Derrida: Philosophy or Literature?

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Summary

The present article focuses on the question whether, as Habermas claims, Jacques Derrida collapses the genre distinction between philosophy and literature by means of the (alleged) levelling effect of his notion of textuality. More specifically, Habermas accuses Derrida of failing to respect the normative demands of argumentation that characterize philosophical, as opposed to literary-expressive language, with the result that his deconstructive discourse is reduced to literature. According to Habermas, the price that Derrida has to pay in the process is the problem-solving, consensus-promoting capacity of philosophy. By way of a careful examination of relevant passages from Derrida's as well as from Habermas's work, and with the help of Norris's critical commentary on Habermas's reception of Derrida, it is demonstrated that the latter's literary style of writing is combined with a degree of argumentative rigour which places its philosophical significance above suspicion.

Opsomming

Die huidige artikel fokus op die vraag of Jacques Derrida inderdaad, soos Habermas beweer, die genre-onderskeid tussen filosofie en literatuur ophef vanweë die (beweerde) gelykmakende uitwerking van sy begrip van tekstualiteit. Meer spesifiek: volgens Habermas eerbiedig Derrida nie die normatiewe eise van argumentasie wat eie is aan filosofiese, soos onderskeibaar van literêr-ekspressiewe taalgebruik, nie, met die gevolg dat sy dekonstruktiewe diskoers tot literatuur gereduseer word. Die prys wat Derrida, volgens Habermas, daarvoor betaal, is die probleemoplossende, konsensusbevorderende kapasiteit van die filosofie. Aan die hand van 'n noukeurige ondersoek van relevante gedeeltes van Derrida sowel as van Habermas se werk, en met die hulp van Norris se kritiese kommentaar op Habermas se resepsie van Derrida, word gedemonstreer dat laasgenoemde se literêre skryfstyl gepaard gaan met argumentatiewe strengheid wat die filosofiese belang daarvan bo verdenking plaas.

Does Jacques Derrida's distinctive "deconstructive" approach to the philosophical and literary tradition offer philosophers and literary critics anything more than the discovery that meaning cannot be tied down conclusively, and that all signs or complexes of signification are subject to an infinite process of freeplay? Judging by some responses to Derrida's work or to deconstruction in general (Habermas 1987; Ellis 1989; Miller 1990), it is a common misconception, that it does not - something that probably stems from

a very partial reading of or familiarity with his writings.

One context within which this issue may be fruitfully addressed, is the question concerning the critical imperative to respect strict boundaries between distinguishable kinds of discourse.

A case in point is Habermas's criticism of Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987), where he takes the French philosopher to task for failing to respect the crucial differences between certain generically distinct employments of language, in this way short-circuiting the potentially philosophical or argumentative value that his hybrid form of "philiterature" might otherwise have. Habermas's argument is predicated on, and an updated (re-)statement of, the classical Kantian distinction between three spheres of rationality, viz. the theoretical (cognitive, scientific), the practical (moral, legal, political) and the aesthetic (artistic), to each of which pertains its own special set of discursive rules. In our own time, these distinctive rational domains have grown into "expert cultures" (as Habermas calls them), from which those people who move in the world of "ordinary language" are largely alienated. Philosophy, literary and art criticism have the special task, according to Habermas (1987: 207, 1988: 313-314), of mediating between these expert cultures and the everyday world, "interpreting" their "regional rationality" on behalf of people in the lifeworld. In so doing, Habermas hopes that philosophy (or literary criticism, for that matter),

> might then be able to help set in motion the interplay between the cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-expressive dimensions that has come to a standstill today, like a tangled mobile.
>
> (Habermas 1988: 313)

I shall return to this image of "interplay" between Habermas's three rational compartments, but first I want to look more closely at his charges against Derrida, as set out in the following passage:

> Because Derrida overgeneralizes this one linguistic function - namely, the poetic - he can no longer see the complex relationship of the ordinary practice of normal speech to the two extraordinary spheres, differentiated, as it were, in opposite directions [viz. "problem-solving" and "world-disclosure"]. The polar tension between world-disclosure and problem-solving is held together within the functional matrix of ordinary language; but art and literature on the one side, and science, morality, and law on the other, are specialized for experiences and modes of knowledge that can be shaped and worked out within the compass of *one* linguistic function and *one* dimension of validity at a time. Derrida holistically levels these complicated relationships in order to equate philosophy with literature and criticism.
>
> (Habermas 1987: 207)

It is not difficult to see from this passage that Habermas believes Derrida to have obliterated the genre-differences between literature and philosophy, in this way forfeiting the normative argumentative force that his prose might have had, if he had chosen to let the literary or rhetorical elements of his writing serve the interests of truth, logic, and analysis instead of (subjective) "world-disclosure" or expressivity.

Admittedly, as an interlocutor has reminded me, one should understand Habermas's (mis-)reading of Derrida in the context of the German philosopher's project of communicative rationality - that is his own alternative to the discredited model of modern subject-centred rationality - by which he hopes to rescue the conditions of the possibility of consensus (interpretive agreement) as prerequisite for critical and social interaction. Needless to say (and as I hope to show in the course of the present article), Habermas underestimates the critically interactive efficacy of Derrida's work, even (or especially) when it engenders dissent instead of consensus. A case in point is the critical debate sparked off in *Critical Inquiry* (1986) between Derrida, on the one hand, and McClintock and Nixon, on the other, by an essay that Derrida published on apartheid in an earlier issue of *Critical Inquiry* (1985). Not only did the original piece initiate far-reaching critical interaction; it also impinged directly on the question of socio-political action, if not on such action itself (Olivier 1993: 257-259) - something that is demonstrated by the very fact and form of the two authors' response to the French thinker's critical interpretation of apartheid as the last word in racism. Moreover, as Derrida (1986) rightly points out in his rejoinder to McClintock and Nixon's charge (reminiscent of Habermas) that deconstruction's "textuality" effectively prevents it from contributing to the political destruction of the apartheid system:

> ... deconstructive readings and writings are concerned not only with library books, with discourses, with conceptual and semantic contents. They are not simply analyses of discourse such as, for example, the one you propose. They are also effective or active (as one says) interventions, in particular political and institutional interventions that transform contexts without limiting themselves to theoretical or constative utterances even though they must also produce such utterances. That's why I do not go "beyond the text" in this new sense of the word text, by fighting and calling for a fight against "apartheid", for example.
>
> (Derrida 1986: 168)

Given the political and institutional efficacy of deconstructive interventions (why would Derrida otherwise on occasion have been imprisoned in Czechoslovakia "for giving seminars prohibited by the authorities"? - Derrida 1986: 168), it should be understood that his metaphorical use of the

term "text" suggests any set, field or complex of signs, forces or practices that can be interpreted and acted upon. Apparently Habermas (1987) fails to appreciate this, too, where he remarks plaintively that:

> The frailty of the genre distinction between philosophy and literature is evidenced in the practice of deconstruction; in the end, *all* genre distinctions are submerged in one comprehensive, all-embracing context of texts - Derrida talks in a hypostatizing manner about a "universal text".
>
> (Habermas 1987: 190)

Therefore, as far as Habermas is concerned, Derrida is guilty of an "aestheticization of language"; something which evidently seems to imply that the latter is forever trapped within textuality as in a prison - so much so that the world retreats beyond the reach of his linguistic utterances. Hence Habermas's claim, that Derrida

> permits the capacity to solve problems to disappear behind the world-creating capacity of language; the former capacity is possessed by language as the medium through which those acting communicatively get involved in relations to the world whenever they agree with one another about something in the objective world, in their common social world, or in the subjective worlds to which each has privileged access.
>
> (Habermas 1987: 205)

What Habermas neglects to notice, in his all-consuming desire for consensus about the conditions for consensus, is that communication about the (objective or the common social) world does not *have* to end in agreement in order to result in social or political action. Sometimes "communicative" interventions of the kind that Derrida initiates have effects resulting in or from disagreement, but effects (of a political, social or institutional kind) in the *world* nevertheless. Derrida's response to this kind of blind spot regarding the "relations to the world" of his own approach, highlights the unacknowledged advantages of deconstruction when it comes to such "practical" matters:

> It is in the interest of one side and the other to represent deconstruction as a turning inward and an enclosure by the limits of language, whereas in fact deconstruction begins by deconstructing logocentrism, the linguistics of the word, and this very enclosure itself. On one side and the other, people get impatient when they see that deconstructive practices are also and first of all political and institutional practices.
>
> (Derrida 1986: 168)

Clearly, Habermas counts among those who show signs of impatience when Derrida's critical practice seems to stray in a direction which is not appropriate to its "disrespect" for discursive boundaries. The point is that it would not matter to Habermas if Derrida were to produce "literature" - that is, a kind of writing clearly recognizable as literary in the "expressive" genre-mode that Habermas regards as its hallmark - as long as he (Derrida) would admit or clearly indicate that he was doing so, instead of making disconcerting philosophical noises about representation, language, reason, essence, political practice, etc. For this is Derrida's cardinal sin according to Habermas: he mingles discourses that are supposed to be kept "pure", at least in the sense that their respective functions or exclusive validity-claims be clearly recognizable. Christopher Norris (1990), in an uncompromisingly argued response to Habermas's criticism of Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987), makes the same point:

> Here we have the nub of Habermas's case against Derrida: the charge that he has effectively *disenfranchised* critical reason by allowing this promiscuous confusion of realms within and between the various linguistic orientations.
> What this argument cannot countenance is any suggestion that *one and the same text* might possess both literary value (on account of its fictive, metaphorical or stylistic attributes) and philosophic cogency (by virtue of its power to criticise normative truth-claims). Thus Habermas would need to reject as non-philosophical not only a text like [Derrida's] *La Carte Postale*, but also those numerous border-line cases - among them Plato, Augustine, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Austin, Borges, Calvino - where fiction and philosophy are closely intertwined. And if the list were then extended to philosophers who had once in a while made use of fictive devices or analogies, then it would also include Aristotle, Kant, Husserl, Frege, Quine, Searle and just about every thinker in the Western tradition.
>
> (Norris 1990: 65)

One could add Habermas's name to this list - his work teems with tropes of all kinds, the earlier image where he compares the impasse in the "interplay" between the three specialized discursive domains of modernity to a "tangled mobile" being a case in point. Except that he would probably justify such figural language by pointing out that it is wholly subservient to the truth-claims of the philosophical argument in which they appear as "guest artists", so to speak.

The co-presence of literary and philosophical elements in the same text or work need not be so spuriously vindicated, however. It is worth taking note of what Norris says about the status of Derrida's writing in this regard. He refers to it as the practice of a

> "philosophical criticism" ... that deliberately mixes the genres of literature and theory. But we should not be misled into thinking that he [Derrida] has thereby renounced philosophy and given himself up to a mode of "extraordinary" language that severs all links between itself and critical reason on the one hand, or itself and the interests of communal understanding on the other.
>
> (Norris 1990: 67)

The point is that (and Habermas (1987: 209) does not seem to realize this, judging by his appeal to "pure" forms of language) neither "ordinary language", nor any form of "mixed" (or even specialized) language-usage can be reduced to a normatively purified account without significant loss of insights that might flow from the specifics or "abnormality" of such language. And this does not imply, as Habermas seems to think - given his insistence on the need for literary criticism's "distance" from the language of literature (cf. Norris 1990: 66) - that a critical or philosophical language that freely employs figural moments with critical intent necessarily sacrifices critical power. To do so would be to deny that Derrida's writing (or Wittgenstein's, or Kundera's, or Marx's, or Nietzsche's) can function with critical, rational force despite, or because of the manifest fact that it operates on various levels at the same time, including the logical, the figural, rhetorical, grammatical and the performative. And all these distinguishable constituents of his writing contribute importantly to its argumentative force, because each component contributes in its own way to the "meaning" (note the scare-quotes!) of a text.

Megill (1985: 260) has remarked that Derrida is perhaps the "most accomplished ironist of our age" - a pertinent consideration here, given the fact that, unless irony is identified from the outset as a pervasive mode of a piece of writing, it is likely to be misconstrued altogether. An example from Derrida's own writing may demonstrate how important this is for grasping the sense of a text written in ironical mode. Unless Derrida's *The Post Card* is read on this level, a passage like the following would make no philosophical sense :

> ... the guardians of tradition, the professors, academics, and librarians, the doctors and authors of theses are terribly curious about correspondences ... about private or public correspondences (a distinction without pertinence in this case, whence the post card, half private half public, neither the one nor the other, and which does not await the post card *stricto sensu* in order to define the law of the genre, of all genres ...).
>
> (Derrida 1987: 62; quoted in Norris 1990: 62)

Apart from the irony, that the dignified "guardians of tradition" should be curious about public and especially private correspondences (one would

expect these serious authors of scientific documents to concern themselves with loftier matters), the ambiguity of the term "correspondences" compounds the irony, given the fact that it names the traditional truth-theory, in the first place, but then undercuts it immediately with the psychoanalytic hint of a "correspondence" between the private and the public, where "private" suggests the most private sphere of all, namely the unconscious. And finally, the hybrid "postcard" undermines the very distinction between these two spheres, and simultaneously the absolute distinction between the conscious and the unconscious as well as, by implication, any other absolute distinction, for example between philosophy and literature, or self and other. Once its irony is perceived, one is able to grasp the function of this piece in the context where Derrida draws an analogy between a philosophy that conceives of itself as serious and responsible, and as approximating (if not attaining) full transparency of communicated meaning, on the one hand, and the concept of a postal service as the paragon of fail-safe efficiency and reliability with regard to the timely arrival of letters at their "proper" destination, on the other hand, only to bring both of them face to face with the evidence of their own unacknowledged limitations and slippages. In the case of philosophy, this means the effects of its own "structural unconscious" in the shape of a residue of unintended meanings, associations and connotations that ineluctably attach to the constituents of its discourse. This repository of philosophically uncontrollable elements finds its equivalent in the surplus of mail-items without an identifiable destination (that is address or addressee) or sender, which finally comes to rest in the dead-letter office as a sobering reminder of postal fallibility. In the light of both of these sources of disruption, the self-image of "philosophy as postal service" is itself ironical.

Moreover, there is nothing - except dogmatic insistence on discursive separatism or "apartheid" - that effectively forbids something like irony to play a part in an argument for or against a certain position. In fact (as a perceptive critic has pointed out), Socrates already gave irony philosophical respectability by his distinctive form of interrogation. And what would Swift's "A Modest Proposal" be as a satirical argument against (industrial) child abuse, if it were not written in ironical mode? The same holds true for parody as figural mode. Unless one realizes that Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is a parody of (probably Descartes's) method (as set out in the *Discourse*), one would miss the point that the bewildering, accumulating sets of apparently methodological principles and considerations constitute a parody of an epistemic tradition that Foucault questions and ultimately rejects.

But my present concern is Derrida, not Foucault. After all, despite the

resemblance between their respective strategies, there is a cardinal difference between them, which can be succinctly stated as follows (Boyne 1990: 86): whereas Foucault first believed that he could escape from Western reason, and later turned to a belief in the subservience of reason to history, Derrida has persistently insisted on the impossibility of escaping from reason. The moment we speak, write, or try to communicate in any way, we participate in reason in the sense of rational practice. (Which, incidentally, is one way of explaining his notorious statement, "There is nothing outside of the text" [Derrida 1980: 158], where "text" is a metaphor for reason, among other things - such as those alluded to earlier.)

This does not mean that reason need only be affirmed in its traditional (fairly arrogant) guise as the legislator regarding what is to count as meaningful, normative and so on. Derrida's work - from his rigorous analysis of Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* through to his more playful works (like the mischievous response to Searle, viz. "Limited Inc abc") - has been dedicated to demonstrating that, only by taking note of all the moments, acknowledged as well as tacit or unacknowledged, that operate in reason (that is in the texts of the philosophical as well as the literary tradition), can we come to terms with its own internal tensions in such a way that the oppressive, hierarchical axiological consequences of its traditional practical and institutional embodiment may be avoided.

Hence, to return to the (rhetorical) question(s) I raised at the beginning of this paper: it should be apparent that I do not share the belief, adhered to by Habermas, Searle, Ellis and others, that Derrida's work sanctions an unbridled romp through the avenues of textual interpretation, thus turning them into a labyrinth. All things considered, I agree with Norris, certainly one of Derrida's most capable defenders in the English-speaking world (and a thinker in his own right), that:

> What Derrida gives us to read is *not* philosophy's undoing at the hands of literature but a literature that meets the challenge of philosophy in every aspect of its argument, form and style.
>
> (Norris 1990: 74)

This may sound unconvincing, *if* one's acquaintance with Derrida's work is fairly superficial, or partial, or second-hand; or if one is familiar only with those American deconstructionists who have celebrated what they take to be the effect of Derrida's work, viz. to have "liberated the signifier" from the constraints of critical orthodoxy (cf. Norris 1989: 20-21; 26-27, 44). After all, the overriding impression that most philosophers (or philosophologists, as Pirsig [1992] calls the uncreative teachers of philosophy in

Lila), literary critics and social scientists have of Derrida is of the Gallic irrationalist who introduced borer-beetle terms like undecidability, writing, iterability and *différance* into the previously "solid" edifice of Western philosophy and literary criticism.

It should be noted that Derrida does not claim that in *every* interpretive situation meaning is undecidable. Rather, he insists on the ultimate undecidability of *priority* (that is epistemic, ethical and axiological) with regard to the deep-seated conceptual oppositions that structure "logocentric" Western thought, and which pervade Western culture in its entirety. For example, in his scrupulously careful reading of Lévi-Strauss's portrayal of the Nambikwara (Derrida 1980: 107-135; Norris 1989: 128-138) Derrida demonstrates the strict undecidability regarding the value-laden contrast between nature and culture as embodied in the connotative contrast between writing and speech or the (innocent) absence of writing. While the anthropologist blames himself for introducing the corrupting power of writing into the uncorrupted communal life of the tribe, as evidenced by their leader's realization of the possibility of using writing for maintaining power, as well as by the tribal children's transgression of the social taboo of revealing other children's and adults' names (to the "writing" anthropologist), Derrida shows that this explanation is fuelled by Lévi-Strauss's wishful imagining of an uncorrupted, pure community, untainted by the degeneracy of Western civilization. Even before the introduction of the tribe to writing (in the narrow sense) by the anthropologist, writing (or "arche-writing" in the broad sense in which Derrida employs it) already existed in the tribe's social structure, for instance in the existence of *names* for individuals who are, therefore, nominally differentiated from one another by "linguistico-social differences" - a classificatory system that already has the structure of writing and, therefore, of culture. The source of destabilization which Lévi-Strauss blames himself for having introduced into an otherwise idyllic situation is, therefore, as Derrida demonstrates, always already there.

It may seem as if the force of Derrida's argument points to the need to invert the epistemological-axiological order of speech (good) versus writing (bad), or nature (good) versus culture (bad). This is not the case, however. Norris explains:

> ... the point is *not* simply to invert this binary opposition, so that writing would henceforth take absolute priority over speech. This gesture would still be inscribed within the same logocentric order of thought. Rather, what Derrida is asking us to conceive is the radical instability, the strictly *undecidable* character, of any such loaded metaphysical opposition.
>
> (Norris 1989: 133)

The "logocentric order" that Norris mentions here is the metaphysical order that has always structured Western culture, according to which speech has always taken epistemological-axiological and, therefore, also ethical and political precedence and priority over writing, man over woman, presence over absence, reason (intelligibility) over sense (or sensibility), philosophy over literature, white over black, identity over difference, soul over body, and so on. Which is why our culture has always been characterized by a violent hierarchical order which is, strictly speaking, without foundation but is instead the outcome of the wish to stabilize things for the sake of metaphysical security. And it is the arbitrary nature of this metaphysical privileging that Derrida's deconstructive readings bring to light with forceful logic.

We are now in a position to see that when people like Habermas or Ellis (cf. Norris 1990a) privilege philosophy in relation to literature, or theory in relation to "interpretation", they are presuming to be in a position to make a *de jure* judgment regarding priorities which are, in the sense explained above, *undecidable*. The reason for such undecidability should be clear: although not wanting to dissolve all genre-distinctions between philosophy and literature, Derrida has, nevertheless, shown that, given the strict impossibility of an absolutely "pure" theoretical or normatively argumentative discourse that can serve as measure for others, we have to settle for an "impure", but not for that reason critically powerless, discourse. Or, as he shows elsewhere (Derrida 1978: 278-293), the dream of the sciences, to approach the status of *engineering* in terms of precision and adequacy of instruments, has to make way for the sober realization that every science ultimately has the status of *bricolage*, and the scientist is a *bricoleur* (tinkerer, handyman) instead of an engineer, because the sciences are always in a position where the theoretical instruments they employ come from a tradition that is never pristine, but always relatively ruined, that is, not unproblematical even when it is unavoidable to use them (for example, the concepts of nature and culture). If one jumps to the conclusion, however, that Derrida sanctions *bricolage* without reservation, or absolutely, and that he is, thus, after all, content with "ruined" interpretations which do not have analytical rigour or clarity of distinction and articulation as their aim, because such an aim is worthless, would one be right? That is - would this be another way of justifying the hermeneutics of "anything goes", given the demonstrable futility of coming up with an interpretation that is conclusive, instead of at best "responsible" or "accountable" in relation to a given text? I think not, and perhaps this is the opportune time to let Derrida speak "for himself", as one says, or alternatively, to utilize the "iterability" of his texts which, like any other writing, can be "grafted" (Derrida 1982: 317) onto a

new or different text (in this case, the text you are now reading). The following two excerpts come from the essay, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (Derrida 1978), where his reading of Lévi-Srauss focuses on (among other things) the *bricoleur*/engineer opposition:

> If one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*. The engineer, whom Lévi- Strauss opposes to the *bricoleur*, should be the one to construct the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon. In this sense the engineer is a myth. A subject who supposedly would be the absolute origin of his own discourse and supposedly would construct it "out of nothing", "out of whole cloth", would be the creator of the verb [Fr. *verbe*, that is verb, language or word; B.O.], the verb itself. The notion of the engineer who supposedly breaks with all forms of *bricolage* is therefore a theological idea; and since Lévi-Strauss tells us elsewhere that *bricolage* is mythopoetic, the odds are that the engineer is a myth produced by the *bricoleur*. As soon as we cease to believe in such an engineer and in a discourse which breaks with the received historical discourse, and as soon as we admit that every finite discourse is bound by a certain *bricolage* and that the engineer and the scientist are also species of *bricoleurs*, then the very idea of *bricolage* is menaced and the difference in which it took on its meaning breaks down.
>
> (Derrida 1978: 285)

The next excerpt is a passage near the end of the essay; a passage, moreover, which - when iterated in isolation - seems to confirm the impression that Derrida sanctions an interpretive process of infinite "freeplay" of understanding, association, and so on (not least because of its linguistic flair):

> There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology [that is, of the discourse on the creation of things *ex nihilo* by the word of God; B.O.] - in other words, throughout his entire history - has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play.
>
> (Derrida 1978: 292)

What happens when the second of these is read without the benefit of what comes before or after in Derrida's essay, is very different to one's understanding of it within its context. The earlier excerpt shows quite clearly that Derrida does not believe that one could simply *choose* to give up the En-

lightenment desire for a break with the tradition and be content to be a *bricoleur* in the sciences (or in philosophy, or literary criticism). The very idea of consciously practising a finite science or employing a limited discourse *depends upon* its own contrary, namely striving or attempting to construct a science of "engineering", that is, a discourse that would be free from historical contingency. When read together with the first one in this way, the second excerpt is relativized in relation to Derrida's argument, put forward in the essay, that the field of the social sciences is constituted by the "irreducible difference" between the "two interpretations of interpretation" distinguished in the second excerpt. In other words, these are crucial passages where he shows that the human sciences emerge from the tension between the attempt to stabilize knowledge on the one hand, and the tendency to destabilize it by interpretive practices that sometimes undermine our very best attempts at being "engineers", on the other hand.

Therefore - to return to the question of philosophy and literature - it is not a matter of choosing between "pure" philosophy and "pure" literature; the one always bears "traces" of the other (just as the self always bears traces of otherness). And yet we can still recognize when a discourse is employed for philosophical purposes, even when it is "literary" in appearance, and *vice versa*. Or, in the case of the mixed, integrated language that Derrida employs, it is possible to discern where he is using "philosophical" tools like logic to get his point across, and where (usually in conjunction with this) he employs literary means to do so. In so far as this happens in the "same" text, which, therefore, incorporates all of those discourses that Enlightenment thought has separated, Derrida's text may be understood as the linguistic counterpart of that "space" where the interplay that Habermas would like to see between the "cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive dimensions", has already been "set in motion". Moreover, Derrida's texts are not the only ones where this occurs, although they are difficult to match.

I would like to conclude this brief consideration of Derrida's status as a "literary philosopher" with an admirably accurate resumé of the qualities of Derrida's writing by Norris:

> ... he combines a quite extraordinary range and depth of philosophic thought with a keen analytical intelligence *and* (by no means incompatible with these) a degree of stylistic virtuosity that allows his writing to reflect at every point on its own performative aspect, or on issues raised in and through the practice of an answerable "literary" style.
>
> (Norris 1990a: 160)

Not to recognize these qualities, and to insist on forcing Derrida's work into a narrow, procrustean "philosophical" apparatus of adjudication, is to misrepresent his philosophical importance, and to relieve such adjudicators of the responsibility to understand him on his own terms.

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