

Deconstructing the rhetoric of philosophy

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Summary

In this paper an attempt is made to demonstrate the *rhetorical* thrust of philosophy. Contrary to the traditional assumption, it is argued that rhetoric rather than logic motivates philosophizing. The "irrationalism" of Gorgias, the Sophist, as well as rhetorical elements in Socratic thought, are considered in this regard. This particular form of irrationalism is construed as a *liberation* from the fetters of rationalistic illusion.

Next, a brief investigation of Nietzsche's "deconstruction" of language and knowledge is undertaken. He is seen to operate in the same (sophistic) tradition. Then there is a section on the contemporary deconstructionist approach of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man who expose tropic activity within philosophical discourse itself. Finally, the interaction of Derrida and Heidegger is briefly examined, together with an assessment of the *hermeneutical* implications of the deconstructionist approach.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel word 'n poging aangewend om die *retoriese* dryfkrag van die filosofie te demonstreer. In teenstelling met die tradisionele opvatting word aangevoer dat retoriek, eerder as logika, die aanvanklike beweegrede van die filosofie is. Die "irrasionalisme" van Gorgias, die Sofis, sowel as die retoriese elemente van die Sokratiese denke word in hierdie verband bespreek. Hierdie besondere vorm van irrasionalisme word as die *bevryding* van die greep van die rasionalistiese illusie voorgehou.

Daarna volg 'n saaklike uiteensetting van Nietzsche se "dekonstruksie" van taal en kennis. Hy word in terme van dieselfde (sofistiese) tradisie benader. Vervolgens word die huidige dekonstruksionistiese benaderings van Jacques Derrida en Paul de Man, waarin die metaforiese aktiwiteit van die filosofiese diskoers blootgelê word, bespreek. Laastens word die verhouding tussen Derrida en Heidegger kortliks ondersoek, tesame met 'n kritiese waardering van die *hermeneutiese* implikasies van die dekonstruksie-benadering.

As soon as one is willing to be made aware of their epistemological implications, concepts are tropes and tropes concepts.

Paul de Man

... we are unwitting metaphysicians in proportion to the use/usary of our words.

Jacques Derrida

A burning issue in contemporary philosophical debate is the extent to which the particular language use of a philosopher influences or determines his or her concepts and conclusions. Nietzsche went so far as to declare that: "words are the seducers of philosophers: they struggle in the nets of language" (quoted in Schrift, 1983: 229). Though reflective of a more radically aesthetic or rhetorical position, these words are remarkably akin to the later Wittgenstein and may, fairly accurately, be taken to sum up the major insights of the analytical philosophical tradition. How did Nietzsche – or any of his contemporary followers – arrive at this conclusion? The present paper is an attempt to argue this case – of the crucial role of the rhetoric of philosophy – as contextualised in the contemporary hermeneutical-deconstructionist philosophical dialogue.

Like his sophisticated and wily predecessors whom Socrates took so seriously, the current French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, is not to be treated lightly. The sophists were eccentric, colourful, sceptical, ingenious, innovative and played philosophy. Indeed, they did not even take the rules of this game seriously, still less the “final truth” it professed to reveal. On reading Derrida one is not always sure how he means to be taken: literally or as engaging in disruptive caricature. In one sense his philosophy is an undoing of “the literal”, of “the serious” and of the whole logical system these terms reflect and presuppose.

The motivation of philosophy: logic or rhetoric?

Are the pronouncements of philosophers to be construed as transactions in propositions or in persuasion? Such is the crucial and challenging question confronting us at the outset of our investigation. Before we answer – or presume – glibly that the former, logic, constitutes the founding principle of philosophy, the following evidence against this assumption should be considered.

What is in question here is not the foundational role of language as such in the process of philosophising. The intimate connection between language and logic is an established doctrine, for instance, in the analytical tradition. One need only cite Russell’s question (which he answered in the affirmative): “Is Mathematics Purely Linguistic?” The *analysis of meanings* is the first if not the only task of philosophy. What we are exploring in this paper is the *mode* in which philosophy is motivated by language. The concept of language presupposed by analytical and traditional philosophy has been that of language as *representation*. In terms of this model, language refers to, represents, or even pictures, an (empirical) world or object in the world. This world is a world existing independently and in-itself, *outside language*.

In a searching article, “The Place of Language in Philosophy; or The Uses of Rhetoric” Anthony J. Cascardi has called this “long-standing alignment of language and epistemology” into doubt. He notes that the July 1948 symposium of the Aristotelian Society asked the following question: “Are All Philosophical Questions Questions of Language?” A note of reservation is sounded. Conventional “philosophy of language” appears to be making way for entirely different problems. Richard Rorty’s important book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* confirms this. “In place of philosophies preoccupied with representations, in place of conventional epistemology, current interest is shifting to ‘edifying’ philosophies” (Cascardi, 1983: 219). One is struck here by an almost psychological element in the founding of philosophy.¹ Indeed, the burden of Cascardi’s paper, which focuses on the uses of rhetoric in grounding philosophical argument, develops this very point. The shift from conventional epistemology to which Rorty is referring is precipitated by a general reluctance to overvalue the transcendental foundations necessary to and implicit in epistemology. He sums this up as follows: “epistemology is the attempt to see the patterns of justification within normal discourse as *more* than just such patterns. It is the attempt to see them as hooked on to

something which demands moral commitment – Reality, Truth, Objectivity, Reason” (Rorty, 1979: 385).

How is philosophy then to be done, in the absence of such (illusionary) foundations? Cascardi cites a whole range of work as an alternative approach: from Derrida’s critique of Husserlian phenomenology, through Ricoeur’s philosophical-hermeneutical studies, to the post-Romantic German hermeneutics of Heidegger, Gadamer and Grassi. For Cascardi’s part he examines more ancient appraisals of the problem and, in particular, the recourse to rhetoric, for possible solutions. He points out that the argument for a *non-representational* language is perennial. We need only recall its advancement by the Sophists, notably by Gorgias. As Cascardi says: “For Gorgias, language is a virtual prison-house. He tells us that our thoughts and our existence, our mind as much as our being, are separated from language by an obstinate, intransigent cellophane margin: we are caught in the ambiguity of not knowing being from non-being because of the opaque gossamer of words” (Cascardi, 1983: 220). We shall presently witness how reminiscent Nietzsche’s line of attack is of this argument. Gorgias’s irrationalism is most illuminatingly revealed by Cascardi as a liberation, a joyful liberation, one might say, from the “chains of reason which might lead to self-paralysis”. Has not much of our philosophy thus become self-paralysed, fettered by the chains of its own sterile and presumptuous logic, divorced from the living heart beat of the imaginative drama of being human? For is this drama not ultimately motivated by non-rational drives, *rhetorical* drives? Consider Gorgias’s ready advice: “One must destroy one’s adversaries’ seriousness by laughter and their laughter with seriousness” (fragment 12, as quoted by Cascardi, 1983: 223). As Cascardi notes: “He pierces through the vicious circle of language and logic by parody of the opposition, and in doing so he subverts reason” (1983: 223). One might qualify this by saying that it is as yet *unliberated* reason that is hereby subverted.

Yet even apart from the “logic of laughter”, Cascardi reminds us that “in fact, the inner force of argument, the hardness of the logical ‘must’, bears resemblance to the force of persuasion through which rhetorical argument works” (Ibid).

As for Plato’s philosophical rhetoric, it draws on love and madness, combining logical and psychological persuasion. He views it as “a dialectical art of leading the soul (*psychagogia*) through language” (Ibid). Language becomes, for Socrates, a tool of *understanding*. The latter is viewed as a *process* in which we are not so much moved by the “representation” of words as by their *effect*. A tension is thus seen to exist, between the persuasion of words used and that which they purport to be saying.

We may conclude this section by noting that understanding is not the final discovery of any absolute truth but rather an open-ended and ongoing process of finding ourselves on a pilgrimage through language: our “knowledge” will always be a function of our language. Philosophy thus becomes rhetoric as “the ‘conversation’ in which understanding happens” (Cascardi, 1983: 226). Persuasion is central here because of its crucial role in this understanding.

Nietzsche's deconstruction of language and knowledge

As was noted in the previous section, there is a striking concurrence of ideas between Nietzsche's meditation on the role of language in philosophy and that of his Sophist predecessor, Gorgias. For in Nietzsche too we are confronted by a rejection of a naïve yet arrogant representational theory of language, exposed as the illusionary foundation of so-called philosophical knowledge. In a dissertation on *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, Alan Schrift presents Nietzsche's view of language as follows:

From the beginning, Nietzsche's explorations into the nature of language are directed toward demystifying the philosophical pretensions of truth and knowledge, as man's quest for knowledge reveals itself to be grounded upon the "fundamental human drive": "the drive toward the formation of metaphor". This is to say, human knowledge is possible only by means of language and, in Nietzsche's view, language reveals itself to be founded upon man's capacity for the creation of metaphor. At the centre of Nietzsche's position is his critique of the philosophical faith in concepts and the representational nature of language. Whereas philosophy had traditionally conceived knowledge to be a mirroring of reality with the aid of concepts (words) as representations (*Vorstellungen*) of reality, Nietzsche argues that "the intellect unfolds its principal powers in dissimulation (*Verstellung*)" (1983: 221).

According to this view, philosophical knowledge has no solid basis. It is a kind of groping in the dark, whereby the philosopher mistakes the words of his language (which make up concepts) for actual things in the "real world". These "things" as well as the world, together with the alleged knowledge that posits them are all illusions for Nietzsche, a linguistic sleight of hand. We may recall the earlier reference to Nietzsche as contending that "words are the seducers of philosophers".²

Schrift proceeds to cite the "process of naming" as the primary example of the dissimulation in which the intellect operates. Philosophy itself, Nietzsche maintains, begins with the "legislation of nomenclature". It is from this process – which takes the form of differentiation, classification and designation – that concepts arise. Nietzsche is here alluding to an artificial and contrived and hence reductionistic lumping together of things and words, and of things and things, imposing a forced "sameness" and "difference" for the sake of a (synthetic) knowledge and its communication.

At this point a possible confusion over an ambiguity regarding Nietzsche's use of representation needs to be cleared. In one sense he is clearly rejecting the notion that language represents a world (or any *thing* in it) for, being a fabrication of language, such a world simply does not exist in reality: there is ultimately nothing to *be* represented. Yet, in another sense, language is – or posits – nothing but representations or, as we might term them, relations, relations between images and images of images (words). Nietzsche integrates his view of language with what one might term a metaphysics of becoming. Nothing is fixed, nothing is constant or permanent, nothing is absolute. In terms of this metaphysics, "the empirical world only *appears* and *becomes*" (quoted in Schrift, 1983: 222). One wonders, in passing here, how he is able

to refer to the “empirical world” like this and categorise it if it does not exist. This contradiction is surely serious, lying as it does, at the heart of his philosophy. He might respond, however, that the metaphorical drive in us constrains us to posit such a world. The thing, indeed everything, is representation for Nietzsche:

In becoming, the representative nature of the thing shows itself: it *gives* nothing, it *is* nothing, everything becomes, i.e., is representation (quoted in Schrift, 1983: 222).

For Nietzsche, then, language is an (artistic) amalgamation of concepts imposed on the more primitive images of empirical experience. In this creative process of producing language – and a “world” to go with it – man assumes the role of the primal artist whose process of world-production takes the form of an infinite regress of images – images of images . . .

An integral aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy of language is his concept of *metaphor*. For Nietzsche, metaphor designates a kind of levelling device, a reduction of the meaning of things by simplistic equation through a process of naming. This is one of his two most frequent uses of metaphor, the other being borrowed directly from Aristotle for whom metaphor was restricted to a linguistic “carrying over” or *transposition*. Nietzsche generalises this latter notion to denote any transference from one sphere to another. This extended application is clearly operative in his (deconstructive) assessment of the concepts constituting knowledge as the result of a “three-stage metaphorical translation”. The first metaphor consists in the transition from nerve stimulus to *image*. Secondly, there is the imitation or transposition of this image into a *sound*. The third metaphor takes the form of converting sound into *concept*. In this sense, all knowledge for Nietzsche is, in essence, transpositional or relational. What is more, like language itself it is metaphorical or *figurative* in nature. We are hereby presented with a concept of knowledge as artistist production, human *invention*, even imitation. The full impact of this deconstruction is expressed by Nietzsche as follows:

Knowing is nothing but working with the favourite metaphors, an imitation (*Nachahmen*) which is no longer felt to be an imitation. Naturally, therefore, it cannot penetrate to the realm of truth (. . .)

Imitation is the opposite of knowing, to the extent that knowing certainly does not want to admit any *transference*, but wishes instead to cling to the impression without metaphor and apart from the consequences. The impression is petrified for this purpose; it is captured and stamped by means of concepts. Then it is killed, skinned, mummified, and preserved as a concept.

But there is no “real” expression and *no real knowing apart from metaphor*. But deception on this point remains, i.e. the *belief* in a *truth* of sense impressions. The most accustomed metaphors, the usual ones, now pass for truths and as standards for measuring the rarer ones. The only intrinsic difference here is the difference between custom and novelty, frequency and rarity (quoted in Schrift, 1983: 226).

For Nietzsche, truth itself is metaphorical, a series of human fabrications. What is more, as time goes by, we forget that we are dealing with metaphors.

They then become fixed and binding and circulate as such until eventually they are reduced to clichés, meaningless truisms like worn coins, as Nietzsche depicted them in his famous definition of truth:

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically enhanced, transposed, and embellished, and which after long use seem fixed, canonical and binding to a people: truths are illusions of which we have forgotten they are illusions; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power, coins which have lost their picture and now matter only as metal, no longer as coin (quoted in Schrift, 1983: 225–226).

Before leaving Nietzsche, we may note two significant philosophical consequences that follow directly from the ideas we have been discussing. Firstly, this philosophy necessarily and totally rejects any *correspondence* theory of truth, in terms of which verifiable propositions could mirror or represent an actual (literal) state of affairs in an independent external world. We have seen that for Nietzsche no such world exists. We only presuppose one as an “essential fiction”, a necessary illusion. Secondly, he is committed to rejecting the inseparably related *referential* theory of meaning. In fact, this is but the correlate of the correspondence theory of truth, postulating, as it does, an actual reference for our linguistic statements – the corresponding reality of which linguistic statements speak or to which they refer. In Nietzsche’s shift from a representational model of language to a rhetorical model he has transposed the problem of meaning from an epistemological enterprise into an endlessly playful aesthetic involvement.

Tropes in the discourse of philosophy: deconstruction

Until now we have been analysing the thought of “unofficial” deconstructionists. Nietzsche is something of a Sophist and both approaches are essentially deconstructionist in their thrust. Both approaches, particularly that of Nietzsche, have profoundly influenced a contemporary philosophical approach officially known as Deconstruction. It is to this approach that we now turn.

The major pioneer of Deconstruction is the contemporary French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, of whom mention was made at the beginning of the present paper, and whose interaction with Heidegger shall be examined in some detail in the final section.

Derrida’s influence has definitely been more profound in the field of literary criticism than in philosophy itself. Perhaps this is due to the same reason that Nietzsche – Derrida’s philosophical father – is often regarded as more of a poet than a philosopher. At any rate, the critique of both thinkers is devastating for comfortable, complacent, orthodox philosophical thinking. Both radically threaten a total subversion of the philosophical security of the entire Western metaphysical tradition. Besides, deconstructionist criticism is *textual* in its thrust – the traditional orientation of literature – whereas “pure” philosophy still considers itself essentially conceptual. This, of course, is part of the delusion of philosophy that Derrida is challenging.

On the literary side, one of Derrida's main representatives was the late Yale critic, Paul de Man, whose hard-pressed argument and high conceptual rigour single him out. His version of deconstruction distinguishes between the manifest intentions of a text and its deeper logical workings which eventually succeed in overthrowing or subverting the author's own explicit intentions. As Christopher Norris puts it: "De Man's readings draw out the innermost logic of the text, showing how figurative tensions develop to a point where that logic is implicitly confounded by its own implications. For De Man this discrepancy between reason and rhetoric is endemic to all literary texts, and to criticism also wherever it passes from mere explication to theory and self-conscious method" (1982: 100).

In this sense, language works against itself and every author undermines himself, unintentionally though not entirely unconsciously. De Man expresses the converse of this point paradoxically: "Critics' moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insights" (1971: 109).

In an article on "The Epistemology of Metaphor" De Man (1978) demonstrates, by a series of ingenious analyses, how leading epistemologists have reluctantly yet ineluctably implicated themselves in tropic contradiction and inconsistencies.

Referring to Locke³ – who is ostensibly contemptuous of "eloquence" in philosophical discourse⁴ – and his "simple ideas", De Man shows how he cannot escape the level of tropes. I shall deal with just two. On closer scrutiny of the simple idea of *motion* we find Locke to mean a "passage from one place to another". Yet this is simply a figural substitution, for "passage" and "motion" turn out to be alternative tropes. Each refers to the other yet neither can be taken "literally". Nor is it coincidental that the term "metaphor" itself (from the Greek "*meta pherein*") originally bears this meaning (to transfer, to translate).

Locke's second simple idea is that of light – in its original sense of the *idea* (as opposed to the perception) of light. This leaves us with the "light of light". To understand the idea of light would then be "to light the light of light" – an infinite (tropic) regress.

Speaking of the "light of understanding" one is inevitably reminded of Derrida's brilliant analysis of the "sun" metaphor (or the heliotrope) in what must surely be the locus classicus of our inquiry – "White Mythology" (1982). The sun illuminates understanding and all meaning *revolves* around it, the *circle* being another master metaphor in Western metaphysics, according to Derrida. Derrida's telling deconstruction of Descartes's metaphors of (natural) light and the circle runs as follows:

... if we put ourselves at the most critical and most properly Cartesian point of the critical procedure, at the point of hyperbolic doubt and the hypothesis of the Evil Genius, at the point when doubt strikes not only ideas of sensory origin but also "clear and distinct" ideas and what is mathematically self-evident, we know that what permits the discourse to be picked up again and to be pursued, its ultimate resource, is designated as *lumen naturale*. Natural light, and all the axioms it brings into our field of vision, is never subjected to the most radical

doubt . . . As natural, (natural light) has its source in God, in the God whose existence has been put into doubt and then demonstrated, *thanks to it* . . . In escaping from the logical circle that has so occupied him, Descartes all the while inscribes the chain of reason in the circle of the natural light that proceeds from God and returns to God. (1982: 266–267)

For Descartes, God, like the sun, cannot ultimately be questioned, for as the sun which illumines all observation cannot itself be observed, so God, who illumines all understanding, must Himself transcend human inquiry. In Descartes, natural light and God – from whom it proceeds and to whom it returns in a circular movement – serve as master metaphors, immune to philosophical investigation. We may conclude this section with an observation by De Man (1978: 23): “As soon as one is willing to be made aware of their epistemological implications, concepts are tropes and tropes concepts”.

Conclusion: deconstruction and hermeneutics

In this concluding section I wish briefly to contextualise the implications of this paper, within the dialogue between deconstruction and hermeneutics. If philosophy is rhetoric, is it exempt from hermeneutical responsibility? Conversely, is hermeneutics hereby doomed to failure? The answer to both these questions is an emphatic *no*.

In their own ways the two leading representatives of hermeneutics and deconstruction – Heidegger and Derrida – try to avoid the net of metaphysics by a “language of non-commitment”. Through a bewildering and often vertiginous variation of highly unorthodox idiosyncratic styles each tries to rupture and interrupt any tendency to metaphysical commitment as it arises and even before it can begin to develop. This partly accounts for the extraordinary unintelligibility of their writings, particularly Derrida’s. For neither philosopher is meaning the kind of thing we can finally grasp and manipulate at will, and each is guaranteeing that this will not be possible, at least in our reading of *their* philosophy.

In his later thinking Heidegger is campaigning for a new relation to Being through a new relation to language. For him, language, like meaning, is not something we appropriate and use to our own ends. Rather, “language speaks us” so that our speaking is, beforehand, a *listening*, a listening to what language is saying. Heidegger seeks to convey the autonomous power of language.

Yet, we may note, in terms of the deconstruction of Descartes in the previous section, to talk about a relation to Being in this (ultimately) general sense is to want to “see the sun” or to “understand God”. In this way Heidegger has recourse to a master metaphor at the heart of his philosophy. The same would hold for his concept of language as an ultimate category – i.e. in which we have our being. Heidegger’s (poetic) style – and the various forms this takes⁵ – does not disengage him from metaphysics. On the contrary, it becomes his access and commitment to it. In an article on “Style and Strategy at the Limits of Philosophy”, David Wood (1980: 502) observes the following:

... Heidegger seems to be aiming at an ideal coincidence between what sceptics would still call the act and the content of language. And if we are right, it is in the performative use of language that, if anywhere, he achieves this. But this is an ideal, one that the sheer materiality of language can never allow to be achieved. Heidegger is projecting onto his linguistic performance an imaginary unity, in a desire which is as old as philosophy.

Whereas Heidegger resorted to the performance of language, through stylistic innovation, to escape metaphysics, Derrida construes the challenge in terms of strategy. The area of strategy is also, according to Derrida, the area in which Heidegger's limitations lie.⁶ In Wood's words (1980: 503):

The sheer interconnectedness and diffusion throughout language of metaphysically burdened concepts and themes make it very likely that attempted escape moves will have already been covered, will themselves be just moves in the game.

Derrida distinguishes between an "immanent deconstruction" – which he ascribes to Heidegger – and a "deconstructive genealogy" which would constitute a disruptive change of ground, a stepping *outside* philosophy. While immanent deconstruction "risks merely confirming the prison one is trying to escape from" (Ibid), the second strategy runs the risk of sterility, the danger of having nothing interesting to say. Nevertheless, Derrida feels he has to take this risk and that ultimately both (deconstructive) strategies need to be interwoven in the production of complex and multiple texts. As any reader of Derrida will know, he resorts to the most peculiar and eccentric tactical lengths to bring out his effects, including the coining of new "words" (such as *différance*) which allegedly escape any fixed meaning or final philosophical determination.⁷

This is not the place for a detailed critique of Derrida's deconstruction. However, three avenues of criticism open up and may briefly be mentioned. The first we have already noted – that of *sterility* and a nihilistic paralysis: if there is no final, or determinate, meaning is there any point in saying or writing anything more? Secondly, there is his *text-centredness* or "textualism": "There is nothing outside the text", Derrida is famous for proclaiming. The vital hermeneutical category of *context* appears to have been eclipsed. Wood objects that the central extra-textual conditions, on which textuality is alone possible, are treated by Derrida as mere extensions of textuality. As Wood says, "Derrida cannot handle the idea of context" (1980: 507). Lastly, and most significantly, there is the factor of his *textual reflexivity*. In the very act of writing texts – and being aware of his own strategies of writing – Derrida is necessarily "involved in the creation of a space of textual intentionality, which has to take itself to be privileged in order to assure us of a correct focus on the rest of the text" (Ibid). Derrida, presumably, wants us to understand *his* texts, even if such understanding may never be final or conclusive. The Derridean strategy too is undermined by privilege (as was Heidegger's and the whole metaphysical tradition's before him). Yet herein lies the semantic hope beyond deconstruction. Meaning is not ultimately a fiction in itself, though the (dynamic) unfolding of meaning may take the form of a dance of fictions or imaginative constructions.

For it is not meaning as such that has changed here but our understanding of it and of how we discover meaning. In other words, the rules of our language game have changed. Perhaps interpretation has finally become a game. I believe that the value of Derrida, as of Heidegger, is to re-orientate us accordingly, and to divest us of our traditional illusions of mastering absolute truth. Interpretation has simply turned out to be a different kind of venture from the one we have traditionally imagined it to be, one over which we assumed we had total control. Indeed, the very desire to exert such control may be viewed as a function of the representational model of language. When the latter model is replaced by a rhetorical model of language, such control (or the need for it) collapses (or has already collapsed), and we become listeners to or discoverers of “meanings” in a sense completely different from the traditional one, i.e. meanings that are as subject to the effects of space and time (or history) as we are in our human finitude.

I shall conclude by noting some guidelines for a philosophy after deconstruction.

- (i) We are to resist pessimism and nihilism. Neither life nor philosophy is simply meaningless.
- (ii) The hope of philosophy lies in the *challenge* of meaning. Philosophy should address itself to the on-going challenge of an ever-more meaningful life, even though the absolute realisation of this ideal may, in principle, be unattainable. Part of what it means to be a human being is to be a maker and reader of signs, actively engaged in their infinite process of signification. Deconstruction is the celebration of the *playfulness* of language, of creative involvement in the endless possibilities of such signification as the unending adventure of the “meaning” of our life.
- (iii) For all these reasons, philosophy remains a humble engagement. Moved by the wonder in which philosophy is born, the philosopher can have no more arrogant claims to make.

Notes

1. My choice of the term, “motivation” to head this section may be construed as reinforcing this element.
2. It is this context that one might understand Nietzsche’s curious remark to the effect that as long as we believe in grammar (“the metaphysics of the people”) our “god” is not dead. He surely intends hereby to convey the idea that we take the rules of language too seriously – we tend to absolutise them – as though they constituted the structure of reality itself, as though they were the very structures governing the workings of our world rather than mere constructs – originally of our own formulation – of our understanding of it. Indeed, for Nietzsche, our “world” is a product of our language.
3. See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1961), Bk 3, chapter 10, pp. 105–106, for Locke’s “eloquent denunciation of eloquence”, as De Man puts it (quoted in De Man 1978: 15).
4. De Man analyses tropical entanglement in the philosophy of both Condillac and Kant in the same essay. For the sake of brevity I have limited my discussion to his analysis of two of Locke’s “simple ideas” as representative of his deconstructive strategy in general.

5. Time does not permit an elaboration of these forms. A useful list of six stylistic devices used by Heidegger is presented in Wood (1980: 500–501).
6. For another discussion of Derrida's critique of Heidegger, who allegedly fails to escape "a metaphysics of presence", see David Couzens Hoy, "Forgetting the Text: Derrida's Critique of Heidegger", in *Boundary 2*, Vol. 8 (1). This article also provides a defense of hermeneutics.
7. For a discussion of Derrida's five tactical categories, as distinguished by Wood, see 1980: 505–506.

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