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The Unlimited Responsibility of Spilling Ink

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Abstract

In order to show that both Derrida's epistemology and his ethics can be understood in terms of his logic of writing and giving, I consider his conversation with Searle in *Limited Inc*. I bring out how a deconstruction that is implied by the dissemination of writing and giving makes a difference that accounts for the creative and responsible decisions that undecidability makes possible. *Limited Inc* has four parts and I will interpret it in terms of the four main concepts of Derrida. I will relate signature, event, context to Derrida's notion of dissemination and show how he differs from Austin and Searle concerning the notion of the signature of the one who writes and gives.
Next, I will show how in his reply to Derrida, entitled, "Reiterating the Differences", Searle overlooks Derrida's thought about the communication of intended meaning that has to do with Derrida's distinction between force and meaning and his notion of *differance*. Here I will show that Searle cannot even follow his own criteria for doing philosophy. Then by looking at *Limited Inc*, I show how Derrida differs from Searle because repeatability is alterability. Derrida has an ethical intent all along to show that it is the ethos of alterity that is called forth by responsibility and accounted for by dissemination and *difference*.

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> Of course, comments on comments, criticisms of criticisms, are subject to the law of diminishing fleas, but I think there are here some misconceptions still to be cleared up, some of which seem to still be prevalent in generally sensible quarters. J.L. Austin, "*Unfair to Facts*"

It was the project of modernity to ground ethics in epistemology. Descartes thought that if we could with our reason establish the three metaphysical roots of the tree of knowledge namely the *cogito*, God and matter, we could then on that foundation explain, physics, mechanics, medicine and morals.

It has been the task of all the existential-postmodernists to show that accounting for ethics within the limits of reason alone is not enough. Kierkegaard set ethics within the wider context of faith and Nietzsche within the *ethos* of a joyful wisdom. Derrida

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continues their way of accounting for ethics in terms of what he calls the gift of responsibility. He thinks that since Hegel, the logic of writing, which is also the logic of the pharmakon and the logic of the gift, has become possible. His understanding of responsibility is set in the ethos of a *pre-arche* writing and a *pre-arche* giving.

In order to show how Derrida's epistemology and his ethics can be understood in terms of this logic of writing and giving, I will consider his conversation with Searle in *Limited Inc*, in order to bring out how a deconstruction that is implied by the dissemination of writing and giving makes a difference that accounts for the creative and responsible decisions that undecidability makes possible.

Limited Inc has four parts and I will interpret it in terms of the four main concepts of Derrida. That is, I will relate signature, event, and context to Derrida's notion of dissemination and show how he differs from Austin and Searle concerning the notion of the signature of the one who writes and gives.

Secondly, I will show how in his reply to Derrida, Searle overlooks the insight about the communication of intended meaning that has to do with the distinction between force and meaning and Derrida's notion of *differance*. Here I will show that Searle cannot even follow his own criteria for doing philosophy.

Next by examining *Limited Inc,* I will show how Derrida differs from Searle because repeatability is alterability. This "alter" which is in the Sanskrit word ITER is the basis for Derrida's ethics. Both "alter" and "iter" motivate Derrida to develop his

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philosophy of dissemination and *differance*. Derrida has an ethical intent all along to show that it is the ethos of alterity that is called forth by responsibility and accounted for by dissemination and *differance.*

In the fourth part of this paper, I will deal with Derrida's notion of the responsibility that governs his ethical and political thinking. I will primarily concentrate on his notion of revolutions that as yet have no model.

I Communicating the Nuclear Traits of Writing

> But I owe it to the subject to say, that it has long afforded me what philosophy is so often thought and made barren of- the fun of discovery, the pleasures of co-operation, and the satisfaction of reaching agreement. J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses"

One of Derrida's first publications was a translation of Quine's article "The Frontiers of Logical Theory".[1] It is therefore somewhat ironic or perhaps even normal that opponents of Derrida's writings have come from the Anglo-American analytic school of philosophy.[2] Throughout his authorship, Derrida has shown sensitivity to dimensions that the Anglo-American philosophers have overlooked or deliberately ignored. While Derrida has used the principle of charity when discussing the writings of analytic philosophers such as Quine or Searle, they have not used the same criteria when reading him.

Derrida, despite assertions to the contrary by analytic critics, does not deny the necessity of employing classical methods of textual exegesis. Derrida shows that the text does have an edge. In other words, there must be a point of departure. However,

the edge, frame or center has never opened a reading. Derrida's disconcerting law of dissemination invokes a shifting of interpretive spaces or contexts. The result is a shifting interpretive topology where philosophical, political, ethical, or religious positions no longer remain protected by the exclusionary policy of a restricted analytic economy.

Take the word, "communication" for example. In "Signature Event Context", Derrida asks whether the word communication can communicate "an identifiable meaning, a describable value".[3] The word communication, opens "a semantic field which precisely is not limited to semantics, semiotics, and even less to linguistics".[4] To communicate designates the act of sharing, imparting or transmitting knowledge, information, a secret or a pleasure. To communicate is also to give or deliver over something tangible. To communicate is to participate, it is to speak or write to another; it is to join and to have in common. Derrida adds that one can communicate a movement, a tremor, and a shock or "a displacement of force".[5] For Derrida, the literal or proper meaning is problematic because it must not be pinned down to one meaning which is what the analytic tradition wants to do. For Derrida, the issue will be the problem of polysemia and communication and dissemination.

Derrida's insight is that the context in which a communication takes place, "is never absolutely determinable".[6] Due to the disconcerting law of dissemination, neither context nor the event of communication can be saturated with absolute certainty. Such a stance does not imply that intelligibility, truth or meaning have been abandoned. Derrida wants to show that analytic philosophy is marked by a theoretical

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insufficiency when it has dealt with the notions of signature, event, and context.

The disconcerting law of dissemination displaces the concept of writing so that writing can no longer be included in the category of communication, understood solely in the restricted sense of transmitting meaning. It is self evident that writing is a means of communication "which extends very far if not infinitely, the field of oral or gestural communication".[7] Writing understood in the usually accepted sense merely opens, "the same field to a much greater range,"[8] while remaining essentially homogeneous. According to Derrida, writing has been represented in this manner "in the entire history of philosophy".[9] The written text of philosophy in Derrida's view cannot be contained within a homogeneous order since whatever is written overflows and cracks its meaning. Far from leading to relativism or any sort of indeterminism, Derrida's analyses expose the violence of the analytic limit that restricts, constricts and confines. To show the limiting character of a philosophy that designs itself to have mastered its margins requires rigorous analysis. It is through the disconcerting law of dissemination that Derrida raises the stakes of what is involved in analysis. *To write otherwise* is to solicit the limit, is to shake the whole and make it tremble.

Through an analysis of Condillac and Warburton, Derrida emphasizes the role that the value of absence has in their writings on communication. The value of absence "will risk introducing a certain break in the homogeneity of the system".[10] Condillac's notion of absence and the role it plays in communication is never fully examined by him. By taking into account the value of absence Derrida points out that, "writing no longer would be a species of communication, and all of the concepts to whose

generality writing was subordinated (the concept itself as meaning, idea or grasp of meaning and idea, the concept of communication, of sign etc).”[11]Derrida gives the distinguishing features of writing given through the insights of dissemination. Derrida refers to these traits as “nuclear”. Writing breaks with the horizon of communication. The horizon of meaning is punctured by writing. Dissemination replaces polysemia as the concept of writing. Within this context, nuclear can be understood as a cluster, kernel or as the inner portion of a seed. These nuclear traits, “break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely non-saturable fashion”.[12] It is this excess without limit that can appear to generate nihilism. However, by escaping the horizon of the unity of meaning, dissemination engenders a patient, open aporetic analysis that is in constant transformation. Derrida shows how the beginning or *arche* of writing refers to the absences that writing makes possible. The possibility of these absences and the impossibility engendered by them is known as *arche-ecriture*. Writing describes the intervals between marks and their objects; between addressers and addressees.

II Announcing the Force of Truth

> Here the natural economy of language operates: if the words already available for simple cases suffice in combination to describe a complicated case, there will be need for special reasons before a special new word is invented for the complication. J.L. Austin, “A Plea for Excuses”

In this section I want to show that in his reply to Derrida’s “Signature, Event, Context”, entitled “Reiterating the Differences”, John Searle misses Derrida’s point concerning the communication of intended meanings that has to do with Derrida’s distinction between force and meaning which is linked to his notion of *differance*.

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In understanding and unraveling Searle's reading of Derrida I will follow the advice that Searle gives from his recent *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*.[13] Searle writes,

> When confronted with an intractable question such as is presented by a clash of convictions, don't accept the question lying down. Get up and go behind the question to see what assumptions lie behind the alternatives the question presents.[14]

And

> The fact that there are no universally accepted procedures for solving philosophical problems does not mean that anything goes, that you can say anything or that there are no standards.... In philosophy there is no substitute for a combination of original, imaginative sensibility on the one hand, and sheer intelligent, logical rigor on the other. The rigor without sensibility is empty, the sensibility without rigor is a lot of hot air.[15]

I will take the last quotation as an admission that Searle's reading of Derrida is mistaken and continues to be mistaken because Searle has not followed his own criteria in dealing with "intractable questions". Searle admits:

> The methods that I employ are more adequately described, at least in the first stages as logical or conceptual analysis. I try to find the constitutive elements of consciousness, intentionality, speech acts and social institutions by taking them apart and seeing how they work. But truth to tell, even that is a distortion of the actual methodology in practice. In practice, I use any weapon that I can lay my hands on, and I stick with any weapon that works.[16]

So Searle admits that *anything goes*; that he uses "any weapon" that he can lay his hands in order to cut through philosophical problems. Searle declares that when the truth is told, there is a discrepancy between methodology and practice. Based on these

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admissions, it is puzzling when Searle claims in *Mind, Language and Society*, that he will respond, "to various aspects of the postmodern challenge"[17] to the Enlightenment.

Searle sees himself as representing the Anglo-American tradition of philosophy that responds to the "relativism" of the "collective" movement known as "postmodernism", by making "a modest contribution to the Enlightenment vision".[18] Perhaps such an undertaking has it merits, but Searle is mistaken when he includes Derrida among the "relativists postmoderns" without a) having carefully read Derrida's writings, b) without giving any textual evidence of his claims and c) without engaging in a close textual analysis of Derrida's writings (which is something one would expect a "philosopher of language" to do).

Searle believes that he is an Enlightenment realist and argues that the truth is before us in plain view and can be expressed in plain language. While defending the position that the problems of philosophy are created by philosophy itself, Searle never looks at the contesting claim that the problems noted by Derrida come out of the Enlightenment. Searle accepts Enlightenment claims to scientific certainty *a priori* and declares any challenge to that "optimism" such as relativity, quantum theory, Gödel's demonstration of the incompleteness of arithmetic and Freud's psychoanalytic discoveries as intellectually feeble and dubiously motivated.

For Derrida, writing is characterized by its force. He writes "a written sign carries with it a force of breaking with its context, that is, the set of presences which organize the moment of its inscription".[19] It is this essential drifting that troubles Searle. For

Derrida, "this force of breaking is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written".[20] For Derrida, the organizational principles of unity and coherence have played an unnecessary exclusionary and repressive role in the philosophical tradition. Derrida's work does not dispense with such classical exigencies but rather works out the theoretical and practical system of these borders.

In Derrida's view, Searle has an unnecessary restrictive paradigm that recoils against positions that do not fit within his definition of what constitutes doing philosophy. By professing to liberate the and the force of the interrogative, Derrida frustrates inclinations to terminate the interrogative. Derrida's writing calls us to displace the strategies of containment with the strategies of *differance.* Truth is an abyssal event; a folding of one mark against another mark. In contrast to the fusion desired by analytic philosophers, Derrida's writing yields an undecidable oscillation.

To place the object of interpretation in an abyss is to generate understandings of a text that do not yield to a simple, fused horizon of meaning. Far from being a destruction of meaning, the methodology of writing *en abyme,* destroys the claim to unequivocal hegemony of one unified meta-narrative over another narrative. It permits multiple dimensions to interpretation.

The Anglo-American analytic tradition as represented by Searle calls for a denial of the otherness of the other; that is, a denial of alternative conceptions which fail to cohere with our own conceptual schemes. The existence of alternative conceptual schemes or worldviews is deemed incomprehensible. Unlike Searle, Austin shows a

great deal of interpretive charity. In a paper entitled "A Plea for excuses" he writes, "But I owe it to the subject to say, that it has long offered me what philosophy is so often thought, and made barren of- the fun of discovery, the pleasures of co-operation and the satisfaction of reaching agreement."[21] When asked by an interviewer from the German magazine *ZIF*, "So are you one of the children in the fairy tale that strip the emperor of his non-existing clothes?" Searle responds,

> In some ways I like the analogy with the child that is saying that he emperor has no clothes ... I had a similar experience when I debated certain so-called deconstructionist philosophers such as Derrida. It seems to me there is nothing there. It's largely show with no underlying substance ... the joy of philosophy comes from trying to get knowledge and understanding of difficult areas.[22]

By way of response, a number of points (in ordinary language) can be made. First, Derrida has never claimed to be an emperor. He has never claimed to be a deconstructionist philosopher or a "so-called deconstructionist philosopher". If Searle had read Derrida's works, he could never claim that "there is nothing there". In fact, there is so much in Derrida's writings that Searle cannot comprehend the force of Derrida's insights.[23] In other words, Searle has not attempted to understand the difficulty of Derrida's works.

While I am in agreement with Bennington's insight that Searle and others have given "unargued condemnations and risibly ill-informed,"[24] I want to show that there is much to be learned from Searle's "debate" with Derrida. While I disagree with everything that Searle has written about Derrida, his article, "Reiterating the Differences" and his "Response to Derrida" in the *New York Review of Books* has the great merit of raising serious questions. After having studied Searle's "reply" it is

evident that Searle is misrepresenting his own problem and it must be admitted that

the misrepresentation is pretty consistent.[25]

III Talking Seriously with Searle[26]

> On a festive occasion you are ordered, for a forfeit, to pretend to be a hyena:
> going down on all fours, you make a few essays at hideous laughter and finally
> bite my calf, taking, with a touch of realism possibly exceeding your hopes, a
> fair-sized piece right out of it. Beyond question you have gone too far. (In these
> circumstances. But if Nero ordered you, in the arena, to pretend to be a hyena, it
> might be unwisely perfunctory *not* to take a piece right out.) J.L. Austin,
> "Pretending"

When repeatability is seen as alterability, the alter as *iter* or other becomes the basis

for Derrida's *ethos* of alterity. Searle misses that Derrida's *ethos* of alterity that is first

called forth by responsibility and accounted for by dissemination and differance.

Derrida writes,

> Adventurous because this strategy is not a simply strategy in the sense
> that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal or telos or theme of
> domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the field. Finally a
> strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics or empirical
> wandering if the value of empiricism did not itself acquire its entire
> meaning in its opposition to philosophical responsibility.[27]

Published in 1968, the essay "Difference" exposes us to the force of Derrida's ethical

aporetic insights. To delineate differance is to give a different perspective on ethics.

Differance is strategic because it is of great vital importance. It is designed to upset so

called sources of political, economic, moral and theological power. The strategy of

differance is not the science or art of employing military force. It is the art of

deploying an ethical force.

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Derrida points out that empiricism and epistemology have acquired their meaning in opposition to philosophical responsibility. Empirical, epistemological "wandering" or dissemination gives a new meaning to responsibility. Derrida views the philosophical tradition as adventurous. An adventure is an enterprise, an undertaking or a performance involving the uncertain or the unknown. Adventure signals the *adventus* or the arrival of the new. The word "new" can be traced back to the Latin *novus* and the Greek *neos*. The word "new" may be added to the list of Derridean undecidables such as *pharmakon*, supplement, trace etc. "New" means having existed or having been made but for a short time or having been seen or known but for a short time, although perhaps existing before. Derrida's epistemology and his aporetic ethics are to be understood in terms of the new logic of writing.

The three characteristics of writing as 1. iterable, 2. a force that breaks with its contexts and 3. whose spacing permits disengagement and grafting, carries over and into Derrida's aporetic ethics. The point of Derrida's reply to Searle or Sarl can be summarized as follows. Searle, representing the Anglo-American analytic school of philosophy, sets up a Society with Limited Responsibility (*Sociétéà Responsabilité Limitée*). *SARL* as the self-proclaimed heir of Wittgenstein, Austin and Quine, limits and restricts the stocks of the analytic corporation residing at the University of Berkeley.[28] Derrida, however, writes that he considers himself to be in many respects quite close to Austin.

Derrida appreciates the contributions of the analytic tradition. He reads texts as iterable. The tradition is iterable. For Derrida, unlike Searle, iteration alters,

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something-new takes place. Sarl, the "theoretician of speech acts" has a view of writing that is narrow by confining himself to a certain interpretation of phonetic writing, indeed to the alphabetic model, to the a b c's of logo-phonocentrism.

Searle sees Derrida's reading of Austin as harmful and dangerous. Derrida praises speech act theory as fundamentally important and productive. Yet Searle writes, "Derrida has a distressing penchant for saying things that are obviously false"[29] Derrida's point is that Searle's reading of Austin is harmful. Searle's reading of Derrida is harmful.[30] It is based on gossip, which is one form of communication to be sure, but it is not very responsible.[31]

In the collision of these positions taking place between Oxford and Paris, we are not looking for a Californian *Aufhebung* that would somehow reconcile Berkeley with Irvine. Given that California is the state of theory, we are not looking for a symphonic agreement aimed at finality (something that Searle wants), but a cross-cultural fecundation.[32] If one draws rigorous consequences from the insights of iterability it can deconstruct oppositional limits. The implications of iterability extend to areas such as ethics, politics, economics, etc, to transform our communicative spaces in a revolution that yet have no model.

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IV Addressing the Amodal Revolution

> But whatever the defects of either of these two movement- the 'verification'
> movement or the 'use of language' movement- at any rate they have effected,
> nobody could deny, a great revolution in philosophy and, many would say, the
> most salutary in history. (Not, if you come to think of it, a very immodest claim).
> J.L. Austin, "Performative Utterances"

What are the ethical and social-political lessons to be drawn from this revolution that yet has no model? Derrida makes clear that deconstruction, as recontextualization does not amount to relativism or nihilism. Deconstruction is rooted in a given context but in one that is differentiated Derrida's aporetic ethic is engaged in the world of context. Most commentators see relativism or nihilism in these formulations. However, Derrida sees an increase in responsibility.

How can these insights be applied? First it has to be noted that it is simply untrue that Derrida's contribution to political thought remains as elusive as ever.[33] His early articles such as "The Ends of Man", "Declarations of Independence", "Nelson Mandela: In Admiration", "Racisms Last Word" and books such as *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe, Specters of Marx, Force of Law, Politics of Friendship, Cosmopolites de tous les pays,* testify to Derrida's commitment to questions of justice. Rather than explicate all of Derrida's texts dealing with political issues, I will only bring out those details that intersect with Searle's concerns.

In an interview with *Reason Magazine*,[34] Searle gives the following insights regarding his own approach to social-political engagement: "I've always been active in civil

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liberties issues — I believe in human rights and especially the right to free speech and free expression ... this was in December of 1961 and at that point I decided this university was not deeply committed to free speech." Searle goes on to explore Derrida's "bad arguments" and proceeds to tell the interviewer the following incredulous account,

> With Derrida you can hardly misread him, because he's so obscure. Every time you say, "He says so and so", he always says, "You misunderstand me". But if you try to figure out the correct interpretation then that's not so easy. I once said this to Michel Foucault who was more hostile to Derrida even than I am, and Foucault said that Derrida practices the method of *obscurantisme terroriste* (terrorism of obscurantism) We were speaking French. And I said to Michel, "What the hell do you mean by that?" And he said, "He writes so obscurely you can't tell what he's saying, that's the obscurantism part, and then when you criticize him, he can always say, 'You didn't understand me, you're an idiot'. That's the terrorism part. And I like that. So I wrote an article about Derrida. I asked Michel if it was OK, if I quoted that passage, and he said yes.

It is difficult to know where to begin pointing out the flaws in Searle's reading of Derrida. Given that Searle sees his philosophical work as a continuation of the Enlightenment's scientific and philosophic program, his remarks against Derrida make any sane reader wonder which "Enlightenment" and what "program" Searle is defending? How can Searle claim to defend reason, objectivity and intellectual standards within the academy and outside of it, when his own remarks show a remarkable lack of interpretive charity? The fact that Michel Foucault may have called Derrida a terrorist that practices obscurantism only shows how low one philosopher descends when he does not allow his work to be criticized by a former student. In fact, Derrida's criticism of Foucault's work was so clear and distinct that

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Foucault could only make up *ad hominem* attacks. For if Derrida's criticisms were so obscure, Foucault would not have been so badly hurt.[35]

I contend that it is Searle and not Derrida who has embraced a destructive approach, such that anything which does not fit into Searle's definition of "philosophy" must be ridiculed and rejected before taking the time, effort and patience to understand what is being said. Searle's position shows a contemptuous rejection of Enlightenment values. Based on his comments, his politics can only be said to be exclusionary. Searle's attack against Derrida continued in an article entitled, "Rationality and Realism: What is at Stake?":

To those within the Western Rationalistic Tradition, these types of challenges have names. They are commonly called *argumentum ad hominem* and the genetic fallacy. *Argumentum ad hominem* is an argument against the person who presents a view rather than against the view itself, and the genetic fallacy is the fallacy of supposing that because a theory one claims has a reprehensible origin, the theory or claim itself is discredited. I hope it is obvious why anyone who accepts the idea of objective truth and therefore objective knowledge thinks this is a fallacy and that an argument *ad hominem* is an invalid argument.[36]

The obvious question would be if Searle sees that *ad hominem* and genetic fallacy arguments are invalid, why does he continue to use them against Derrida? Are they valid *only* for Searle *if and only if* he is "reading" Derrida? In his "reading" of Derrida and in every public forum where Searle has been given the opportunity to criticize Derrida's work, his arguments (sic) have made use of *ad hominem*, genetic fallacy and

cocktail party gossip. If we use Searle's comments against Derrida as a model then Searle destroys any legitimacy he has been given to talk about objective truth, reason and academic standards.[37] But all is not lost. There are a number of important things that a philosopher from the "continental" tradition can learn from the analytic school. For example, Bertrand Russell argues that the value of philosophy "must not depend upon any supposed body of definitely ascertainable knowledge to be acquired by those who study it. The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty."[38] It is interesting to see Russell locating the epistemology of embracing uncertainty and making this epistemic claim into a value or moral claim. This epistemic claim of uncertainty necessitates a moral inquiry that is based on the aporia. In light of this evidence, Searle is wrong to judge Derrida when Russell makes claims that are indistinguishable from Derrida's own.

To claim is to assent with conviction in the face of possible contradiction. To claim is also to cry out- *clamare*, which is also akin to *calare*, to call or summon. How does one begin to adjust these claims? *Calare* is related to the word *low*. To low is to call.[39] The claim that calls me takes place in the lowness of language, i.e. very close to the ground. Derrida contents that "one always works or thinks in a natural language, because therefore the absolute formalization or artificialization of language is impossible".[40] When a complete philosophical elucidation of any language is given (as Ayer wants), and that language is formalized, analyzed and reduced to symbolic notation, what happens then?

While Ayer asserts that it is the job of philosophy to provide definitions, he warns,

that "it must not be inferred that it is the function of the philosopher to compile a dictionary, in the ordinary sense".[41] Ayer's distinction between an explicit definition found in dictionaries and philosophical definitions of use is artificial. The nature of philosophical analysis proposed by Ayer and others, even if it adds a *qualitativ*e distinction and clears away misunderstanding in the way in which a word is used, results only in a *quantitative* buildup of *definitions.* In other words, what is the value of clearing away the ambiguity of the ambiguous word 'is' when there are more pressing concerns at hand? This is not to say that ordinary language analysis is without merit. Ordinary language analysis as practiced by Ayer may show how philosophers are responsible "for much of the confusion that infects their treatment of general propositions,"[42] but such a showing is without responsibility to the other. Philosophy reduced to grammar is not philosophy.

While analytic philosophers engage in questions such as whether good is defined in terms of right or right in terms of good or both in terms of value, they miss the other that calls in a cry beyond language. While Ayer asserts, "it is impossible to find a criterion for determining the validity of ethical judgements,"[43] Derrida is called a relativist for attempting to point out the relativism at work in such systems. Ayer's relativism receives little attention from Searle, even when it is most visible in statements such as, "We find that ethical philosophy consists simply in saying that ethical concepts are pseudo-concepts and therefore unanalyzable....it appears, then, that ethics, as a branch of knowledge, is nothing more than a department of psychology and sociology."[44] The reduction of things to linguistic problems may free us from metaphysics or even show us that "the metaphysician is a misplaced poet,"[45]

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but it contributes nothing to ethical, social or political questions.

Leslie Armour points out that when analyzing the human predicament, "the sum total of puzzles about value could not possibly fall before a single theory, however good it was".[46] Armour maintains that there is a tension in the structure of experience. This tension is between the individual and the community and between the immediate and the transcendent. This tension or anxiety is at work in Derrida's writings and a recent essay shows how this tension creates a different stance on political issues. Derrida writes,

> Not only are there other ways for philosophy, but philosophy, if there is such a thing, is the other way. And it has always been the other way: philosophy has never been the unfolding responsible for a unique, originary assignation linked to a unique language or to the place of a sole people. Philosophy does not have one sole memory....We must adjust our practice of the history of philosophy, our practice of history and philosophy...What I am saying here of philosophy can just as well be said, and for the same reasons of law and rights and of democracy.[47]

And

> The opposition between the so-called continental tradition of philosophy and the so-called analytic of Anglo-Saxon philosophy is not reducible to national limits or linguistic givens. This is not only an immense problem and an enigma for European or Anglo-American philosophers who have been trained in these such traditions. A certain history, notably but not only a colonial history, constituted these two models as hegemonic references in the entire world. The right to philosophy requires not only an appropriation of these two competing models and of almost every model by all, mean and women...the right of all (men and women) to philosophy also requires the reflection, the displacement and the deconstruction of these hegemonies, the access to places and to philosophical events which are exhausted neither in these two dominant traditions, nor in these languages.[48]

Derrida proposes the unreserved tension of competing paradigms that take place in a chiasmic communication. Such a position destroys in a constructive sense the claim to

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unequivocal hegemony of one tradition over other traditions. Such a stance gives an ethical account of the intolerance displayed by various interpretive communities, (i.e. Marxism, psycho-analysis, postmodernism or the tradition represented by Searle or the tradition he thinks he represents).

Derrida's work shares affinities with W.V. Quine's principle of the indeterminancy of translation.[49] Quine, paralleling Derrida's statement that every reading is a new writing, contends that interpreters can develop rival, equally convincing and incompatible interpretations. While much work remains to be done to Derrida's call for a cosmopolitical aspect of doing philosophy, Derrida's works with the undecidable informs us that we are always already dealing with the tension of shifting interpretive topologies. In the tension of this anxiety, every reading is a new writing. Decisions must be made in the face of a series of compelling alternatives. That there is no thematic unity to resolve such interpretive rivalry places greater responsibility one who decides in a state of anxiety. This greater responsibility is brought forth through our encounter with the aporia.

What distinguishes Derrida from Searle is Derrida's deconstruction of performative meaning. Searle wanted to legitimize performative speech acts as providing meaning, which can be used philosophically. Semiotics as the theory of signs distinguishes between syntactics, which is the relation of signs with other signs. This gives us connotational meaning. Semantics or the relation of signs with their referent gives us denotational meaning. Pragmatics or the relations of signs to their users gives us performative meaning.

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What Derrida is doing is to say that philosophers have always based philosophy on the meaning of signs. Searle and the speech act theorists emphasize the performative meaning of how the sign relates to users. Derrida's point is that no matter how many kinds of meaning or signs there are, we have to notice the force of the text and this force cannot be reduced to meaning. The distinction between force and meaning is important when Derrida deconstructs Searle. He goes from the performative meaning to the *perverformative force.* The simple performative cancels out the event that is full of force. The performative does not bring out the event because what is performed is limited.

The dissemination of signs gives us the force of meaning. There is an excess of signs. This force has a temporality based on differance. This brings us to deconstruction. Once we see that writing has dissemination, we see that it is in speaking as well. The written sign, the spoken sign, the conceptual sign and the transcendental signified are effected by dissemination thus making it a quasi-transcendental. Quasi-transcendental has process and relationality, which gives to it a force beyond any simple analytic meaning. Instead of this being relativism, there is an occasion to understand the leap of the decision over the abyss of undecidability. Only where there is undecidability can there be decisions.

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NOTES

1. Les frontière de la théorie logique de W.V. Quine (avec R. Martin) *Études Philosophiques* 2 (1964).

2. See Richard Rorty's humorous remarks in 'Derrida and the Philosophical Tradition' in his *Truth and Progress, Philosophical Papers, Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Rorty perpetuates a misreading of Derrida that sees him engaging in 'jokey and raunchy desublimizing', 332.

3. Jacques Derrida 'Signature, Event, Context', in *Margins of Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 309. Hereafter cited as SEC (un sens identifiable, une valeur descriptible), 17. Derrida's reply to Searle can be found in *Limited INC*, translated by Samuel Weber, (Northwestern University Press, 1988). Searle's reply to Derrida's SEC was entitled, "Reiterating the differences: A reply to Derrida. *Glyph* 2: 198-208, 1977)

4. SEC,309. (ouvre un champ sémantique qui précisément ne se limite pas à la sémantique, a la sémiotique, encore moins a la linguistique.), 17.

5. SEC, 309. (un déplacement de *force*.), 18.

6. SEC, 310. (n'est jamais absolument déterminable.), 20.

7. SEC, 311. (qui *étend* très loin, sinon infiniment, le champ de la communication orale ou gestuelle.), 20.

8. SEC, 311. (le même champ à une très longue portée.), 21.

9. SEC, 311. (dans toute l'histoire de la philosophie.), 21.

10. SEC,312. (risque d'introduire une certain rupture dans l'homogénéité du systeme.), 22.

11. SEC, 314-315. (l'écriture ne serait plus une espèce de communication et tous les concepts a la généralité desquels on subordonnait l'écriture (le concept lui-même comme sens, idée ou saisie du sens et de l'idée, le concept de communication, de signe, etc.), 26

12. SEC, 320. (rompre avec tout contexte donné engendrer a l'infini de nouveaux contextes, de façon absolument non-saturable.), 36.

13. John R. Searle, *Mind, Language, Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999). Hereafter cited as MLS.

14. MLS, 54.

15. MLS, 159.

16. MLS, 160.

17. MLS, 4.

18. MLS, 6.

19. SEC, 317. (une signe écrit comporte une force de rupture avec son contexte, c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des preéences qui organisent le moment de son inscription.) 30

20. SEC, 317. (Cette force de rupture n'est pas un prédicat accidental, mais la structure même de l'écrit.), 30.

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21. J.L. Austin, 'A Plea for Excuses', in *Philosophical Papers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 175.

22. Ralf Stoecker, 'Interview mit Prof. John R. Searle', *ZIF*, June 1999.

23. On the other hand, Austin is very close to Derrida. In his essay, 'Other Minds', Austin writes, 'A new language is naturally necessary if we are to admit unconscious feelings and feelings which express themselves in paradoxical manners, such as the psycho-analysts describe', 109. On the other hand, Austin is far from Derrida when he believes that philosophy is something that can be overcome. In his essay, 'Ifs and Cans', Austin writes, 'Is it not possible that the next century may see the birth, through the joint labours of philosophers, grammarians, and numerous other students of language, of a true and comprehensive *science of language?* Then we shall have rid ourselves of one more part of philosophy (there will still be plenty left) in the only way we can get rid of philosophy, by kicking it upstairs', 232.

24. Geoffrey Bennington, *Interrupting Derrida*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 16. In 'Limited Think: how not to read Derrida', Christopher Norris argues that Derrida wins the debate, 'not merely as a skilful rhetorician, one who contrives to tie Searle up in philosophical knots of his own creations, but also by far the more rigorous thinker and perceptive exponent of Austin's ideas', 147. For further discussions of the Derrida-Searle 'debate' see Jonathan Culler, 'Meaning and Convention: Derrida and Austin' *New Literary History*, Volume 8, 1981, 5-30, and Gayatri Spivak, 'Revolutions that as yet have no model: Derrida's *Limited Inc', Diacritics*, Volume 10, 1986, 29-49.

25. Here I am paraphrasing Austin. See his essay, 'ΑΓΑΘΟΝ and ΕΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ in the ethics of Aristotle' in *Philosophical Papers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

26. Derrida has shown that he takes Searle seriously. His seriousness and patience is evident in the engagement with Searle's reply. Not only does Derrida devote an entire book to explicating Searle's misreading of him, he utilizes the entire English alphabet from A to Z; letters that ordinary language philosophers have claim to have mastered.

27. Diff, 7. (Aventureux parce que cette stratégie n'est pas une simple stratégie au sens ou l'on dit que la stratégie oriente la tactique depuis une visée finale, un *telos* ou le thème d'une domination, d'une maîtrise et d'une réappropriation ultime du mouvement ou du cham), 7.

28. Searle's 'Statement of Teaching Philosophy' located at the University of Berkeley web site is illuminating for the hegemony it may inspire. We read, 'Most of my actual teaching efforts are devoted to undergraduates, and I can say now that my favorite students to teach in the whole world are Berkeley upper-division undergraduates in advanced undergraduate courses, the Philosophy of Mind, the Philosophy of Language and Social Philosophy. Such students have a combination of intelligence, enthusiasm, intellectual openness, and a kind of respectful skepticism that I believe is unmatched anywhere in the world. When I teach in Germany, for example, the first thing I have to do is train my students to act like Berkeley students... They are not used to asking questions in a way that challenges the professor while being at the same time respectful and observant of the rigorous logical standards of the discipline. I teach them to do this, and by the end of the semester they are raising their hands and arguing with me as vigorously as my Berkeley students. But when you are not in Berkeley, it takes an effort to get other students up to Berkeley level'. (my emphasis). One would need to devote a book perhaps to fully analyze the supremacy and close-mindedness that Searle is advocating. It is one thing to assert that syntax or the symbolic is insufficient to establish semantics as Searle does in his Chinese Room argument; another to argue that consciousness is as much an ordinary biological phenomenon as is digestion. However when Searle asserts that non-Berkeley philosophy students in Europe or elsewhere must be taught to think like his Berkeley students he merely perpetuates an intolerance that Europe is very familiar with.

29. In *Limited Inc*, 79.

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30. The question of *harm* cannot be addressed fully within this space. We would have to examine Searle's intentions. Were his mis-readings of Derrida done intentionally, deliberately, or on purpose? In Austin's words, Can something be done deliberately or purposely, but not intentionally? (Three Ways of Spilling Ink, 278). If Searle's mis-reading of Derrida was done deliberately, but not intentionally, i.e. done as a quick decision, without having the intention of doing harm, then we must conclude that his decision was incorrect. Did Searle deliberately harm Derrida without intentionally doing so? Was his 'response' done 'on purpose', yet not intentionally? Accidentally on purpose, perhaps?

31. The distinction between gossip and true speech was made by Jesus when he asked his disciples the question, 'Who do people say I am?', and 'Who do you say I am?'

32. In the concluding statement of his *Language Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover , 1952), 155, hereafter cited as LTL, A. J. Ayer makes the vexing statement, 'What we must recognize is that it is necessary for a philosopher to become a scientist, in this sense, if he is to make any substantial contributions towards the growth of human knowledge'. Is this then the final outcome; the concluding statement of ordinary language philosophy – 'philosophers become scientists'? Perhaps lexicographers who pose as philosophers should consider becoming scientists. On page 103, Ayer contends that 'a strictly philosophical treatise on ethics should therefore make no ethical pronouncements.' However he fails to see that his statement is already an ethical pronouncement.

33. A claim made by Catharine Zuckert in 'The Politics of Derridean Deconstruction', *Polity*, Volume XXIII, Number 3, Spring 1991.

34. Edward Feser and Steven Postrel, A Reality Principles: An Interview with John R. Searle, *Reason Magazine* February 2000.

35. Derrida has responded to his debate with Foucault in a recent text entitled *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*.

36. John R. Searle, 'Rationality and Realism: What is at Stake?' *Daedalus* 122 (4) Fall 1993, 55-83.

37. I will allow the American pragmatic philosopher John Dewey to answer Searle, proving perhaps that answers can sometimes come from the grave. In his *Theory of the Moral Life,* (New York, Holt, 1960),84., Dewey writes, 'Wrong consists in faithlessness to that upon which the wrongdoer commits when he is judging and seeking for what is good to him... He contradicts, not as Kant would have it, some abstract laws of reason, but the principle of reciprocity when he refuses to extend to others the goods which he seeks for himself'. Dewey clearly sees Searle's problem when reading other philosophers.

38. Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 156.

39. From the Greek *kalein* and the Lithuanian *kalba* or language.

40. Florian Rotzer, *Conversations with French Philosophers*, translated from the German by Gary E. Aylesworth, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 52.

41. LTL, 59.

42. LTL, 96.

43. LTL, 108.

44. LTL, 112.

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45. LTL, 44. Is the ordinary language analyst a 'misplaced grammarian'?

46. Leslie Armour, 'The Origin of Values', in *Ethics and Justifications*, edited by Douglas Odegard (Edmonton: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1988), 178.

47. Jacques Derrida, 'Of the Humanities and the Philosophical Discipline: The Right to Philosophy from the Cosmopolitical View', *Surfaces*, Volume 14, 7. French original not available.

48. Ibid, 7.

49. For indeterminancy in Quine see his *Word and Object*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), 26-80. And his *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 52. The link between Derrida and Quine needs to be further explored. See Edith Wyschogrod's groundbreaking essay, 'Time and Non-Being in Derrida and Quine', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Volume 14, No.2, May 1983, 112-126.

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