

## **Beyond Hermeneutics: Derrida's Semiology as a Temporal Metaphysics of Communication<sup>1</sup>**

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*Depuis Aristote, tous les philosophes qui ont étudié le temps se sont accordés au moins sur un point: l'extrême difficulté, sinon l'impossibilité, de penser sa réalité.*

Dominique Janicaud, *Chronos: Pour l'intelligence du partage temporel*

Time *is* not. There is. It gives time [*Es gibt Zeit*]. That giving that gives time is determined by denying and withholding nearness.

Heidegger, *On Time and Being*

Patience swallows its own intention; time is attested in being deferred [*se réfère en se déferant*]. Time is deferred, is transcended to the Infinite. And the awaiting without something awaited (time itself) is turned into responsibility for another.

Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*

The future is not a future present, yesterday is not a past present. That which is beyond the closure of the book is neither to be awaited nor refund. It is *there*, but *out there*—beyond—within repetition but eluding us there. It is there like the *shadow* of the book, the *third* between two hands holding the book, the *différance* in the now of writing.

Jacques Derrida, "Ellipse"

It will have been a claim you would have denied *a priori*: that Derrida could have a metaphysics. I speak here in the singular, there you are before me, *you*, singular, unique—although there is a bunch of you, all of you in each of you.<sup>2</sup> There will not have been a metaphysics in Derrida.

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<sup>1</sup>This is, of course, a response to Jim Bradley's "Beyond Hermeneutics: Peirce's Semiology as a Trinitarian Metaphysics of Communication," *Analecta Hermeneutica* vol. 1 (2009): 56-72, and everything that follows is an attempt to respond to that and other texts of his. And that is what all texts are: responses to texts in languages borrowed and repeated, with difference inscribed through this repetition and response.

<sup>2</sup>If one wished a quick summary of what follows, here would be an outline: first, to discuss the relation to the Other as what all text and textuality responds, and to think how textuality is not simply about books and writing in the narrow sense; second, to introduce the standard Derrida and his supposed anti-realism; third, to begin to pull at strands of Derrida's thinking of time and relate it

That this is the case is undeniable; it is what is really the case, a fact of the matter you will say. Between you and me: he can't think about you beyond the text and textuality of *différance*.<sup>3</sup> The real is denied by him in the first place, and the *first place* is the *arché* about which Derrida cannot speak because he speaks endlessly of language and could never shut up about it. He does not have a metaphysics. You beyond this text would know it; beyond the language and borders here, you would deny it; that is undeniable, even as I can't, here in this text, deny you, the other, there, *really* there before me, to whom I respond, *hic et nunc*. Beyond or before any hermeneutics of this text is the undeniable, and you would deny it only as your *auto-da-fé* beyond the text itself. A denial of you. In denial. That Derrida can in a text speak to the real other. I could go on like this— *really*, I can—but I must respond to you. You all.

Levinas called first philosophy “metaphysics,” but not as Jim Bradley would have meant it: metaphysics is the welcoming of the coming of the Other, the *undeniable* relation to the Other that we follow from, and the mark of this ethics is the simple “*après vous*.” This is the case whatever our disavowals and denials, and the Other marks an undeniable *a priori* to any affirmation or denial. Because there you are. And Derrida's later work never stopped testifying and mourning, endlessly, of this Other that he called the “undeniable” prior to any denial.<sup>4</sup> The undeniably real beyond or before textuality, before the signifier/signified relation. *Really*. There would be no texts as such without this relation.

I planned to press this upon you, to testify to the undeniable and the realism of Derrida's metaphysics, even if he would disavow and deny the word, not least because, as you would say, it points to first philosophy, to the ground and *arché* that you would have said he found unreal, unfounded, that is, a “transcendental signified” that would have to be deconstructed. But I wouldn't be responding to *you*, in the singular or as the many, *vous*; it would be, you would say, irresponsible, not least because following *après vous* at the end of so many responses to metaphysics in your work—and you'll see this paper is as much about response and responsibility as anything else—I wouldn't speak

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to Jim Bradley's work (he is often the “you” to whom I'm responding); fourth, to begin to describe the relation of temporal deferral as the true import of Derrida's early work; and finally to relate this thinking to the *a priori* finitude and thus mourning of the other.

<sup>3</sup> Derrida's use of this term is well known, but it's important to note that Derrida chose this term for its double meaning as temporal deferral and spatial differentiation as a means for rethinking Heidegger's ontico-ontological difference. In what follows, I will be relying on this temporal deferral that is at the heart of any discussion of textual *différance*.

<sup>4</sup> Derrida discusses the “undeniable” in several crucial places in his later work. See especially his discussion of animal cruelty in *The Animal that Therefore I am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 27-9.

responsibly to metaphysics—so much response and responsibility is called forth here: a work of mourning that has been anything but morbid or narcissistic, but an affirmation of life, of *a* life, even as that life was given over to a thinking of *firstness* (the *arché*) that would be prior or beyond any given life. And because we here at Memorial University don't simply play on words as you would say Derrida does, we *perform* metaphysics. It is something of a shared credo, a statement of faith about what would be beyond faith: a speculation on the real.<sup>5</sup> At least that's the lesson I took from you, singular and unique, all of you. And your interest was specifically in the philosophy of time and at the end of a too-short year responding to your work, always unique, always addressed in particular to those in this community (so many friends and so many students—an indelible inheritance still to come), I can only begin to offer a response to you, if such a thing is possible. Thus I look to connect Derrida to a realism of time, but coming back, at the end, to one's responsibility to the Other and to you in light of this thinking of time.<sup>6</sup> And yet it's important to note, there is a failing that is always an aspect of any response, as Levinas argues, such that there is always a prior shame to *being* or being *here*.

And thus shame for you being here,<sup>7</sup> and shame for all of you doing metaphysics. Have you not heard of the Kantian critiques of dogmatism? Or Marx's determination to turn Hegel's metaphysical, speculative philosophy on its head? Or Husserl's proclamation to go back to the things themselves, to do a science of phenomena that would bypass metaphysics? Or Heidegger's *Destruktion* of metaphysics as a metaphysics of presence? Of analytic philosophy? Of Russell and Carnap, Wittgenstein and Dummett? Have you no sense of shame, or shame that you have no shame in the face of these others? Those others who would deny metaphysics can happen, perhaps especially here, in a new doctoral program out on the edge of the sea, where our metaphysical pretensions risk being washed away at any moment? And you would say to me, if I

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<sup>5</sup> Jim speaks of Peirce's "faith (Latin, *fides*: trust) in the hypothesis of reason" (Beyond Hermeneutics, 57).

<sup>6</sup> This, as many readers will know, was often precisely the form of Jim's essays: to move from seemingly abstract metaphysical considerations (though, of course, time is anything but an abstraction) to what he called the "unconditional concern" for the other. See, for example, his "The Triune Event: Event Ontology, Reason, and Love," in *Event and Decision: Ontology and Politics in Badiou, Deleuze, and Whitehead*, eds. Roland Faber, Henry Krips, and Daniel Pettus (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 97-114.

<sup>7</sup> This paper was presented as the last in a series of papers at Memorial University on the question "What is metaphysics?" The topic was chosen as an homage to the work of Jim Bradley. I thus have decided to keep in multiple references specific to that occasion in what follows, not least to underline the place of Jim's work in the firmament of Memorial's philosophy department, or better to emphasize the ways in which the future of that faculty will form itself as one mode of response to Jim and his work.

dared to sovereignly declare for you what you would say, as if I know you already, *all* of you, “*you* who teach Derrida, who are *you* to speak of metaphysics? Does not the mere acid taste of that word in your mouth cause you to bite your tongue? And biting your tongue, would you not have us stop speaking of metaphysics?” And you would tell me a story about a Derrida who called for an end to metaphysics and whose “textual idealism” would forever imprison any speculation by him on the real, and thus could never give us time, especially a real time; all his texts would be just playing for time but never, precisely, giving it. And you, all of you, would only be following and thus responding to Jim in this oft-told story:

Peirce’s semiology constitutes a rejection of Saussure: because Saussure’s structuralism operates only in terms of a binary or dyadic relation of signifier (words) and signified (concepts), his account of communication is nominalist (concepts say nothing about the world) and subjective-idealist (communication is a matter of linguistic structures alone). Deconstruction takes this subjective idealism to its extreme limit by treating communication as nothing more than *the differential plurality of signifiers* [my emphasis]—a paradoxical form of monism.<sup>8</sup>

The *locus classicus* for the charge of Derrida’s textual idealism— this “paradoxical form of monism”—comes just near the midpoint of his early work, *Of Grammatology* (1967), where he declares “there is no out-side text [*il n’y a pas de hors texte*].” Let me retell this story, though you would say it is already well known—the original scene of the crime of deconstruction. Reading Rousseau’s texts to demonstrate an implacable logic of “supplementarity” intrinsic to them, Derrida pauses to consider whether someone disputing his reading of Rousseau could not simply point to the “reality” of Rousseau’s life beyond any given text. If everything is a “text” for Derrida, then does he not deny the reality of the world as such? Moreover, doesn’t his text risk just producing a hermeneutic “commentary” that would look to stand in for the text itself, to state a truth it does not itself announce? He writes:

Yet if reading must not be content with doubling the text, it cannot legitimately transgress the text toward *something other than it* [my emphasis], toward a referent (*a reality that is metaphysical* [my emphasis], historical, psycho-biographical, etc.) or toward a

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<sup>8</sup> Bradley, “Beyond Hermeneutics,” 56.

signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place *outside of language* [my emphasis], that is to say, in the sense that we give here to that word, *outside of writing in general*. . . . *There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*]. And that is neither because Jean-Jacques' life, or the existence of Mamma or Therese *themselves*, is not of prime interest to us, nor because we have access to their so-called "real" existence only in the text and we have neither any means of altering this, nor any right to neglect this limitation. . . . [I]n what one calls the real life of these existences "of flesh and bone," beyond and behind what one believes can be circumscribed as Rousseau's text, there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of *differential* references, the "real" supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from *a trace* and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus *to infinity*, for we have read, in the text, that the *absolute present* [my emphasis], Nature, that which words like "real mother" name, have always already escaped, have never existed; that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence.<sup>9</sup>

No doubt, this long citation risks going on so long as not to respond to you. But Derrida's take is incisive, even if it risks an anti-realism, or risks discussing all "reality" as derisively "metaphysical." Derrida, like Heidegger before him, set out to critique the "metaphysics of presence," though the terminology Derrida tends to use in *Of Grammatology* is "transcendental signified." In any set of texts, there are, of course, a whole slew of signifiers (words, but also structures that themselves are said to be *signifiers* of reality—this is point that in Derrida is often missed). To keep things as simple as possible, what Derrida argued in *Of Grammatology* is that his structuralist forbearers, such as Saussure, recognized the play of language in writing—that its meaning shifts in different contexts—but sought some pivot point that transcended this "play." For Rousseau, this was Nature, something that he could indeed write about, but had a fixed "reality" in the world beyond the texts he was writing. Saussure argued the same for consciousness. But, Derrida notes, all such argumentation is taking place within language itself; it cannot transcend all signifiers and language, since all such terms are *within* language and thus are given over

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158.

to the very structures Saussure and Rousseau discuss, and these structures are “founded,” if you can use such a word, on the time-spacing of *différance* (difference/deferral). In other words, Saussure says that no term has a “positive” meaning: a tree is only knowable in terms of what it is not: not a chair, not a blade of grass, etc. etc. But when it comes to “consciousness,” Saussure argues that somehow this *term* is outside the contexts of language, despite the fact that, of course, it is a word, and thus its meaning will shift in a given context. And, in the citation above, in Rousseau this is “Nature,” something incorruptible and “real” beyond culture and language and the changing ways in which “Nature” differs in given contexts. Derrida’s take is that “Man,” or “Nature,” or “God,” or the self-present subject both *grounds* and are *put out of play* in these “metaphysical” discourses. This is not merely the facile claim that these words are pulled into language and one can’t think except in language, but rather that both Rousseau and Saussure bypass the very linguistic structures they delineate in their important works on the matter.

Thus, where Heidegger critiqued the metaphysics of presence for its reductiveness, that is, reducing Being to one kind of being (be it God or matter), Derrida in his earlier work seeks to find the “transcendental signified” that centers a given philosophical discourse. In this way, Derrida, you’ll tell me, traps us forever in “readings” of texts, forming a new (anti-?) scholasticism creating nothing but different interpretations of philosophical works without ever speculating on the real. There is, it would seem, “no outside-text.” As Lee Braver puts it:

There is nothing outside the text because our experience is always linguistically mediated; this makes both subject and object *effects* of language, rather than entities that precede it from the outside to master or anchor it. Language impersonally structures our selves and our world, and our actions depend on passively taking on these structures.<sup>10</sup>

There is so much wrong in this passage and it calls for (what doesn’t?) a response: linguistic mediation is equated with efficient causality (“subject and object” are “*effects* of language”), as if there were not two centuries of meditation on just what “mediation” means, or as if anyone but a naïve realist believes in the immediacy of objects (let alone subjects). In any case, those who tell this story of Derrida face two problems, *at least*:

(1) Inasmuch as Derrida is given to putting the very word “reality”

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<sup>10</sup>Lee Braver, *Thing of this World* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 495.

in quotation marks, he can be said to note its shifting meaning in different contexts. But *who would deny this?* Are not the many arguments over realism really just about different uses of the term? *For real*. Moreover, those who do speculative metaphysics claim to bypass naïve realism, about which they are equally scathing. Is not Derrida's emphasis on textuality and *différance* simply a reference to the implausibility of any naïve realism—the naïve realisms of unmediated presence, of consciousness, of “man,” of nature? The whole problem is contained in Braver's formulation: Derrida is not suggesting objects are the “effect” of some “cause” known as linguistic structures. That, certainly, would be a linguistic idealism, if such a thing even exists. Words do not create Being. Such would make the speaker of language an infinite being—“In the beginning was the Word”—and even John Caputo would be hard pressed to find such a theology in Derrida.

(2) But—and this will be the most difficult part of our discussion ahead—neither is Derrida formulating a linguistic update of Kant's concepts of the understanding, where linguistic structures merely filter an *an sich* forever inaccessible to us on this side of the language barrier. This, at least, is Braver's contention, and meets up with Christopher Norris's early claim that Derrida's work amounted to a new “transcendental deduction” of the conditions of possibility for knowledge.<sup>11</sup> This would make Derrida's entire project an *epistemological* adventure, an irony given his proximity to Heidegger's *Destruktion* of the history of *ontology*, and it would give us, at best, what Scott Johnston calls an antecedent realism.

No doubt, many of Derrida's earliest exponents presented his work in terms of his textualism, but he is less an heir to the linguistic turn than continuing a line of thought from Husserl and Heidegger regarding the importance of temporality. Derrida's *speculative* move is to look to the specific temporality of texts as a pivot to a *real time*; it is *différance* as difference/deferral<sup>12</sup> that is the condition of possibility for all of Derrida's claims about deconstruction and indeed his claims about texts. He writes:

The concept of text or of context which guides me does not exclude the world, reality, history. Once again (and this probably makes a thousand times I have had to repeat this, but when will it finally be heard, and why this resistance?): as I

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<sup>11</sup> See Braver's discussion in *Thing of This World*, 464-6.

<sup>12</sup> Clearly here I am privileging the temporal, though Derrida would rightly note that *différance* is temporal-spatial, or the opening of the temporal spatial. But this “momentary” privileging of a “real temporalization” in Derrida's text is meant—as Derrida often did himself—to overturn a thinking that emphasizes the spatiality of the *topos* in Heidegger and the spatial/textual readings of his own texts.

understand it (and I have explained why), the text is not the book, it is not confined in a volume itself confined to the library. It does not suspend reference—to history, to the world, to reality, to being, and especially not *to the other* [I will have to come back to this], since to say of history, of the world, of reality, that they always appear in an experience, hence in a movement of interpretation which contextualizes them according to a network of differences and hence of referral to the *other*, is surely to recall that *alterity* (difference) is irreducible.<sup>13</sup>

There is his “metaphysics,” and we can use this word since Derrida often said that we couldn’t but speak metaphysically, and though this is taken to be “anti-metaphysical,” he can no more be anti-metaphysical than one can be “anti-“ the floor on which one stands; he was always “taking on the tradition,” as Michael Naas discusses it, in both senses of the term. So let’s repeat this last formulation: “To say of history, of the world, of reality that they always appear in an experience, hence in a movement of interpretation which contextualizes them according to a network of differences and hence of the referral to the *other*, is surely to recall that alterity (difference) is irreducible.” That is, undeniable. Like you, ahead of me. Is this but a triunic structure, as Jim would discuss: (1) reality, (2) difference/alterity, and (3) interpretation? I will come to the end to responding to all of this, but my answer is no, since reality for Derrida is differentiation itself, that is, the time-spacing of *différance*.

But you would say we should not simply accept Derrida’s own defense on the matter, though his later work, which privileges the “to come” of a future worthy of the name rather than his early emphasis on writing, brings home this point. He writes:

The deconstruction of logocentrism, of linguisticism, of economism (of the proper, of the at-home [*chez-soi*], *oikos*, of the same), etc., as well as the affirmation of the impossible are always put forward *in the name of the real*, of the irreducible reality of the real—not of the real as the attribute of the objective, present, perceptible or intelligible thing (*res*), but of the real as the coming or event of the other, where the other resists all appropriation. . . .

The real is this non-negative impossible, this impossible coming or invention of the event the thinking of which is not an onto-phenomenology. It is a thinking of the event (singularity of the

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<sup>13</sup>Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988),

other, in its unanticipatable coming, *hic et nunc*) that resists reappropriation by an ontology or phenomenology of presence as such. . . . Nothing is more “realist,” in this sense, than a deconstruction.<sup>14</sup>

As he’s suggesting, this would not be a realism in the epistemological sense, where truth is the relation between the representation and represented, between a perception of the sign and its signified in an intelligible concept, in a correspondence theory of truth. Sean McGrath notes—how could I not cite this passage from 2009?—the following about Heidegger’s own critique of this form of epistemological “realism,” and I note this because there will be the most immense difficulty of providing any discourse that corresponds to what is dubbed “time”:

The robust CT theorist does not merely stipulate that every truth claim can be falsified; he goes further and stipulates the kinds of disclosures that can be the subject of a truth claim, i.e., the disclosure of an objective publically verifiable fact. But among the kinds of things that might be pointed out, things that *show themselves*, the publicly accessible fact is only one. Return, for a moment, to the showing of friendship, which is pointed out in the statement, “Peter is a true friend.” How does friendship show itself? Does the acknowledgment of friendship admit of the same kind of public verifiability, as say, measuring someone’s height? We can say of course, the proposition, “Peter is a true friend” either does or does not correspond to a fact. The proposition “Peter is my friend” is true if and only if Peter *is* my friend. But that is to talk around the problem. What do I recognize when I recognize friendship? Friendship does not show itself directly, nor is it objectively available when it does. It is a showing that is not accessible to the theoretical attitude. It is not a present-at-hand thing. Friendship shows itself through action in an inter-subjective situation. Friendship only shows itself to friendship; that is, I must be disposed in friendship to see friendship. To acknowledge Peter as my friend, as a true friend, is to commit to a certain interpretation of Peter’s actions. The acknowledgment is

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<sup>14</sup> Derrida, “As If It Were Possible, ‘Within Such Limits’ . . .” *Negotiations: Interviews and Interviews*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). See also Derrida, *Séminaire: La bête et le souverain: Vol. 1 (2001-2002)* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2008),

hermeneutical, i.e., a self-involving act, not a theoretical observation.<sup>15</sup>

How can I begin to respond, what with so many Peter's whom this could name? And would not discussing this *here* give it over to this now invalidated logic of "publicly verifiable facts"? So many guesses about this writer on the dark ground of the unconscious on the truths of friendship<sup>16</sup> and the responses owed to this other named Peter—in 2009. What "acts" of this Peter will have to be "interpreted," that is, put under scrutiny, and how will he respond *après vous*—in 2013? At the least, he can respond that we are on a path towards a thinking of time that is not *merely* theoretical, if such a thing can be thought, since as Heidegger noted well, our relation to time is pre-theoretical, and is prior to or the condition of possibility for Dasein's "practical," circumspective care structure as well. Heidegger's project, one to which Derrida responds and follows, is to think time not from the point of view of eternity. From the *Timaeus* to the *Confessions*, this is the shared axiom of Platonism, and, skipping quite a lot here, the well-named "presentism" and "eternalism" of contemporary philosophies of time, however opposed, share a theoretical view that can only theorize time in terms of conceptual schemes of tenses that freeze time.<sup>17</sup> There is much to unpack here, but I want to argue that Derrida's early work specifically targets the relation between writing and time, and thus between any supposed conceptual scheme or formal structure and the time of discursivity, that is, between differentiation (time-spacing) and its marking of existence, or marking *as* existence. Derrida thus refuses the gesture of the "view from nowhen,"<sup>18</sup> as Huw Price calls it, and we should all tense up when the time of writing, as Augustine noted well in his own thinking of the temporality of poetry, is reduced to atemporal problems of tenses.

And yet, you'd respond that Continental philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is no nearer to giving us a "realism" of time. Husserl's early work could only think a time in the circuit of the constituting subject. Heidegger's 1920s writings foundered in trying to get out of the circuit of

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<sup>15</sup> S.J. McGrath, "The Interpretive Structure of Truth in Heidegger," *Analecta Hermeneutica* Vol. 1 (2009): 54-5.

<sup>16</sup> See S.J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> For an excellent discussion of this latter claim, see Jack Reynold's "Analytic and Continental Philosophy: A Contretemps" in his *Chronopatologies: Time and Politics in Deleuze, Derrida, Analytic Philosophy, and Phenomenology* (London: Lexington Books, 2012), 17-34.

<sup>18</sup> Huw Price, *Time's Arrow and Archimedes' Point: New Directions for the Physics of Time* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 3-18.

Dasein, that is, to move from the time of Dasein (*Zeitlichkeit*) to the time of Being (*Temporalität*), or what he later dubbed “true” or “authentic” time” (*die eigentliche Zeit*) in *Time and Being*, which nevertheless must be given in a given experience:

In order to move beyond the idiom [of *es gibt*] and back to the matter [*Sache*], we must show how this “there is” [*es gibt*] can be experienced [*erfahren*] and seen [*erblicken*]. The appropriate way [*der geeignete Weg*] to get there is to explain what is given [*gegeben*] in the “It gives” [*Es gibt*], what “Being” means, which—It gives [*das—Es gibt*]; what “time” means, which—It gives [*das—Es gibt*].<sup>19</sup>

Is this thinking, too, still within the circuit of a giving (*geben*) that is received through an experience and a certain seeing, however many caveats Heidegger will provide? Levinas, too, responding to Heidegger, would critique a thinking of time as related to the eternal, but would find time in the *durée* of the relation between the Same and Other, and thus not outside the circuit of certain humanism, you would say, however rethought.

There is the time that one can understand in terms of presence and the present, and in which the past is only a retained present and the future a present to come. Re-presentation would be the fundamental modality of mental life. But, in terms of the ethical relationship with the other, I glimpse a temporality in which the dimensions of the past and the future have their own signification. In my responsibility for the other, the past of the other, which has never been my present, “concerns me”: it is not a re-presentation for me. The past of the other and, in a sense, the history of humanity in which I have never participated, in which I have never been present, is my past. As for the future—it is not my anticipation of a present which is already waiting for me, all ready, and like the imperturbable order of being, “as if it had already arrived,” as if temporality were a synchrony. The future is the time of pro-phy, which is also an imperative, a moral order, herald of an inspiration. . . . a future that is not a simple to-come [*à-venir*]. The infinity of time doesn’t frighten me; I think it is the very movement of the to-God [*à-dieu*] and that time is better

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<sup>19</sup>Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 5.

than eternity which is an exasperation of the “present,” an idealization of the present.<sup>20</sup>

There is a fundamental insight here, namely a link between infinite displacement and time, and beyond the eternal, it is this Levinas to which I respond. Following this, there is, in Derrida, a linking of time to infinity that is infinitely different, if we can speak that way, from the thinking of time in relation to the eternal. This real time is analogous (here, I am responding to you, all of you) to—of course!—firstness in Pierce, and it’s true that it can’t correspond to a representation (thirdness), since that is exactly the critique of the metaphysics of presence in Heidegger, nor is it some *thing* (secondness). Platonism begins where we move from time directly to the *concept* of time, and treat the latter as the former.<sup>21</sup> It is this conceptualization, not Derrida or Heidegger, that provides a supposed “temporal idealism.” This is also why I must take my distance from Martin Hägglund’s account of Derrida:

It is precisely the co-implication of time and space that I articulate in terms of the structure of the trace. Derrida defines the trace as the becoming space of time and the becoming-time of space. . . .

This *structure* [my emphasis] should not itself be understood as a temporal process, where time becomes space and space becomes time, but rather designates a *logical* co-implication of time and space. This *logical* co-implication is already implicit in the basic formulation of the problem of succession, namely, that the moment comes into being *at the same time* as it ceases to be. Given that every temporal moment immediately ceases to be, it must be inscribed as a trace in order to be at all. . . . Without temporalization it would be impossible for a trace to remain across time and retain the past for the future. . . . The trace enables the past to survive, but it can only do so through the exposure to a future that gives it both the chance to remain and be effaced.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 115.

<sup>21</sup> Of course, we must recognize a Plato beyond of before Platonism, while demonstrating the historical-philosophical effects of a Platonism beyond the letter and the page of Plato’s texts. Such a reading would begin at the beginning of Plato, namely in the *Timaeus* with the (non)place and (non)time of the *kbora*, which is neither sensible nor intelligible and thus is irreducible to what gets named Platonism.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 16.

This would dissolve temporalization in the face of a *logic* that *abstracts* itself in order to think a “structure” that cannot give (itself) time. This is precisely where Peirce’s firstness or Schelling’s *prins* is helpful in finding a language that attempts to avoid the aporetics of Platonist abstractions of time. Coming to this (or in fact never coming, precisely, to *it* as time), let me respond to Scott Johnston’s bifurcation of two different realisms:

[Jim Bradley’s position of] antecedent realism claims a real undetermined or possible yet nevertheless real in all the features characteristic of the signified real are there prior to signification. That is to say, it is not [yet] signified, but is nevertheless real in the all the ways a signified is real; not as a *regulative ideal* of the real, but as real *an sich*. [My position of] a consequent realism takes the real as the *consequence* [my emphasis] of signification and not as an antecedent possible, indeterminate something, or unembodied quality. Whereas it is acceptable to define infinity as “potential” or as “absolute indeterminacy” [quoting Jim], it is unacceptable to consider it as *antecedently real*, or real *prior to signification*, in any other sense than as regulative ideal; infinity has its possibility and actuality bound up in its signification...it has its being in its becoming.<sup>23</sup>

Now, as you would note, the Derridean move would be to show how there is a structural indeterminacy between an opposed pair—here between antecedent and consequent realism. We may indeed come to this. But I would first point out that a reading of Derrida is typically that of an antecedent realism (if not simply a “paradoxical monism”), thus Norris’s view of Derrida’s grammatology as a quasi-update of the Kantian archi-techtonic. Scott Johnston’s move, as I take it, is to think the real *as always already bound up* with secondness and thirdness, or rather, the real is that very relation of firstness, secondness, and thirdness in its motility and mobility. But what would this motility and mobility be if Johnston sticks to his Kantianism, that is, if “temporality is thirdness.” My task is different: the marks of signification (and here we are literal and thinking of textuality in the widest sense, taking up precisely the *écriture* of Derrida’s early writings) are nothing but the *traces* and *tracing out* of the difference/deferral of temporalization as firstness, or as a firstness that disrupts the stability of the whole structure of firstness, secondness, and

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<sup>23</sup> Scott Johnston, “To What Sort of Metaphysical Realism does Peirce Subscribe? Reflections on James Bradley’s Account of Firstness,” *Analecta Hermeneutica*, vol. 4 (2012): 1.

thirdness. Or better put, to respond to Sean McGrath, it's the deconstructive move of Schelling's late "positive philosophy," where "the realm of reality in which this proof moves is not finished and complete— for even if nature is now at its end and stands still [my God, the apocalypse!], there is, nonetheless, still the unrelenting advance and movement of history—because insofar as the realm of reality *is not complete* . . . the proof therefore is also *never* finished."<sup>24</sup> Is this not the utter textuality of all proofs, giving themselves over to time, to the finitude of incompleteness, always disrupted by time? Is this not why the early Schelling—I am still responding here—privileged the non-sensuous sensuousness of temporality over space? That is, privileging time over space, deferral over spatial difference?

Yes, this is not an *exoteric* or *common* Derrida. The real is temporalization, in Derrida, even if all discussions of time risk bringing us back to a metaphysics *of* time, even if *naming* time risks removing time from itself in the name of its concept and conceptualization, which would make it anything but timely. This was precisely the move of Platonism. I thus will side with Jim's version of realism at least as it pertains to Derrida, at least Scott Johnston describes it, following after him, responding in my own way, as we all must—that is, a response to a response in thirdness (that is, through signs) to firstness; after all, we can only think these categories in terms of a response and perhaps a responsibility (to what Jim called the firstness of Love), since thirdness is nothing but a *response* to firstness. Indeed, it is, after all, how we respond that singularizes us all, each time singular and unique, and thus never given all at once. We, whoever "we" are, are literally a sign of that. Four quotations now from Jim placed haphazardly below—to let his text respond to this, even if placing them in a different context means letting *différance* change the very response itself, and thus producing an inevitable and unavoidable, if not undeniable, violence to his text beyond simple cutting and pasting:

In the first place, the self-explanatory first principle of actualization, which Peirce calls "firstness," is pure *ecstatic* or ablative activity, abductive "movement from. . ." Because it is origin, it is *unconditioned*. So it is free or spontaneous in the sense that it acts wholly out of its own nature. Because it is unconditioned or free activity, it is limitless in the sense that it is absolutely indeterminate in its own nature. It is a *free ekstasis*

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<sup>24</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures* (New York: SUNY Press, 2007), 118.

which, as such, possesses no ‘real’ or determining properties or predicates. Its character as *free ecstatic activity* means that in the nature of the case it is a non-determining power.<sup>25</sup>

Peirce describes free or indeterminate firstness as a *no-thing or void*. That is, firstness is nothing, not as all-containing plenitude (*per excellentiam nihil*), nor as vacuity (*omnino nihil*), nor as negation (*nihil privativum*), but only as infinite free indeterminacy (*nihil per infinitatem*). It may be objected that this infinite origin is a ‘unity’ of free indeterminacy.<sup>26</sup>

Like differences, all structures are determinations of free indeterminacy, which is inexhaustible. In consequence, all structures carry free indeterminacy within their nature. So all structures possess an inexhaustible indeterminacy, which is always more than any of their individual instances. What this means is that all specific laws or rules are essentially and intrinsically vague: they are infinitely or inexhaustibly determinable determinations.<sup>27</sup>

In this context, the crucial implication of Peirce’s theories of infinity and vagueness should now be clear: there is no opposition between realism and constructivism, for the real is itself a movement of constructive activity.<sup>28</sup>

How far are we from structure, sign, and play in and beyond the human sciences, to paraphrase a title of one of Derrida’s best-known essays? How far are we from the indeterminacy and indecidability of determinable determinations? From the unconditional that temporalizes all our conditions?<sup>29</sup> From deconstruction? Let me hazard another response to you: we would need to think temporalization as the *Abgrund* that gives and “decays,” as Jim puts it, these structures (including this whole edifice

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<sup>25</sup> Bradley, “Beyond Hermeneutics,” 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. This comes in Jim’s discussion of thirdness as order.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> I think this is more clear in Jim’s 2010 “The Triune Event: Event Ontology, Reason, and Love,” in *Event and Decision: Ontology and Politics in Badiou, Deleuze, and Whitehead*, eds. Roland Faber, Henry Krips, Daniel Pettus (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 97-114. Here Jim attempts to identify an *arché* that itself is not contingency and is not chaos, because both, as he puts it, rely on a certain temporality (my word) of event and “succession” (his term). There is, of course, a violence to this reading, but only to argue that there is more going on in “*différance*” in Derrida than simply the pure void of difference, that is, a *deferral* that is temporal in the first place.

about which I write) in the first place. And then we can ask how far we are from Derrida's later discussions of "autoimmunity."

But you might say: how to address and respond to time as other to conceptuality? Why not just turn to the matter (*die Sache*) of time itself? Directly and head-on, if you will, without all this "reading"—all this hermeneutics, even in a journal titled *Analecta Hermeneutica*? In *Being and Time*, Heidegger sought to do so, to open up the question of time as such (*Temporalität*) through the time (*Zeitlichkeit*) of Dasein, through a phenomenology of the appearance of time to Dasein. This move led him to think the transcendental care structure of being asking after its own being, and thus hopefully (and speculatively) giving us the transcendental structure of time (*qua Temporalität*) as the condition of possibility for Dasein's being in the world and its own timeliness. That this failed is well known, and led Heidegger to forestall a third division of *Being and Time* that was never to appear. Phenomenology reached its terminus in an inability to *speculatively* pivot from the Dasein-*Zeitlichkeit* dyad to an "independent" *Temporalität*, since a science of appearances, despite whatever withering (*Destruktion*) of clichéd language covering over the *phenomenon*, could not help but circle around a creeping anthropology of Dasein in its acts of boredom and being-towards-death. Thus while Heidegger's perspicuous phenomenologies of factual existence rendered as an abstraction clock time and philosophical conceptions of the now of Dasein's being-in-the-world, the *aporia* of the phenomenological method only meant circling back to Dasein. Thus Heidegger would attempt other "methods"—most notoriously, forms of poetizing—in order to speak to the givenness of time as such. Heidegger's early failure (though, given its import, that is too strong a word) is but another sign of a certain truth, though not a truth that can be adequated, as you suggest above, to a given real. Recall—here, I can only begin a response to you as well—Augustine's oft-repeated quotation on time:

For what is time? [*quid est enim tempus*] Who is able easily and briefly [*facile breviterque*] to explain that? Who is able so much as *in thought* to *comprehend* it, so as to express himself concerning it? And yet, what in our *usual discourse* do we more familiarly and famously [*familiarus et notius*] make mention of than time? . . .

We understand it also, when in speaking with another we hear it named [*cum alio loquente id audimus*]. What is time then? If no one asks me [*si nemo ex me quaerat*], I know [*scio*]; but if I were

desirous to explain it [*explicare*] to one that should ask me, I know not [*nescio*].<sup>30</sup>

Like the ghost in Hamlet, we are asked to speak to time, to speak of it, and finally respond to it. Is this not the thought of anyone writing on time: “The time is out of joint: O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right”?<sup>31</sup> It gives, and yet when I must speak to it, I bite my tongue, like you would say Derrida does concerning all metaphysical questions. On the one hand, we can read this as repeating a classical distinction between discursive thinking—that which can be spoken—and the *nous* that merely “sees” through the intellect (via *animus* or *psyche*) the matter at hand. Yet we notoriously speak of time, and nevertheless it lies beyond signification or *representatem* of knowledge. This would seem merely to repeat Platonism’s distinction between the sensible (sign) and the intelligible (signified). Yet even Augustine indirectly contests this aspect of Plato, since time is *sensible* via the soul as it is literally marked out on notes of poetry, though this time is itself not speakable as the quotation above stipulates. Augustine’s resolution to the difficulties of time comes in his *Confessions* Book XI when he ponders the timing of a given psalm:

Who therefore can deny [*negat*—if only I had the space to think through this whole discourse of “denial” and “negation” that forms around all these discussions of time—from Augustine to Hegel to Heidegger to Levinas to Derrida, but beginning in Plato’s turnabout from becoming to the eternal] that things to come are not as yet? Yet already there is in the mind [*in animo*] an expectation [*expectatio*] of things to come [*futurorum*]. And who can deny [*negat*] past things to be now no longer [*non esse*]? But yet is there still in the mind a memory of things past. And who can deny [*negat*—again!] that the present time hath no space [*praesens tempus career spatio*], because it passeth away in a moment [*in puncto*]. But yet our attentive *marking of it* [here the crucial point: time and its marking] continues so that that which shall be present proceedeth to become absent [*set tamen perdurat attention, per quam pergat abesse quod aderit*]. The future therefore is not a long time, for it is not [*quod non est*]: but the long future time is merely a long expectation of the future. Nor is the time past a long time,

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<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. William Watts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press [Loeb edition], 1912), book xi, chapter xiv, translation adjusted slightly.

<sup>31</sup> *Hamlet*, act I, scene v, 189–190.

for it is not [*quod non est*]. I am about to repeat a psalm that I know . .  
. [etc. etc.]

There has thus always been linked a relation between time and *aesthesis*, time and experience (*erfahren*). Time, thus written out (of metaphysics), would be but a signifier, a mimesis or *representatem*, of the eternal, the ever self-same, the *one* ever standing in the present, a truly transcendental signified, which is the mark of the intelligible as such. One thus sees the radicality of Heidegger's project in the 1920s. As he noted, it was past time to think temporality not as anchored in the eternal. But he also attempted to disentangle what was also axiomatic to Platonism: that time was a specific mark of the sensible, whether that sensible is the world of becoming, the sensibility of the *animus*, or the transcendental aesthetic of Kant. Of course, no doubt, we can witness "exoteric" (*dia tôn exôterikon logôn*, as in Aristotle's *Physics*) or "common" doctrines about time, which were the starting points for Aristotle and Augustine's analyses, which in turn would become the "vulgar," "inauthentic" temporality engaged in the second division of *Being and Time*. But—and this explains all the supposed mystification of Heidegger's later work—Heidegger recognized what was needed was an *esoteric* consideration of time, and hence he borrowed all the language of those traditions, from the last God to the numerology of the four-fold. Indirectly—was he not noting that this tradition, rather than the *exoteric* or "vulgar" tradition given to us as "Platonism" is the one that has "sheltered" a thinking of time irreducible to Platonism? Here I am responding to you (again).

Let's move in on this *esoteric* doctrine that can neither be pointed to—*qua* secondness or as a signified *tout court*—nor as thirdness, as a signifier or *representatem*. It is "unconditioned" and "limitless," it is "absolutely indeterminate in its own nature," and "its character [is] a free *ecstatic* [my emphasis] activity means that in the nature of the case it is a *non-determining* [my emphasis] power," quoting Scott Johnston quoting Jim here. It is, in short, an "unconditioned freedom."<sup>32</sup> As Derrida puts it, "Here we are touching upon the point of greatest obscurity, on the very enigma of *différance*."<sup>33</sup> Recall that this *ecstatic* structure stands-out ahead of itself, toward the future worthy of the name. This is the ethics and

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<sup>32</sup> Derrida hesitated over the use of the word "freedom" in his work given its conveyance of a certain metaphysics of the sovereign subject. But in his later work, he was clear that freedom, if there is such a thing, is irreducible in thinking what he called the "event." See "Unforeseeable Freedom" in *For what tomorrow . . .*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 19.

politics of Derrida's later work. I realize I'm moving fast here. But for Derrida, the structure of the future is that which we must welcome without delay, since of course, this is temporalization itself. This would be a future that would be wholly other, not the future as thought from the present, and thus there's precisely, as in Levinas, a symmetry between the relation to temporalization and the coming of the Other; it cannot be made the object of a correspondence theory of truth, as Sean McGrath reminds us, nor be the *significatum* of Augustinian knowledge. It is not to be represented— “comprehended” [*compris*] in Levinas's sense—since it's slipped away before you've done so. Like you, before me.

Is this not the message of Aristotle's profoundly non-Platonist *Physics*? Heidegger thinks time in *Time and Being* as the *es gibt* (it gives or there is) of Being, all of which has withdrawn “in favor of the gift that It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings.”<sup>34</sup> This exchange and response of the gift (*die Gabe*) to the giving (*geben*), this *signifier* of a timely *signified* that is beyond signification, that is, what Heidegger calls “true time extending,” is generally lost in the discussion of the onto-ontological difference, the metaphysics of presence, the dismantling of a tradition, and the iron grip we find in Heidegger's readings of various authors. No doubt, Heidegger occasionally read less with a lens than with a hammer. In particular, when he reads Aristotle's still contemporary meditations on time in the *Physics* as “metaphysical” and thus anchoring time in the now. But this is not *entirely* the case, or perhaps we should say, “it is not...or scarcely is.” That is, Aristotle begins his account in the *Physics* with the *aporia* that time is made up of nows, which in turn are made of up of the past and the future, and thus is made up of what is *not* (the future just about to be and the past that is no longer, and thus time would be what is *not*), since it is made up of non existents (that which is *mê on*). Hence, while Aristotle gives us an account of time as anchored in the now, it is only to reveal the *aporiai* of common or exoteric views of time. First, Aristotle does not think time on the basis of the eternal (“time is the moving image of eternity” as in the *Timaeus*), which is the starting move of more than a millennium of thinking on the matter, from the *Timaeus* to Augustine's *Confessions*. That is, Aristotle shows that one cannot find a *paradigma* or *idea* of time, since all fail: it is not a line (*grammê*), it is not a point (*stigmê*), it is not a number (*arithmêma*), it is not a sphere (*sphaira*), it is not change (*kinêsis*), it is not movement (*metabolê*), etc. Indeed the best Aristotle can broach is that time is “what is counted,” but is not a number,

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<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, “Time and Being,” 8.

and thus we can disturb the facile summation that Aristotle thinks time is the measure of movement: it is that which is *numbered* and thus is “prior” to *mathêsis* and any given signification. It gives itself to number: “time is a numbered number” (*oukb boi arithmoumen all’ho arithmoumenos*). As Derrida rightly interprets this, “This means paradoxically that even if time comes under the rubric of mathematics or arithmetic, it is not *in itself* [my emphasis], in its nature, a mathematical being,”<sup>35</sup> a point that Aristotle makes clear when he argues that 100 men and 100 horses have the same number but are different. And by declaring a non-reductivity to time through the marking out of the *aporiai* of time to the now, Aristotle thus escapes the full grasp of Heidegger: he can’t make time present to thought; time as such (if there is such a thing) is not given over to conceptuality or a given “logic.”

Thus as “realists” of temporalization, we must acknowledge that even *abductive* attempts to give time mean a slippage or movement of *différance*—an “*ecstatic* or ablative activity, abductive ‘movement from,’” we could say—that is the movement from any *form* of time. Derrida writes:

Let us take [this] as a marker in the history of aporetics [Can there be a history of aporetics?] that will become a law and tradition [same question: can there be a law of *aporia*? Can one make it a tradition?]: From the moment time is apprehended on the basis of the present now as a general *form* [my emphasis] and only modifiable or modalizable in such a way that the past and future are still presents-past and presents-to-come,<sup>36</sup> this predetermination entails the aporetics of time that is not, of a time that is what it is *without being* (it) [*sans l’être*], that is not what it is and that is what it is not, which is to be *without being* (it) [*qui est de l’être sans l’être*].<sup>37</sup>

Time, too, comes to us as if by surprise, like the other. It comes in events and the non-anticipatable, which Derrida thinks in terms of the death, not just of the Other, but of all Others of the Other. If I had the space here, I would mark this out: the use of the “trace” in Derrida both to

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<sup>35</sup>Derrida, “*Ousia and Grammé*,” *Margins of Philosophy*, 59.

<sup>36</sup>Derrida is thinking of Aristotle’s *Physics* (217b-18a): “Some of it has been and is not [*gegone kai ouk esti*], some of it is to be and is not yet [*mellei kai oupo estin*]. From these both infinite time [*apeiros*] and time in its incessant return [*aei lambanomenos*] are composed. But it would seem to be impossible that what is composed of things that are not should participate in being [*ousia*].”

<sup>37</sup>Derrida, *Given Time: I Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 28.

mark the relation of *time* to *writing* (in the general sense), one that is the non-presence of time (we have only available its trace), and to mark the deferral of each signifier to another as this deferring, othering, alter-able structure of writing, which is the self-negating of time, that is not a *thing* or being (*ousia*), that negates itself in the passing of any now (*nun*), and thus could never be made present (*parousia*) as such. And this trace would link us to a thinking of the trace of the Other that always interested Derrida, an Other that would come to us not “as if” from the future, but as the future of what can never be present, here and now. Like you. Derrida writes, this trace . . .

. . . is thus that the difference between Being and beings, the very thing that would have been “forgotten” [according to Heidegger] in the determination of Being as presence, and of presence as present—this difference [read always for Derrida: *deferral* and *differentiation*, or the becoming time of space and the becoming space of time—of which writing is the eminent example] is so buried that there is no longer any trace of it. The trace of difference is erased [in metaphysics as read for Derrida]. If one recalls that difference (is) itself other than presence and absence, (is) (itself) trace, it is indeed the trace of the trace that has disappeared in the forgetting of the difference between Being and being. . . . Beyond Being and beings, this difference, ceaselessly differing from and deferring (itself), would trace (itself) (by itself)—this *différance* would be the first or last trace if one still could speak here of origin and end [which would] give us to think . . . a writing exceeding everything that the history of metaphysics comprehended in the form of Aristotelian *grammé*, in its point, in its circle, in its time, and in its space.<sup>38</sup>

Yes, this can be infuriating prose. Nevertheless, Derrida will note that “if one allows that the linearity of language entails this [linear,] vulgar, and mundane concept of temporality (homogeneous, dominated by the form of the now and the ideal of continuous movement, straight or circular), which Heidegger shows to be the intrinsic determining concept of all ontology from Aristotle to Hegel, the meditation on writing and the deconstruction of the philosophy become inseparable.”<sup>39</sup> And thus, *mutatis mutandis*, so too any rethinking of writing, as in Derrida, makes a *speculative* move to a “real time” and thinking of the event that traces

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<sup>38</sup>Derrida, “*Ousia and Grammé*,” 66-7.

<sup>39</sup>Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.

itself out in/as writing (in the widest sense), and thus beyond any tenses of conceptual schemes that require the writing of time. As he puts it: “Now if *différance* ~~is~~ (and I also cross out the “~~is~~”) what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such.”<sup>40</sup> And as derived from the Latin *differre*, it means “in this sense to temporize, to take recourse . . . in the temporal or temporal mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfilment of ‘desire’ or ‘will.’ . . . This temporization is also temporalization and spacing, the becoming-space of time, the ‘originary constitution’ of time and space.”<sup>41</sup>

So many “nots” in this knotty prose—have we *not* another negative theology? Do we not risk in the name of time having a give-and-take that is anything but about time? “The gift of the name”—I think this in response to you, a provocation that comes from on high about that which is higher than height in transcendence—Derrida writes in *Sauf le nom*, “gives that which it does not have, that in which, prior to everything, that is to say—beyond being [yes, you’ll say, *there it is*, Derrida’s neo-Platonism!]*—the non essence of the gift.*”<sup>42</sup> But how to think a gift or giving of a “non-essence,” which would give us nothing in the form of a negation (a “non”)? Could this still be a Platonism? And yet does not the form of this “non” return us to a Platonism of the *via negativa*, that is, precisely, the method of denial? So many questions I have for you, all of you. That is undeniable.

In any case, such a name is always given unconditionally to a tracing of the other (of time), an other irreducible to an “essence” on this or that side of being, presented to us as a mere matter of time. This unconditional, infinite *tracing* (which is neither present nor absent, given the contradictory logic or *logos* of time, as Aristotle himself teaches: “time [*chronos*]” is that which “is not” or which “is barely and scarcely” [*holôs ouk estin ê molis kai amudrôs*]) means also that there is no present in which the Other *is*, and thus the Other, the Other that you are(n’t), and the Other that you and I mourn, comes to me from a future that transcends our epistemologies of the present but is nevertheless real. This is Derrida’s metaphysics, there at the border between a thinking of metaphysical temporalization and a metaphysics of Levinas, announced early in *Of Grammatology*: “The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, presented, as a sort of monstrosity.

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<sup>40</sup> Derrida, “*Différance*,” 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Derrida, “*Sauf le nom*,” in *On the Name*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 85.

For that future world and for that within it which will have put into question the values of sign, word, and writing, for that which guides our future anterior, there is as yet no exergue”—no writing that can masterly present time and this future anterior as such.<sup>43</sup>

I have skipped so much here trying under so many conditions to testify to this unconditional. But I want to end with a thinking of finitude, since it fits here, that time, as trace, can always be otherwise than time, which is the infinite alterity of itself to be otherwise—and thus finite (and monstrous). How could I not respond by quoting these passages?

The death of the other, not only but more so if one loves the other, does not announce an absence, a disappearance, the end of this or that life, that is to say, of a world as it would *appear to a given living being*. Death signifies each time the end of the world in totality, the end of every possible world, and each time the end of the world in its total uniqueness, thus *irreplaceable* and infinite. As if the repetition of an infinite whole were once more possible: of the end of the world as such, of *the only world which is*, each time.<sup>44</sup>

Each time the end of the world, but each time, all over again, and this Derrida argues structures our relation to Other, temporally, from the very beginning of our friendships. There is no rule or law for when one stops the testimony of mourning, and in our case, we never should since it is in this response that we mark out and trace who we are (to be).

The memory we are considering here is not essentially oriented toward the past, toward a past present deemed to have really and previously existed. Memory stays with traces, in order to “preserve” them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which . . . always remain, as it were, to come [*à venir*], come from the future, from the to come [*à-venir*]. Resurrection . . . does not resuscitate a past which had been present; it engages the future.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde*, eds. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2003), 9, my emphases.

<sup>45</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires pour Paul De Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 58.

Central to Derrida's account—despite his many criticisms of Heidegger, he never diverted from this point—is the Heideggerian conception that our lives are lived in our being-towards-death, our being towards our future impossibility—and not just ours, but that of our friends and indeed the whole of the world. Existence itself is just this once, singular and unique, always in the shadow of the end of the world. And always in the shadow of you and your work that time marks out, and marks me, here and now before you. Because there you are. Beyond hermeneutics: a semiology that gives us a temporal metaphysics of communication. With you, Jim, and your texts to come.