imperial grandeur of the order of reason, that which makes it not *just another actual* order or structure (*une structure de fait*), a determined historical structure, one

²² "*Deux texts, deux mains, deux regards, deux écoutes. Ensemble à la fois et séparément.*"

structure amongst the possible ones, is that one *cannot* speak out against it *except* by being for it, that one can protest it *only* from *within*; and *within* its strategic domain (*qu'on ne peut en appeler contre elle qu'à elle, on ne peut protester contre elle qu'en elle, elle ne nous laisse, sur son proper champ, que le recours au stratègème et à la stratégie*). [58-9/36, translation revised]"

Derrida's certainty about his impossibility thesis, which is the driving force behind his argument against Foucault, is problematic and intriguingly so. First, I will explain in what specific sense it is problematic, and then, why this problem cannot be resolved in Derrida's system of thinking in any decisive manner; hence, an intriguing aporia.

First, Derrida's assurance is deeply ironic. It is because, on the one hand, what Derrida problematizes "rigorously" is precisely the theoretical certainty underlining the Foucauldian adventure beyond Western reason, and yet, on the other hand, he does not raise any doubts about his own certainty that underlies this move. The reason why I qualify Derrida's argument specifically as being "ironic," instead of describing it as self-refuting or one-sided, is because, more interestingly, one can level at Derrida exactly the same kind of allegations that Derrida has levelled at Foucault. The point I am highlighting is not only that Derrida's argument is potentially self-refuting, but, more significantly, that this potentiality seems to be suppressed in his text. The discursive force of infinite counter-arguments is already there in Derrida's text; this is what is meant by the potential presence of the force of self-refutation. It is inscribed on the very "path" of thinking Derrida has chosen to follow; in what way?

Derrida's contention is that Foucault advocates the possibility of the genealogy of silence, first, as if he could "speak"²³ [53/32]" "the language of the

²³ "When one attempts, in a general way, to pass from an obvious to a latent language, one *must* first be *rigorously sure* of the obvious meaning. The analyst, for example, *must* first speak the same language as the patient. [53/32-33]"

Other,” and, second, “as if he *knew* what “madness” means²⁴ [66/41].” That is to say, what Derrida tries to undermine is the set of implicit presuppositions underlining the Foucauldian trajectory. The first presupposition is that reason-in-general can articulate the hitherto silenced dimension of madness; and the second, by implication, is that reason-in-general could be *otherwise* than as it is. It is in this context that Derrida asks, in turn, “will it not be possible to interrogate *certain* philosophical and methodological presuppositions of this history of madness? [54/33]”

Now, simply and likewise, one can pose exactly the same kind of threefold “investigative” and “rigorous” question to Derrida. In other words, any one who follows the Derridian path of argument can be forced - if caring to be forced - to ask the kind of questions that call into question the metaphysical presuppositions upon which Derrida's counter-argument is based. By adopting the Cartesian-Husserlian vocabulary of “rigour,” “investigation,” “a necessity to be assured,” Derrida, a closeted Cartesian foundationalist with a fundamentalist bent, is bound to provoke a reading by another foundationalist of the same kind who, in turn, by force of argument, cannot but put the presuppositions of his discourse in doubt. Unquestioned assumptions Derrida makes here must be, in turn, called into question, by force of his argument; thereby, the parody *must* go on.

Let us go on. Firstly, can Derrida be rigorously sure that he is “speaking the language of one,” at the time when he is speaking of Foucault's inability to speak the language of the other? Does he not already presuppose that he would always already, i.e. inevitably, “speak the same language” as the logocentric language of the practitioners of psychiatry? Likewise, secondly, can Derrida be then “rigorously” sure that the “logos itself [56/34]” cannot be otherwise? Does he not unduly exaggerate the forcefulness of the force of logocentrism, “as if he knew what logos means?” Finally, therefore, our hypothetical Derridian enquirer will then be led to ask, finally,

²⁴ Everything transpires (*se passe*) as if Foucault *knew* what “madness” means (*comme si Foucault savait ce que “folie” veut dire*). Everything transpires as if, in a continuous and underlying way, an *assured and rigorous* precomprehension of the concept of madness, or at least of its nominal definition, were possible and acquired. [66/41]

“will it not be possible to interrogate *certain* philosophical and methodological presuppositions of this history of” logocentrism, which allegedly could not but silence pure madness, even in its most rigorously altruistic attempt to represent the silence itself? Now, if so, if Derrida must, by force of argument, give positive answers to the first two questions and, thereby, if the last point of our hypothetical Derridian contender is rendered valid, what could be the theoretical grounds of this level of certainty that the historical Derrida retains? What could be the theoretical grounds, on the basis of which he proposes the following thesis? The logos itself, in principle, *cannot* be “mad,” “mad” in the natural and clinical sense, as long as it is protected by its generic *impossibility* of being so, in other words, as long as the natural threat of clinical madness will always already be overcome by a metaphysical madness staged at a higher level of critical rationality.

I repeat: what could be the theoretical grounds supporting this level of certainty, the certainty about the inadequacy of logos, if not the “unsurpassable, unique and imperial grandeur of the order” of the Cartesian reason, which Derrida takes for granted as a historical given? Now, are we not here being reminded of Descartes’ argument which insulates the territory of the *cogito* against the hypothetical threat of clinical madness? At this point, note that Derrida’s strategy is to subvert Foucault’s position by highlighting the insurmountable force of the logos itself, “the syntax of reason [70/36-7],” to which, putatively, the Foucauldian discourse is subject. Again, what Derrida does is to show that he is the least naïve of “all” of “us,” less naïve than his “master,” Foucault. Derrida’s determined stance of anti-naïveté, manifest in this particular move against Foucault, hinges on a set of twofold Cartesian presuppositions: first, he cherishes the cognitive value of anti-naïveté, and second, he privileges the discursive force of logocentrism which can override any naïvely - that is to say, unreflectively - transgressive moves. In short, the irony here is that a blind faith in a possibility of the non-exclusivist non-Cartesian reason (Foucault’s) is refuted by another blind faith in an impossibility of the non-Cartesian reason (Derrida’s). The only difference is that the former is, allegedly,

more naïve than the latter; the thinker situating himself in the former position is less reflective than the one in the latter. Foucault's discourse is therefore, Derrida purports to show, one "step" short of Derrida's. Then, which brand of blindness, one might wish to ask at this stage, is more insightful, and more advanced, in other words, more ironic?

Derrida's (meta-)certainty about this matter, as I have indicated earlier, is ironic in an intriguing way. He seems to have no other choice but to assume that he is certain, at last; he seems to have no other choice but to proceed, regardless. And this kind and level of metaphysical pretentiousness is necessitated for a strategic reason - which is to imply that to stop at this stage and conclude that Derrida's argument is inconsistent, therefore, flawed, would be perhaps to expose only a half of the problem at stake. At least, and at last, Derrida *must act as if* he were certain, in other words, "the disciple *must* [...] start to speak [52/32]²⁵," for, otherwise, i.e. without this assumption, the disciple's discourse that challenges the master's would either collapse into a pre-Cartesian realm of the pre-critical, natural madness which lacks precisely this dimension of reflective self-consciousness, or recede into a higher level metaphysical madness induced by the hypercritical force of reflexion at work. As Derrida himself well pointed out [58/36], in either of these two cases, he would have to remain silent, anyway, first, silent as an outcast from the world of the intelligible, whose (non-) voice is a priori stifled by the dominant force of reason, and second, silent as a most rigorous Cartesian metaphysician, as an internal revolutionary attempting to arise from within the tradition plagued by "the fundamental permanence of the logico-philosophical heritage [63/39]," and yet, who only has to delay his action for the lack of a more proper or adequate word to pronounce. Therefore, this level of absolute certainty, this irony, this inconsistency, this

²⁵ [...] This interminable unhappiness of the disciple perhaps stems from the fact that he does not yet know - or is still concealing from himself - that *the master*, like real life, *may* always be (*est peut-être toujours*) absent. The disciple *must* break the glass, or better the mirror, the reflection, his infinite speculation on the master. And start to speak (*commencer à parler*). [52/32]

dissension, this decision to leap into an act of faith - to "start speaking" - at a certain point, is a necessary condition for the metaphysical viability of Derrida's discourse; he must act, must start attempting to utter his words. Without this implicit commitment to arrive at, and secure, a vantage point of the macroscopic reason, his argument against Foucault would not hold. To generalise this point, Derrida the author of the Derridian text not only cannot see the irony his text performs, but, more importantly, must not do so. The force of Derridian reflexion is such that the validity of his own position also needs to be put into doubt. However, he does not, and, I highlight again, must not let happen this stifling act of self-silencing, for this is an un-economic move in terms of the production of a text that "speaks for itself"; or rather, for the same reason, he must let the same act happen in a less silent, that is, more articulate, way.

Derrida's strategy, thereby, is to allow the metaphysical silence to articulate itself. We have reached the point where the limits of reflective reason have become the very concern, if not the tangible intelligible object, of the analyst; hence, Derrida's reflection on the logos, on the logos "itself" that escapes the cognitive grasp of the rational being. His attempt is to alert himself to this inability of reason, to this failure of historical logos. His urgency is "maddening" in this regard. Given that, as he argues, natural madness cannot but be thus silenced *a priori*, the possibility that remains viable is to let the metaphysical madness articulate itself from within, in the diction of meta-physics, in other words, in the language of fiction. This, Derrida emphasises, is the one and only way in which - the only and necessary detour through which - logos can have access to its other, i.e. its madness within: it is only by going through this bypass, according to Derrida, that metaphysics can experience its own exteriority.

The power of the Cartesian mind lies in its capacity for fiction, its ability to represent itself in the form of fiction. Its extreme agility allows, for example, a simulation of the natural experience of madness; and this metaphysical simulation of natural madness takes place in a safely secured, mental space of pure hypothesis. In

view of this capacity of the mind to open itself up to the hypothesis of madness, it would be, Derrida argues [71ff/45ff²⁶], deeply unfair to complain that madness has been excluded from the Cartesian territory of reason.

The second phase of Derrida's argument against Foucault is concerned with marking out the ineradicable place of madness in the Cartesian metaphysics. This move may seem rather confusing as well as confused; earlier, he argued that logos cannot be mad; and this time, he argues that logos cannot not be mad. Apparently, this move is not meant to be read as a naïve fallacy of contradiction. This seemingly flawed move, however, is legitimate, for Derrida uses the different senses of madness in the two different phases of argument, respectively: in the first case, natural madness, and the second, metaphysical madness. In this sense, one can say that the argumentative structure of Derrida's text hinges, firstly, on this distinction and, secondly, on the discursive move based on the validity of this distinction, all of which he, quite rightly in my view, seems²⁷ to identify as the Cartesian as well as his. The textual movement from natural madness to hyperbolic madness - the pedagogical dismissal of the first and the metaphysical admission of the second - is exactly what Descartes follows, as Derrida well points out [see 74-80/48-51, in particular]. Descartes the sceptic's hypothesis of the otherworldly world, a world that is otherwise than what it looks like, is rather a mad thought, as a naturally demented person would entertain exactly the same thought. The difference, however, lies in that the same thought cannot be dismissed as simply "mad," when it enters the realm of fiction, that is to say, in so far as the thought appears in the hyper-critical phase of hyperbolic doubt, and not in the natural phase. Put otherwise, the critical difference lies in that metaphysical madness can be even "madder" than natural madness, for its

²⁶ This phase of argument is prefaced by Herder's aphorism on madness, which laconically sums up Derrida main contention: "there had to be folly so that wisdom might overcome it [71/45]."

²⁷ Derrida does not spell out clearly this thesis himself; however, the distinctive difference between the two is clear both in Descartes's argument and Derrida's exegesis of Descartes. More importantly, Derrida must maintain this implicit distinction in order to advance his argument, as we will see why more clearly later on.

delusion is deliberative, that is to say, for there is no "force" of reflective deliberation in the natural phase of madness.

Hence, we have Derrida's eulogy [81ff/52ff] of the Cartesian *hyperbolism* or "hyperbology,"²⁸ which he deliberately contrasts with Foucault's naïve condemnation of Cartesian determinism, of the Cartesian exclusion of madness; "everything that was previously set aside as insanity under the name of *extravagance* is now *welcomed (accueilli)* into the most essential interiority of thought [82/53, translation revised]." The irresolvable, therefore fatal, aporia implicated in this move that welcomes the other, which Descartes's text, in turn, suppresses by means of taking a further step of interiorisation, and which, by contrast, Derrida "welcomes" again by means of taking a further step of exteriorisation, is that this excessive and self-distancing movement of "hyper-" keeps "introducing" silent "subversion to pure thought [82/53]"; the "subversive" force of hyper-reflexion is thereby repressed in the case of the former (Descartes), and expressed in the latter (Derrida). An extra, "feint" move of hyper-reflexive reason in which the thought violently exposes itself to its exterior, i.e. to that which has not been thought-out, must happen, Derrida insists; this fictive, and yet, radical gesture of exteriorisation, must happen, Derrida insists. The mime, therefore, must continue.

5.4 The Narration Narrating Itself

It would be not only natural, but inevitable for a faithful reader of Derrida to anticipate an "extravagant" level of reflexivity in Derrida's reading of Descartes; it is, at this point, hardly surprising to learn that Derrida the reader had to plunge himself, armoured with strategies, into the task of allowing "the (Cartesian) narration to narrate itself [88/58 (my insertion)]." This next step of reading, which Derrida must

²⁸ Interestingly, in a similar manner, Derrida makes a complimentary remark [D 636-8/40-42] on Lacoue-Labarthe's "hyperbologic," which, "programmes the inevitable effects of a "logic" of mimesis [D 636/41]. "

and does follow, is illustrative of the way in which Derrida's discourse "welcomes" the maddening force of metaphysical scepticism. Derrida not only allows, but, rather forces, the intra-metaphysical hyperbolic move to take place.

In proposing to read the "narration that narration itself" in Descartes's text, Derrida's aim is to bring into light the ultra-formalistic, trans-historical, meta-dimension of Descartes's historical narrative. The dimension to which Derrida is referring is where "the narration narrates itself": it is, in other words, the meta-dimension of hidden narrativity which resists being exhaustively narrated by an historical narrator. Derrida attempts to reach this zero-point of thought in the course of reading [81ff/52ff] Descartes's "critical" or "hyperbolic" phase of the "properly" "philosophical" madness. Derrida's intention, as he says, is to provide a properly hyper-"sensitive (*très sensible*) [59/36]" reading that protects the formalistic purity of the metaphysical madness of Cartesianism from the Foucauldian attack or contamination of structuralist, historical determinism. What Derrida does here is to purify and protect, in other words, not to contaminate further; he protects the purity of transcendental contamination from a further empirical contamination; he protects the originary purity of philosophical madness from a historical naming of it. Thereby, Derrida's thematic interest lies in stepping beyond the historical Descartes narrated by the historical Foucault, into the originary realm of logos where "reason and madness have not yet been separated [91/58]." Note below that, for this reason, Derrida is determined to avoid any historical determinism; and that, for the same reason, his consequential hyper-determinism derives its formal-logical resources from the hyperbolic dimension of Descartes's reflexive epistemology.

I believe (Je crois) [...] that (in Descartes) everything can be reduced to a determined historical totality except that hyperbolic project. Now, this project belongs to the narration narrating itself (récit récitant) and not the narration narrated (récit récité) by Foucault. It cannot be recounted, cannot be objectified as an event in a determined history. [translation revised, 88/57-58]

What is hyper-deterministic about this passage is that, whilst arguing against historical determinism, i.e. the historicisation of Descartes's narrative, Derrida is rigorously deterministic about the distinction between the transcendental level of narration and its historical manifestation; accordingly, Derrida wishes to leave the transcendental level intact. Observe here that he draws on the diction of reflexivity in order to show the mode in which narration resists being historicised: "the narration narrating itself." Derrida takes it for granted, or rather actively assumes, that the originary "law" of narration should conform to a certain minimal form of reflexivity, which may not necessarily be "ours" or "historical." But, how does Derrida know that the law of narration can be put in such terms? The putatively alienating force of originary narration, thus represented by Derrida in this mechanical formulation, carries a terribly familiar ring around it: a meta-narrative that transcends historical narratives, the "narrativity itself" which narrates itself, appears to be tamed and tailored by the economy of formulaic thinking: the autonomy of meta-narrativity is, according to Derrida's formulation, guaranteed by its putative automaticity. The putative homogeneity between autonomy and automaticity at stake, which Derrida's formulation presupposes here, should remain only hypothetical and epistemological; he, however, already assumes that the putative mode of this relationship is, and must be, real and ontological. Apart from the issue that this assumption remains to be justified, there is a more serious problem with this move Derrida is making: his unquestioned commitment to the reflexive model of thinking precludes the conceivability of other models of originary thinking: simply, the philosophical possibility Derrida's system of thinking does not allow in advance is that the originary narrativity of narration may have a radically heteronomous, ontological structure inconceivable in the diction of reflexive self-referentiality such as "the narration narrating itself." One must ask whether Derrida's attempt, with his reflexive formula, to measure the magnanimity of the "undetermined," of the "unknown," is a

legitimate move, given his talk of the inevitable failure of thought to transcend the empirical. By what right can Derrida make this move?

The Derridian way to liberate the originary narrativity of narration from its historical constraints, as is economically exemplified in this single phrase, “the narration narrating itself,” is to recast it in a “quasi-”transcendental structure of indifference; hence, his search for the kind of ahistorical “narration that narrates itself,” which has been, and will have been, repeatedly consumed throughout the history of narration, and which, at the same time, remains, and will have remained, inexhaustible. With this Derridian turn of reflexion, a historical narrative transforms or translates itself into an effect of meta-narration; it becomes a fate and not a fable - the “fable” of Descartes [see 4.2], for instance. Implicit in the automaticity of auto-narration are, therefore, both the vigour and the void; the vigour of thinking in Derrida comes from reflection's desire for the void; the vigour is, for Derrida, the becoming-void, the emptying-out of the empirical. Derrida, thus forced to think in this Derridian line of thought where the other is systematically given a secure place within the highly unified order of reflexive reason, must find a way to ensure, on the one hand, that this break between the transcendental narrativity of narration and its empirical cases is maintained, whilst, on the other, securing the self-same mode of reflexive complicity between the two non-identical realms of thought. Thereby, he is forced to submit his empirical discourse to a higher order of reason [89-91/158] where reason takes care of “itself” in its auto-immunised, automaton-like transcendental narrativity, where the originary kind of madness, the “madness itself,” which “has not yet been separated from the logos,” maintains its “instantaneous and [...] most intense (*la plus aiguë*) [91/58]” experience of auto-narration.

The Derridian locus of limit-experiences where discursive reason acknowledges its empirical and historical limits, is precisely where the self-implicated deconstruction of the self becomes, and must become, an auto-critical endeavour; the self in this case is therefore the narrative subject. Here, a particular attention ought to be paid to the tenacious non-absence of the auto-critical subject in

Derrida's discourse. There is the subject that experiences the auto-criticism, i.e. the subject of reflection: the subject with an irreducible desire for transcendental reflection. Put otherwise, deconstructive narrative is not an impersonal happening of "the narration that narrates itself," as long as there is the "there" of most intense experience, the "là" of "*il y a là cendre* [C 21]," that is to say, as long as there is the subject that bears witness to this happening. As long as Derrida's text absolutises this necessity of deconstruction to become auto-critical in its tending towards its ultimate, and yet indefinite, reference, "là," which, as Derrida emphasises, is not "là," this logical move of Derrida which draws on the discursive force of negative self-effacement cannot but retain a reflexive form of argument. In the same vein, it is to be emphasised again that it is his text's "meta-awareness" of the force of this law at work, and not "the law itself" that is a condition of the narrative production of his "heterological" "hauntology." Again, implied in this claim is that the condition under which Derrida operates his paradoxical economy of heterological writing is epistemological or ideal rather than ontological or material [See 3.2]. Insofar as the Derridian hauntology refuses to renounce its ultimate loyalty to its proto-type, i.e. the Cartesian hyperbolics, the epistemological tenacity of his discourse, in turn, reinforces the discursive status of Derrida as a Cartesian, who is perhaps more Cartesian than Descartes himself, for following the true spirit of rigorous Cartesianism. Derrida, in this regard, is a contemporary neo-Cartesian.

Another good example may help us conclude the chapter. Immediately after the paragraph quoted above, where Derrida asserts that the more originary project of Descartes "belongs to the narration narrating itself," which is a project that opens itself up to the infinite possibilities of metaphysical hyperbolism, Derrida's machinery of reflexion, as if pre-programmed, in turn, comes to "reflect (*réfléchir*) [89-93/58-60]" on the moments of hyperbolic excess exhibited in the Cartesian scenes of "reflections." In all of five different, and yet interrelated, meta-reflections on the reflective turns the *cogito* argument effects, Derrida highlights the significant discursive roles the Cartesian acts of "reflection" play in the constitution of Cartesian

system of thinking. Following Derrida, I suggest we reflect on these five cases of Derridian reflection on Cartesian reflection.

For a start, to “cogitate” in a Cartesian manner, is to conjecture, to offer a thought, to “proffer” a rather “extreme” thought to oneself, to present a possible case of fictive thought to the court of reason [89/58];

As soon as Descartes has reached this extremity, he seeks to reassure himself, [...] to identify the act of the *Cogito* with a reasonable reason. And he does so as soon as he *proffers* (*profère*) and *reflects* (*réfléchit*) the *Cogito*. That is to say, he *must* (*doit*) temporalise the *Cogito*, which itself is valid only during the instant of intuition, the instant of thought being attentive to itself. [89/58]

In the same vein, Derrida says, “Foucault’s interpretation seems to me illuminating from the moment when the *Cogito must reflect* and *proffer* itself (*doit se réfléchir et se proférer*) in an organised philosophical discourse [91/58].”

Second, the next move of the *cogito* is then to “retain” its own excess thus economised, as opposed to wasting it on an unorganised hyperbole; and the *cogito* must perform this act of self-interiorisation in a movement that returns to this order of economy of self-representation in order not to go mad, that is, in order to prevent the ego from receding further than that. “For if the *Cogito* is valid even if for the maddest madman, one must, in fact, not be mad, if one is to *reflect* it (*le réfléchir*) and *retain* it (*le retenir*) [...] [89/58].” Having ceased to be natural, the “I” of the *cogito* must live as a function of calculated myth, a function in the economy of narration; all “hyperbolic wanderings” must “take shelter,” and are to be “given assurance within the order of reasons, *in order once more* to take possession of the truths they had left behind (*pour reprendre possession des vérités abandonnées*) [90/58].”

Third, this necessary “assurance” comes from the generic ability of the Cartesian reason to utter the *cogito* [See also 1.31]; in other words,

[...] if the *Cogito* is valid *even* for the madman, to be mad²⁹ [...] is not to be able to *reflect* (*réfléchir*) and to *say* (*dire*) the *Cogito*, that is, not to be able to make the *Cogito* appear as such for another (*pour un autre*); *an other who may be* (*peut-être*) *myself*. [91/58]

The “I” of the *cogito* is a case of the other, “an” other that may be myself. The *cogito* argument is an economy of doubt and one model of self-doubt, amongst possible ones, because it specifically turns to the following thought, because it wholly invests in the following conjecture, because it exclusively investigates the following possibility: I am an other that may be myself. However, to be more precise, at this point, Descartes is less cautious and more urgent than Derrida. The Cartesian project of reflective ontology, whose economy unfolds towards a single end, and not a “double” end, cannot afford to allow the “may be” any longer, longer than it necessitates. Descartes, to recall, does not “have the time for” further conjectures. Therefore, at this point, the Derridian *peut-être* must give way to the Cartesian *ergo*. Descartes must, therefore, conclude, instead: I am an other that *is* myself.

The difference at stake is this: the only, and yet crucial, difference between Descartes and Derrida, at this point, is the difference between awareness as an

²⁹ Highly instructive in this regard is Deleuze's view [1968: 169-217/129-167 'L'image de la Pensée'] on a discursive function of the Platonic moment of “recognition”: in contrast to “encounter (*rencontre*) [182/139],” “recognition [...] *measures and limits* the quality (of contrary perceptions) by *relating* it to something, thereby *interrupting the mad-becoming* (*arrête le devenir-fou*) [184/141].” Noteworthy is the conceptual relationship between the notion of recognition Deleuze talks about in reference to Plato's *Republic*, and the Cartesian reflexivity which “interrupts,” therefore, secures itself from the possibility of “becoming mad.” A clue for understanding the conceptual affinity between the two, I suggest, is the notion of “collaboration,” which Deleuze sets out to discuss in the opening pages of the chapter, where, interestingly enough, the notion of the Cartesian *cogito* is introduced as a prime example of thought's self-image [167-175/129-134]. As Deleuze says, and says rightly, the *cogito* is “the unity of all the faculties in the subject [174/133]” as well as “the collaboration of the faculties for ‘everybody’ [174/133];” “it thereby expresses the possibility that all the faculties will relate to a form of object which *reflects* the subjective identity; it provides a philosophical concept for the presupposition of a common sense; it is the common sense becoming philosophical [174/133].” This motive of “collaboration” of all the senses, all the faculties, and all the multiple selves potentially existing within “a” unitary self, towards the constitution of such a self, of such a sense of subjective self-identity, is indeed the key point Derrida also highlights, as we will see shortly.

arrested assurance and awareness as an affirmed agony. It is a difference between a movement of thought that returns to the intelligible order of reason and a movement of thought that allows a higher order of reason to return (*revenir*); a difference between regulation through liberation and allowance through delimitation; a difference between a return to the known and a return of the unknown; a difference between a move towards familiar interiority and a move away from interiorised interiority towards a deeper level of interiority that remains to be interiorised.

Thereby, "Cinders there are (*il y a là cendre*) [C 21]"; the Derridian cinder is that which haunts the metaphysician's house of "one". The house of the philosopher must, therefore, domesticate not only Descartes but a Descartes, not only the historical Descartes but a hypothetical Descartes, the "mad" metaphysician, the man who would be, by force of reflection, forced to throw himself in at the deep end of the flames of reflection. The house of the philosopher must, therefore, bear witness to this man who would still watch himself in madness, burning and burnt, at the same time. This is a must, the Derridian injunction. Conflagration must take place, and the show must go on, regardless. This is what Derrida demands in the absence of, and following the order of, Descartes, the Master.

Surely, in this regard, as Derrida stresses, "in any event, the *Cogito* is a work as soon as it is assured of what it says. *But (mais)* before (*avant*) it is a work, it is a madness³⁰ [92/59]." Derrida's final remark on Descartes's reflection is uncannily fit to use as our concluding homage to Descartes:

The act of the *Cogito*, at the hyperbolic moment when it pits itself against madness, or rather lets itself be pitted against madness, *must (doit)* be repeated and distinguished from the language or the deductive system in which Descartes must inscribe it as soon as he proposes it for apprehension and communication, that is, as soon as he *reflects* the *Cogito* for *the other*, which means *for oneself*

³⁰ "*Le Cogito [...] est folie avant l'œuvre.*"

(*dès qu'il le réfléchit pour l'ature, ce qui signifie pour soi*). It is through this relationship (*rapport*) to the other as an other self that meaning assures itself against meaning and nonmeaning. ... And philosophy is perhaps the assurance given against the anguish of being mad at the point of greatest proximity to madness. *This silent and specific moment* could be called *pathetic (pathétique)*.
 [93/59, ... in the original, omitted in the translation]

A "pathetic" show must go on, Derrida insists. Thereby, the "a" of *différance* is to be staged again, and staged silently. In this pathetic show, it is, therefore, the tears of silence that see, not the eyes;

-Tears that see ... Do you believe (*Vous croyez*)?

-I don't know, one *must (il faut)* believe ... [MA 130/129³¹, translation revised]

I must, then, ask, again: ... *vous croyez*?

³¹ This is the final sentence with which the text ends.

A Concluding Note

“Il y a là cendre.” One must see, with tears, that which cannot be seen, according to Derrida, the blind Cartesian; one must work not only with ashes, but, in the midst of ashes, ashes of reflexive consciousness. To bear witness to that which remains to be seen, regardless: this is the Derridian imperative of thinking, which Derrida follows and follows dutifully. Derrida’s preference for doubt over certainty is pre-reflective, and in this regard, strangely assuring. Descartes comes before Derrida, stays with Derrida, and continues to haunt Derrida, in the sense that the Derridian mode of reflection is, always already, embedded in the epistemological structure of methodological Cartesianism, or put in more general terms, in the epochal order of Cartesian metaphysics. As long as Derrida, the rigorous Cartesian, chooses to suffer from the ordeal of transgressive reflection to which reflexive reason is subject, one cannot but be tempted to believe, there in the Derridian scene of reflection, *il y a la là-cendre*.

The very temptation to define Derrida as a Cartesian thinker, I hope to have articulated in this study; this temptation, I hope to have shown, is logocentric in the same way the transgressive gesture of deconstruction is. Deconstruction’s ultimate desire for reference, for the “very” thing that remains to be deconstructed, cannot but remain undeconstructible for the very logical reason. The proto-Cartesian, phenomenological self-referentiality of the self, to which the deconstructive force of reflexion is subject, is where deconstruction’s reflexive, in other words, discursive, limit is to be found; this limit, accordingly, delimits, as well as defines, the critical scope of deconstruction, deconstruction taken as a philosophical trajectory that attempts to transcend the limits of philosophy by philosophy. Metaphysical fatalism inscribed in the stylised self-reflexivity of Derrida’s metaphysical moves can be viewed as productive in that the historical condition of “Western philosophy” it reflects, viz., the Cartesian predicaments of modern philosophies, can be brought into light by deconstruction’s meta-reflective moves; it is, however, problematic, in that the very discursive force of deconstructive meta-reflexivity leaves the thinker, consequently, blind to other possible models of doing philosophy. This ambivalence of deconstruction, one may call, the paradox of deconstructive insight.

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