

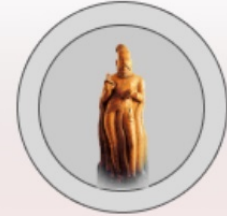


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Derrida's Renewal of Phenomenology

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Derrida will argue that the reversal of the cogito and rethinking subjectivity in terms of embodiment and corporeality is a non-philosophy and anti-metaphysics that repeats metaphysics by negating and reversing it. Derrida's notion of truth is quasi-transcendental rather than anti-metaphysical like Merleau-Ponty's, which locates truth in the difference or differance between transcendental and empirical. Rather than privilege idealism or empiricism as both camps have done, Derrida posits the quasi-transcendental, differance, or the mediation between transcendental and empirical as the space of truth. Differance enables the thinking of both transcendental and empirical, and thus a thinking of the conditionality of structurality as differance is the true resolution to the impasse between idealism and post-metaphysics, or philosophy and non-philosophy.

A common misconception of Derrida is that he continues the legacy of Nietzsche and Heidegger by negating the positive or the transcendental in favour of the negative or empirical, as Stanley Rosen argues in *Hermeneutics as Politics*. Rosen argues that Derrida's differance is a nihilistic embrace of nothingness over the transcendental and an inversion of Hegel, as well as that contrary to Derrida, speech is superior to writing because of the politics encoded in the hierarchy: while one can adjust conversation according to the nature of the interlocutor, in the way that the equity of the judge adjusts the written law to the individual case, writing says the same thing to everyone. Rosen misses Derrida's point entirely, which is to bring about democracy through his emphasis that speech is a form of writing and writing is hence prior to speech. Rosen also misses Derrida's point on metaphysical conditioning by accusing him of being a nihilist and empiricist, Derrida rather locates the conditions of possibility of metaphysics as that which is neither transcendental nor empirical, but the difference between them, or differance. Out of differance arises the differentiating trace that distinguishes transcendental and empirical. This paper argues, contrary to Rosen, that Derrida is not an empiricist, or nihilist, but posits the meta-conditions that enable metaphysical perpetuation and production- which are differance and iterability. The transcendental is nothing outside its iteration as the empirical, and hence arises not from transcendental as condition of possibility, but through the movement of repetition, or the trace. The trace retrospectively distinguishes transcendental and empirical. Derrida's deconstruction is thus a meta-phenomenology rather than a negation or inversion of phenomenology as critics like Rosen argue.

Another critic who holds a view that Derrida continues Heidegger's legacy is Paul Manihotttil, in *Difference at the Origin- Derrida's Critique of Heidegger's Philosophy of the Work of Art*. Manihotttil argues that deconstruction radicalizes the task of destruction inaugurated by Heidegger. I would like to demonstrate that Derrida's work does not represent an extension of Heidegger's as I do not believe, as Manihotttil argues, that Derrida is critical of Western metaphysics or that the aim of Derrida's deconstruction is to undo the transcendental absolute of Western metaphysics. Derrida argues that the absolute is constituted by iterability and the trace, but does not in any way negate or invert the absolute, only investigating the conditions of possibility for its production. Manihotttil further argues that Derrida reduces every concept to the play of the text. I contest Manihotttil's view that Derrida's work negates presence and reduces everything to textuality. Rather, Derrida investigates the conditions of possibility for

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the perpetuation of presence and logocentrism, his arguments about textuality are not a reduction to the empirical but an argument about the fundamental mediation of meaning. The transcendental has to be iterated as the empirical and repeated in the empirical through the movement of difference and the trace rather than existing without a medium or in a vacuum as Husserl's Cartesian reduction would have it. The transcendental exists only in and through iterability. This is what Derrida means by the statement, "There is nothing outside the text"(Derrida, 1976 158)that truth or the absolute is irrevocably mediated, rather than existing without a medium, through iterability and repetition with a difference.

In *Structure, Sign and Play* Derrida describes history as "a detour between two presences-between structure, sign and 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 has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play." (Derrida, 1978292)Derrida argues that there is no "question of choosing between the two, but to conceive of the common ground, difference of irreducible difference", (Derrida, 1978 292) the monstrous birth of the quasi-transcendental. The quasi-transcendental conceives of difference, or the interval between transcendental and empirical, as the condition of possibility and common ground for both transcendental and empirical idealism.

This passage from *Writing and Difference* was written while Derrida had been working on his subsequent manuscript *Speech and Phenomena*, and in it we see the genesis of Derrida's thoughts on metaphysics. It is no longer a question of simply choosing between transcendental idealism or a metaphysics of presence and radical empiricism with Nietzsche and Heidegger, because each thought of either requires the opposing term as its relational other and defining axis. Idealism means nothing when defined in isolation from the empirical, just as empiricism is an empty term without its relation to the transcendental. In Husserl for instance, his maintenance of the transcendental subject depends on his exclusion of the indicative, just as Heidegger requires the exclusion of the ideal from his situated Being in order to maintain a pure Being untainted by Christian spirituality. Transcendental is not conceivable without the empirical and empirical is not conceivable without the transcendental, they are only related dynamically through iterability and repetition with a difference. Truth is then not localizable to transcendental or empirical, but situated in between as difference and the quasi-transcendental. Deconstruction thus proceeds by revealing the aporia that thought cannot do without its ghost or unthought and then proceeds towards transgressing the limit toward thinking the unthought of discourse and bringing it to light. Deconstruction is thus justice as it reveals the dynamic interdependency between discourse and its shadow or ghost. It proceeds to demonstrate that thought cannot do without its ghost or unthought. Deconstruction is the thinking of simultaneous identity and difference, identity in non-identity as a priori difference is necessary for thinking both terms which thus share the condition of being determined by this prior difference, hence difference translates into sameness. Deconstruction shows that the possibility of a distinction is simultaneously its impossibility as that which makes the distinction impossible, for instance what allows expression to exclude indication, is precisely the defining moment that upholds the distinction. It is necessary to exclude indication in order to maintain the transcendental subject, just as it is necessary for Heidegger to exclude Christian spirituality from his anthropological Being in order to maintain its worldliness and separation from the transcendental. Each moment of exclusion is necessary for the maintenance of the defining term as it means something only in relation to its other or unthought. Deconstruction is thus the thinking of the simultaneous similarity and difference, identity in non-identity of thought and itsunthought. Deconstruction is the thought of the simultaneous one and its other, or simultaneous positive and negative, because the other or negative is the relational assumption that founds the possibility of thinking the one or positive. Deconstruction is thus the simultaneous thought of both one and other or both positive and negative, because these exist only in relation to each other, through iterability and difference.

The trap that many contemporary commentators fall into is assuming that Derrida privileges the empirical and continues the work of Nietzsche and Heidegger, as Martin Hagglund assumes in his book *Radical Atheism*. Hagglund describes Derrida as a materialist who dethrones the sacred in his texts.

Likewise Michael Marder, in *The Event of the Thing* argues that deconstruction is a realism that detaches the object from ideal origins in a post-phenomenological turn, thus returning to the thing as fundamentally empirical. My interpretation diverges from such interpretations of Derrida because I hold that they have failed to grasp the aporia of Derrida's thought: you cannot think the transcendental without the empirical and vice versa, the transcendental and empirical are paradoxically similar and different, identical and non-identical. Derrida is not to be mistaken as an empiricist, rather he is a thinker of paradox, aporia, and the very conditions that make thought possible such as differance and iterability. Transcendental and empirical do not exist outside the structure of repetition as each term requires the other for the distinction to be upheld and only can be defined in relation to the other term as each term, is, on its own, an empty term that requires the exclusion of the other to be thought and conceptualised. The transcendental has to be excluded from the empirical to be defined, just as the empirical has to be excluded from the transcendental to be defined. As we will read with the papers on Husserl, his idealism can only stand with the expulsion and exclusion of indication from his philosophy, just as radical empiricists such as Heidegger, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Blanchot require the transcendental to be excluded from their philosophies to define them, accounting for the transcendental on empirical grounds. This act of exclusion is thus necessary, yet mistaken about the fundamental structure of metaphysics because transcendental and empirical only exist in relation to each other through iterability and differance. As Derrida demonstrates, philosophy since Plato has assumed the ontological structure and vocabulary of metaphysics, whether it has affirmed it as philosophy or deviated from it as non-philosophy. Transcendental and empirical are thus terms that are inscribed in language, whether we associate or disassociate ourselves from these terms, these metaphysical terms haunt the structure and vocabulary of our philosophy. True philosophy would, thus, as Derrida demonstrates, come to terms with the necessity of both terms to thinking each other and acknowledge the quasi-transcendental, the between, the neither transcendental nor empirical, as the paradoxical space between that determines the thinking of both, or differance.

In this survey of secondary sources on phenomenology I have located the problematic of an aporia that lies at its center. Phenomenology has divided itself into transcendental idealism or empirical idealism and non-philosophy. In both these incarnations of phenomenology, Husserl's transcendental idealism and the radical empiricism in the philosophies of Heidegger, Levinas, Ricoeur, Blanchot and Merleau-Ponty, lies a form of theoretical essentialism and blindness to the meta-condition that structures phenomenology. It is differance, the space or interval between the transcendental and empirical which conditions and produces both the transcendental and empirical through the retrospective movement of the trace. Derrida's contribution to phenomenology, as I will argue in this paper, is his discovery of the quasi-transcendental, or the interval between the transcendental and empirical which determines phenomenology. It does this through the productive and differentiating movement of the trace. As transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion, then truth would be neither transcendental nor empirical. Rather the difference or differance between transcendental and empirical would be its meta-condition and that which enables the thinking of its structurality. Truth is neither presence nor absence, Jew or Greek, being or non-being, self or other but the difference and differance between these two extremes, Derrida emphasizes the importance of iterability or repetition of both extremes as essentially the same, truth is thus quasi-transcendental or the interval between transcendental and empirical which enables both. The concept is marked by its signature, or its breaking away from the origin, to signify a different kind of writing in order to communicate – which is the logic of the graft, intervening in order to signify anew, and renovate meaning and experience, to mark a double writing, and effect a displacement of the traditional hierarchy of meaning and a reversal. Deconstruction examines these principles of displacement and reversal, in order to bring about democracy, and emphasize writing as a primary form of communication. Writing brings about a force of signification that exceeds its origin, so there is always a surplus and excess of meaning, which can never be reduced to a univocal signified. In doing so deconstruction turns philosophy towards infinite possibility rather than a hierarchy, as meaning always exceeds its origin. Origin itself is an illusion and supplemented by the function and logic of the trace, which displaces it in order to communicate. Derrida inscribes in phenomenology it a measure of fallibility through his demonstrations that thought is always contaminated by its unthought, the ideal is always contaminated by contingency and undecidability. Derrida's arguments are modes of interrogation

in which he questions the basis of presence, fully given to itself, uncontaminated by absence, contingency, the empirical, the Other, and as such inscribes the necessity of incarnation and a necessity for the mark to fail as presence as it has to differ from itself materially in order to be realized. Derrida thus inscribes failure in phenomenology, its necessity for the mark to die and survive itself as the trace to live on in the material world, and thus rescues phenomenology by demonstrating that its success as an enterprise depends on including what it had excluded- which is transcendental-empirical difference.

In this paper I have examined the aporia that has come to pass in phenomenology: phenomenology has divided itself into either transcendental idealism or radical empiricism, and an impasse has occurred as to where truth is to be located, as idealism or empiricism. Phenomenology has traditionally assumed that the transcendental and empirical are divisible and ontologically separate. Traditionally, the transcendental has been understood to be the ground of the empirical, whereas the empirical is thought to be but the simulacrum of the transcendental. Phenomenology, in its divide into transcendental idealism and radical empiricism, assumes these are distinct ontological spheres. Hence Husserl with his transcendental reduction strives to bracket the empirical to reduce indication to expression, while empiricists, though they may not easily recognize themselves as such, such as Heidegger, Levinas, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot, have taken the transcendental as a site of exclusion or negation for their phenomenologies. In their reverse reduction they seek to exclude the transcendental as they view this purification as being faithful to phenomena, returning to the things themselves.

This paper has problematized the relationship between the transcendental and empirical, because it has demonstrated that the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical. The transcendental is nothing outside the empirical and vice versa, because the transcendental needs to be iterated as the empirical to come into being, just as the empirical needs the mediation of the transcendental through iterability to come about. For instance, we would not grasp the object without the transcendental properties of space and time. Yet we would also not grasp the object if there were no empirical instantiation of the object. Hence the transcendental needs to be iterated as the empirical to come into being. Hence a pure idealism such as Husserl's or a pure empiricism such as Levinas' cannot stand, because delineating the transcendental requires the exclusion of the empirical to define itself, just as delineating the empirical requires the exclusion of the transcendental to define itself. Transcendental and empirical exist only through a dynamic relation of difference and iterability, as the transcendental is and is not the empirical, their difference translates into sameness. This is because the transcendental and empirical remain separated and distinguished by nothing, as demonstrated in the Husserl papers. Were the transcendental separable from the empirical, no phenomenological reduction would be able to take place, hence the difference between the transcendental is an illusion as the transcendental does not exist outside the dynamic relationship of iterability to the empirical. Were the empirical separable from the transcendental, this would also translate as a paradox as the radical empiricists we discussed throughout this paper have taken the transcendental as a point of contention and exclusion. Heidegger deliberately excludes Christian Theology from his philosophy, just as Levinas and Ricoeur privilege the Other and embodiment over the Self, excluding the Absolute in their phenomenology. Likewise, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot emphasize corporeality and Other-directed phenomenologies, which I have argued are negative or inverse phenomenologies, and take the transcendental as a point of dissociation from their philosophies. I have demonstrated that this separation of the transcendental and empirical is thus not coherent as these phenomenologists require the transcendental as a site of exclusion to define their philosophies. Hence, defining the empirical in absence of the transcendental does not make sense. As we have demonstrated through readings of transcendental idealism and radical empiricism, both are repetitions of the same through iterability. Heidegger's radical empiricism does not differ from Husserl's transcendental idealism, because their ontological structure is essentially the same. Metaphysics and post-Metaphysics are doublings rather than negations of each other, as we see Christian theology and Heidegger's post-metaphysics share the same ontological and metaphysical structure, because reversed Platonism remains a form of Platonism. Heidegger's post-metaphysics requires the exclusion of the transcendental while Husserl's idealism requires the exclusion of the empirical, hence both exist only in dynamic relation to each other through iterability and are essentially the same. No phenomenological reduction would take place were the transcendental and empirical separable, hence empiricism and idealism are repetitions rather than divergences from each other. The transcendental is and is not the empirical, their difference

translates into sameness as we demonstrated in the Husserl papers, and hence transcendental idealism and radical empiricism are repetitions of the same through iterability and differance. As transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion, truth would be neither transcendental nor empirical. Rather the difference or differance between transcendental and empirical would be its meta-condition and that which enables the thinking of its structurality. Truth is neither presence nor absence, Jew or Greek, being or non-being, self or other but the difference and differance between these two extremes, Derrida emphasizes the importance of iterability or repetition of both extremes as essentially the same, truth is thus quasi-transcendental or the interval between transcendental and empirical which enables both.

The transcendental requires the empirical to be defined and vice versa, while their difference translates into a paradoxical sameness because as we have demonstrated in the Husserl papers, transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion. This paper has thus demonstrated the necessity of the quasi-transcendental to conceiving the relationship between the transcendental and empirical, that which is neither transcendental nor empirical, but is prior to both as it is the anterior difference that enables us to think and conceptualize both transcendental and empirical. In place of transcendental or empirical privilege hence, this paper has argued that the quasi-transcendental and differance are the conditions necessary for conceiving phenomenology as it is transcendental-empirical difference, the point of distinction between the transcendental and empirical, that enables us to think both as each term requires the illumination of the opposing term in order to be upheld. Truth is thus not localizable to either transcendental or empirical, but translates as differance and the quasi-transcendental as we require transcendental-empirical difference to conceptualize phenomenology in the first place. Every designation of the transcendental requires its distinction from the empirical to be upheld in Husserl's transcendental idealism, whereas the radical empiricists, as I have previously mentioned, take their point of departure from the transcendental, making it a point to negate or exclude Christian theology or the ontology of the Absolute and the same in order to define their phenomenologies. This paper has thus negotiated the space between the transcendental and empirical as the difference and necessary a priori condition that is necessary to thinking and conceptualizing phenomenology in its totality, as an idealism without the empirical or an empiricism without the ideal translates into an absurdity or incoherence.

Phenomenology's divide into transcendental idealism or radical empiricism, with its subsequent crisis over origin and truth and where it is to be located, thus presents a false conflict because the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical. Their difference is an illusion or a sameness. The transcendental is nothing outside the empirical and vice versa. This is because transcendental and empirical only come into being through the structure of iterability and differance. Without the transcendental, it would be impossible to conceive of the empirical, and vice versa. Hence phenomenology is based upon the aporia of the quasi-transcendental, that which is neither transcendental nor empirical but is the difference that allows the thinking of both. The transcendental is the empirical because the distinction is an illusory distinction, as we demonstrated in the Husserl papers, because the phenomenological reduction would not be able to take place if the distinction were ontological and substantive. The privilege of either transcendental or empirical upheld by both camps of idealists and empiricists hence generates aporia as the transcendental and empirical are divided by nothing, their difference translates into sameness. Transcendental idealism requires the empirical to be a site of exclusion, whereas radical empiricism requires the transcendental to be a site of exclusion. Hence both terms are empty terms when defined in isolation from each other because the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical, just as the empirical is the repeated trace of the transcendental. Transcendental and empirical are thus historical names derived from metaphysics, based upon an illusory distinction, which can only be defined in dynamic relation to each other as each term requires the exclusion of the opposing term for the distinction to be upheld.

The transcendental and empirical can only come into being through iterability and differance, as the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical, and does not exist outside the dynamic relation to it. This is because the transcendental translates into the empirical, the aporia of metaphysics is that their difference translates into a repetition of the same, or iterability. Hence, we know of no transcendental that can be defined in isolation from the empirical and vice versa. The debate over the source of truth as transcendental idealism or radical empiricism is thus misled. In place, this paper has argued that truth is

neither transcendental nor empirical but quasi-transcendental, the space between the transcendental and empirical. This quasi-transcendental is the difference between them, which gives rise to the distinguishing movement of the trace, retrospectively producing both transcendental and empirical.

I began with a survey of secondary sources to locate the aporia that had occurred in phenomenology and outlined Derrida's intervention. In my papers on Husserl, I argued that there was no presentation but only representation; ideality has to be repeated with a difference or iterated in order to be constituted. In my papers on Heidegger, I argued that Heidegger's non-metaphysics was essentially a repetition of it, and that there was no substantial difference between metaphysics and non-metaphysics or representational and post-representational thinking. In my papers on Ricoeur, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot, I argued that their reversals of phenomenology to embrace a negative phenomenology or radical empiricism ended up being a repetition of metaphysics rather than an overcoming of it as they remain bound to its ontological structure by negating metaphysics and thus repeat it like Heidegger. Through this paper, I have argued that iterability and signature form the conditions of possibility for the perpetuation of phenomenology and metaphysics. Derrida's discovery is thus the a priori condition of possibility for conceptuality – its iterability and mediation, or signature. Derrida's meta-phenomenology is a tracing to the roots of its conditions of possibility for conceptuality, and in this paper I have located these conditions as difference and the quasi-transcendental. My readings do not intend to elevate Derrida to absolute status, but rather I wish to suggest that Derrida has discovered the grounding conditions for metaphysics as difference and the quasi-transcendental. Indeed, such a reading strengthens rather than destroys the metaphysical project because of its meta-phenomenological status as inquiry.

Derrida, through humour, subtlety and irony, demonstrates that the traditional hierarchies in phenomenology and metaphysics, be they empirical or transcendental idealism, simply do not hold as phenomenology always lands in an aporia when one seeks to privilege the transcendental or empirical. In place, as we have seen in our discussions throughout this paper, phenomenology is conditioned by the fundamental phenomena of iterability and signature, transcendental and empirical are not separable or distinct as these concepts have to be irrevocably mediated. An idealism without empiricism or an empiricism without idealism translates into an absurdity. Rather, it is repetition of the transcendental in the empirical, deconstruction as a double science and double writing, which produces the economy of both the transcendental and empirical through the movement of the trace.

In this paper, we have examined various aporias that afflict phenomenology- Husserl's phenomenological reduction cannot hold if the transcendental is separate from the empirical, indeed, nothing separates the transcendental and the empirical and thus they are essentially the same. We demonstrated that Heidegger's repeated attempts to inverse to negate metaphysics only reproduced metaphysics as a ghostly double that returned to haunt his anti-metaphysics which remained bound to its ontological structure and vocabulary. We showed through readings of Levinas, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot that their radical empiricisms and privilege of Other over the same repeated metaphysics like Heidegger, in negating it and reversing its structure, thus reproducing and affirming it paradoxically. In all these demonstrations we have shown that the impossibility of a text is precisely its site of possibility, deconstruction proceeds by exposing the limit of a text and then de-limiting it towards the Other that it had repressed, its method is thus transgression and exceeding of limits imposed by a text towards its blindspots through exposing an aporia, and then proceeding to show the unthought of a text that needs to be thought in order to address this aporia. Transcendental and empirical are related through a dynamic relation of iterability and repetition with a difference. Hence metaphysics is based fundamentally upon an aporia or the conditionality of the quasi-transcendental, which is neither transcendental nor empirical but the condition that enables the thinking of both. Derrida thus inscribes phenomenology in a more powerful form through naming its condition of possibility as the quasi-transcendental, thus bringing to phenomenology reflexivity about its method of production and functioning.

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