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Re-thinking What We Think About Derrida

by **Dino Galetti**

Abstract

Although many still see Derrida as a thinker opposed to a unified systematic meaning, there has recently been growing recognition that Derrida, in his later years, suggested that his work is not averse to formalisation. In support of this view, this paper points out that, in 1990, Derrida himself told us that his first work of 1954 reveals a "law" which impels his career, and that some responses had arisen even there. Some benefits of adopting such a common pole are set out, and an interrelated "system" developed to relate the law of 1954 to the later responses, in order to help find a common, systematic base for Derrida's oeuvre. The need to accommodate approaches which are wary of a systematic approach is nevertheless acknowledged, and possible ways of reconciling the diverse readings of Derrida's intent and collaboratively furthering the formalisation of Derrida's oeuvre for posterity are outlined in closing.

Introduction

It is perhaps fair to observe that Derrida's work accommodates many viewpoints. That said, one might also observe that such accommodation of itself provides no imperative for particular views to agree, and often they have not. This paper seeks to work toward a general basis for reconciliation by pointing out that Derrida tells us that one "law" drove his oeuvre since his first long work of 1954. Furthermore, since Derrida himself tells us that some of his mature responses had arisen there, I will suggest one platform from which such reconciliation could proceed. In 1990, in re-introducing what was originally written as his dissertation for the diplôme d'études supérieures awarded in 1954, *Le Problème de la Genèse dans la Philosophie de Husserl*, Derrida tells us that it

> refers to a sort of law [and] *since then, even in its literal formulation,* this law will not have stopped commanding everything I have tried to prove. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vi/2003, p. xiv; Derrida's emphasis)

Derrida then relates this to his term "contamination"[1] (employed in 1954 on p. xl), asking "why the very word 'contamination' has not stopped imposing itself on me from thence forward" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii/2003, p. xv).

It follows that drawing out some elements of Derrida's approach to contamination could, in regard to the "law" pointed to, provide a basis for the formalisation of Derrida's oeuvre. As no thinkers, as far as I am aware, have mentioned this law, this paper will first suggest why adopting it would be beneficial, and then how it could serve to develop such a base.

An immediate area of application is to historical divides. For example, the radical consequences of Derrida's theory were first embraced by theorists of comparative literature and discourse.[2] From the late

[1] cf. Derrida, 1973a, pp. 20, 22; 1976, pp. 30, 34; 1965, p. 1036; 1978a, p. 128; 1993b, p. 7; 1996, p. 24.

[2] Leavey & Allison (in Derrida, 1978b, pp. 186-193) provide a bibliography of over 180 articles on Derrida

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1960s, these readers began to highlight Derrida's interest in the work of Saussure, while equating him with those thinkers labelled "post-structuralist". A schism appeared in 1986 with the first works claiming Derrida for philosophical consideration.[3] But even the latter pole is hardly homogenous. In the past decade, Derrida's primary influence has been attributed to Kant, Rousseau, Nietszche, Freud, Heidegger, Blanchot, Husserl and Hegel.[4] Here, a shared pole might allow dialogue across the multiple and fragmentary divides. For indeed, none of these views has yet taken Derrida's primary arbiter to be himself. Yet, if Derrida is taken at his word, and such a law applies, then any and multiple influences could be recognised, simply by asking how they accord with Derrida's basic interest. This would hold equally for Husserl. Since the late 1990s, there has been increasing recognition that, for the first eight years of his career, Derrida produced works only on Husserl.[5] Nevertheless, finding a Derrida with his own foci from the first need not limit him to phenomenology;[6] rather one could ask how Derrida's work developed into its multiplicity of interests. To that end, there has indeed been a recent groundswell of advocates of a systematic approach to Derrida – buoyed, to be sure, by his own suggestions in this regard. In 1996, for example, in a modified version of the paper delivered at Colloque de Cerisy in 1992 and subsequently translated by Dutoit in 1993, Derrida pointed in *Apories* to sixteen of his works and suggested:

> One sees perhaps a plural logic of the aporia thus take shape. (Derrida, 1996, p. 20; my transliteration from the French)[7]

While several bases for such an approach have since been set out, these are often incommensurable. Lawlor, for example, finds a basis for Derrida's "logic" in Hyppolite's view of Hegel, and Hurst in Derrida's confounding of the phenomenological tradition since Kant.[8] Without impacting on the value of these readings, a basis from 1954 might provide a neutral common reference point, by virtue simply of the fact that this work was written first. That said, one nevertheless should not proceed without caution. For an opposite school heeds Derrida's earliest and most persistent warning: that a thought which presents its object as a monolithic structure is nearly certain to be misled. For example, in his first published article of 1963, Derrida writes of such "geometric" approaches that

> [e]verything that defies a geometrical-mechanical framework ... is reduced to the appearance of the inessential for the sake of [a] teleological structuralism. (Derrida, 1963(a), p. 625; cf. 1976d/1978a, pp. 20-21)

The warning klaxon was sounded right into the 1990s, where, in the same work that writes of a plural logic, setting out the conditions for its formalisability, Derrida writes:

> [a]s soon as [this project] is converted into positive certainty ("on this condition, there will surely have been event, decision [etc.]"), one can be sure that one is beginning to be deceived. (Derrida, 1993b, p. 20/1996, p. 43)

Indeed, as a watchword for caution, notice the "perhaps" modifying the "plural logic" in the first quotation from *Apories* above (and which word was not included in the English version). The guarantees of this system should not be regarded as impregnable. Hence, if Derrida does arrive at a system, or indeed a "logic", it would need to allow for a central thread which could evolve to critique the power of system. As a result, the approach would need to be simple enough to be common to any of these disciplines, and flexible enough to approach itself. Here, I begin to make the transition to my particular suggestion. For beginning with Derrida's "law", one could begin with

published up to that date, the majority to do with writing, language, discourse theory or structuralism. Comparisons to Husserl are few (cf. Allison, 1974; Benoist, 1969; Deguy, 1963; Schérer, 1968; Smith, 1967), perhaps as Derrida's earliest work was unavailable.

[3] cf. Gasché (1986), Llewelyn (1986), and also Caputo (1987) and Harvey (1986), for a summary of these works. For a response to Gasché, see Sprinker (1986).

[4] Hart (2007, p. 419) sees Derrida as Kantian after 1970. Ferraris (1997/2001, p. 134) sees Derrida's heroes as Rousseau and Nietszche. Michaud (2002, p. 69) sees Blanchot's influence as important from 1967. For Lawlor (2002), Derrida's "logic" emerges from Husserl, but is indebted to Hyppolite's reading of Hegel. Mikics (2009) sees Derrida as drawn to Heidegger, Freud and Nietszche.

[5] See Derrida 1954/2003, 1959/1978c pp. 154-168, 1962/1978b. Kates provides a bibliography of works from the 1990s to 2002 (Kates, 2003, fn. 4) which address Derrida's early engagement with Husserl, with Lawlor's the most established of these. Kamei (2005) also provides a useful historical overview of Derrida's earliest years.

[6] Hillis Miller, for example, recognises Derrida's usage of Husserlian terminology in address to literature, but deems it "odd" (Hillis Miller, 2001, pp. 58-63). Given a basis from Derrida's earliest years, such overlaps might be integrated. Derrida had, indeed, in 1957 registered a doctoral dissertation in which he proposed to relate transcendental phenomenology to "a new theory of literature" (Derrida, 1983, p. 37).

[7] In *Apories* (1996), Derrida writes "On voit, peut-être s'esquisser ainsi une logique plurielle de l'aporie" (p. 20). Dutoit's English translation of the earlier version reads "A plural logic of the aporia thus takes shape" (1993b, p. 44), which does not include the "perhaps" ("peut-être").

[8] See Lawlor, 2002, p. 88 ff., and Hurst, 2004, 2008.

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extremely basic elements – the answer that "he" demands, whether this demand is met, and so on.

As one might expect, such an approach imposes its methodical requirements. Principally, I aim to avoid anachronism, and thus only what is nascent will be drawn forward where required. For example, Derrida has not yet developed a "logic", but employs only a simple inside-outside reasoning.[9] He has also neither included signification and the limits of language (this begins from 1962: cf. Derrida, 1962/1978b, p. 66 ff.)[10] nor problematised the stable external position of the author. Hence this paper begins with very simple hermeneutic bases. Further, only the minimum of Husserl's work – with respect – will be set out where necessary. This is also intended as a safeguard, for, as we will see, this young Derrida is no friend of descriptive phenomenology. Intent on his "law", he relentlessly demands what Husserl since 1907 specifically excluded (Husserl, 1907/1966, p. 7): absolute justification of the object despite the reduction. This paper, then, will be *very* simple. As it sets out basic relations, it is also reductionist; this does not, however, necessarily mean that individual examples are treated unfairly, but rather that they are treated simply for their commonality.

I. The Initial Platform

It remains to set out this "law" which drives Derrida's work, and show how it arises from Husserl. The latter's *oeuvre* had several aims – which, not exhaustively, include: tabulating the elements of consciousness, situating the regions of different sciences (as they are constituted in consciousness) upon a rigorous systematic basis, and accounting for the problems of classical epistemology. All of these, however, occur in a process of constitution, via the flux of the mind's intentionality, in synthesis. Hence, in reintroducing his work of 1954, Derrida explains his "law" further:

> ... the question that governs the whole trajectory [of his *oeuvr*e] is already: "How can the originarity of a foundation be an a priori synthesis? How can everything start with a *complication*?" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii, quoting 1954 [in 1990], p. 12/2003, p. xv, quoting 1954 [in 2003], p. xxv; emphasis added)

While in Husserl, as in Kant, the constituted object is intuited in consciousness in an a priori synthesis, for Derrida *synthesis does not succeed*. The key is the criterion he sets. Derrida later comments that what seems "most *curious*" in his approach of 1954 is his "concern for knowledge" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vi/2003, p. xiv). Put differently, perhaps even shockingly, Derrida's oeuvre begins with the demand to determine the object as entirely present. One might demarcate this from the "presence-seeking" which Derrida later attributes to the history of metaphysics, and also his later approach. While a more typical epistemology[11] seeks to determine the object upon the understanding that it can be found, this early Derrida seeks absolute knowledge on the understanding that determination is *not* found. The Derrida of 1967 recognises that even "it is not found" is undecidable.

The Basic Elements

This section thus sets out his interrelated parameters, which first instances are italicised. First, Derrida has a *demand* for *absolute* solution. As a result, he sets "*either/or limits*": a "yes or no", "true or false" outcome. This is bivalent, and thus the limits apply to an object reasoned about: either it is absolutely *present* or it is not. The limits will no longer be accepted by 1964, but for now: the "*problem"* is that the *origin* of the object is unaccounted for, leaving the demand for absolute solution unmet.

The primary impediment to solving the problem – as Lawlor agrees – is that any intended object is "*always already*" (henceforth "*already*") there to be found (cf. Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 13/2003, p. xxv). Thus the problem has a mechanical relation to presence. Amazingly, Derrida began with this issue in 1954. For a thought of an object

> will always have to be *already there,* in front of a passive consciousness whose *presence* remains accessory or accidental. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 62/2003, p. 21; emphases added)

Hence

> in order to give a "unity of sense" to this [original] genesis and to its objective product, it has to be *supposed present,* and autonomous, before the multiplicity of acts of consciousness. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 62/2003, p. 21; emphases added)

If one is to unify (identify, in *a priori* synthesis) the given object, the "already" means that one must

[9] Elsewhere, I suggest some issues that a propositional logic might face in systematising Derrida (Galetti, 2010), but here I feel this is premature.

[10] In Derrida's introduction to *l'Origine de la Géométrie* (1962) – his translation of part of Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936) – we find his first address to language, writing and Husserl's theory of the sign (via Hegelian examples). See Lawlor (2002, pp. 91-94) for an assessment.

[11] cf. Condillac, the "inheritor of Locke" (Derrida, 1973/1987, p. 29).

"suppose"– affirm – its presence. Given a demand for absolute solution, this is not acceptable.

Shortfall and the Inside-Outside

However, I add a second and related mechanism, not yet included by other readers of Derrida. A systematic interaction is deemed to fail absolutely if it does not interact with origin. But the "already" means that each interaction cannot find origin. Thus: *intra-systematic interactions fail to absolutely solve the problem.* Derrida often uses this kind of reasoning. When the system interacts only with itself,

> [w]e remain on *this side* [*en deçà*] of *absolute originarity*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 225/2003, p. 137; emphasis added)

This will be called "*shortfall*", drawn from *Speech and Phenomena* (Derrida, 1967/1973), where

> presence ... had *already* from the start [from its origin] *fallen short* of itself. (Derrida, 1967b, p. 97/1973a, p. 87; emphases added)[12]

I will set out the relations via Derrida's own terms – nearly universal in systematic readings of his work[13] – of the "inside" and "outside" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 163/2003, p. 93; cf. 1967b/1973a, pp. 30-31). The "already" means that

> pregiven [objects] have only external relations. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 189/2003, p. 112)

Their relations do not relate "inside". Inversely, objects already here remain "on this side" of the external origin (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 225/2003, p. 137). These can be united so: shortfall is a judicative consequence of the inside-outside criterion. If the origin remains outside, it is judged that the system does not meet the demand for absolute solution.

Hence it is the *demand* to solve the problem that is not met; the problem is not that the object is not there, but that its origin is not accounted for. This will lead to the failure of affirmation and denial in closing. A mechanical relation with presence is thus set out: the demand to affirm origin finds, on its "inside", the presence of an object which must be absolutely accounted for - but shortfall means that this is a problem. As can be seen, any term here can be related to any other.

II. The Spatial and its Joints

It must be noted that these are Derrida's own concerns. For example, Husserl often applies a "reduction", which sets aside consideration of relations in the natural world. This allows what appears to be described in consciousness. From the start, Derrida never believes that Husserl's reductions provide exemption from the "problem". For example:

> once the transcendental reduction has been carried out ... Husserl seems, implicitly … to put passive synthesis, pure and as such, in its turn into brackets. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 232/2003, p. 142)

For Husserl, once the reduction is in place, one can begin to describe how consciousness synthesises elements, including those that appear as seemingly passive objects. Indeed, phenomenology is supposed to begin at this moment (cf. Husserl, 1907/1966, p. 7). But, for Derrida, the passive content still requires a justification, as it falls short of its origin. He demands that phenomenology answer his own problem. Hence, *none* of what follows is actually about Husserl's phenomenology. *In this sense, Derrida never was Husserlian*. He admits this in the printed version (included in *Writing and Difference*, 1967/1978) of his next public work, the speech on Husserl in 1959:

> [the reduction] brings eidetic forms once again to light, that is the "structural a prioris" ... in Husserl's mind, at least, there never was a "structure-genesis" problem. Phenomenology, in the clarity of its intention, would be offended, then, by my preliminary question. (Derrida, 1959/1967c, pp. 231-232/1978c, p. 156)

This is unacknowledged in 1954. But, in the speech of 1959, he goes further:

> Having taken these precautions as concerns Husserl's aim, I must now confess my own. (Derrida, 1959/1967c, p. 232/1978c, p. 156)

The aim he confesses is

> to reconcile the *structuralist* demand (which leads to the comprehensive description of a totality, of a form or function organised according to *an internal* legality ...) with the *genetic demand* (that is, the search for the *origin* and foundation of the structure) [which is outside]. (Derrida, 1959/1967c, p. 233/1978c, p. 157; final emphasis added)

[12] In French : "la présence avait déjà commence à se manquer à elle-même." (Derrida, 1967b, p. 97). A "lack" (*manque*) is also "a falling short".

[13] Caputo (1987, p. 247) points out that the systematic readings of Derrida of 1986 (Gasché, Harvey, Llewellyn) are based upon Derrida's work as "neither inside nor outside".

Integrating systematic *shortfall* with origin remains Derrida's central concern. To do so, he tracks through Husserl's work chronologically; I will begin with *Ideas 1* of 1913.[14] There, within a reduction, Husserl divides intentional being into the material (hyletic) and noetic phases (Husserl, 1913/1952, §85). The latter are the intentional processes which constitute essence without material input from the *hylē*. The *noema* is the "intentional content" which corresponds to such a noetic process:

> Corresponding on all points to the manifold data of the real noetic content, there is a variety of data displayable in really pure intuition, and in a correlative "noematic content", or briefly "noema". (Husserl, 1913/1952, §88)

But the "noema" is not a real object, with Husserl reserving his own term "*reell*" for the latter. One can understand this via Husserl's example: the pleasure gained from looking at an apple tree is not real (*reell*), yet the tree would be real (*reell*), as it is perceived and gives pleasure (Husserl, 1913/1952, §88). The noema, however, *is* intentional, as it is constituted in consciousness. On the other axis, the *hylē*, which is supposed to supply "sensile" material, is real (*reell*), yet *not* intentional (Husserl, 1913/1952, §85). But, then, how could a noematic intention interact with it? Derrida applies the "already". For it is

> because [hyletic material] appears as *already constituted* in its very being, *prior to* any noematic synthesis, that consciousness can experience *originary* constitution. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 121/2003, p. 63; emphases added)

The noema cannot interact with the outside. Indeed, Derrida takes the *Ideas* back to the *natural* inside-outside sense. For, Derrida feels, by containing sensile matter, the *hylē* also claims to convey what is *outside* itself:

> does [Husserl] not reintroduce, in the form of a "hyletic datum", passively received, the transcendent object that he claimed to exclude ... ? (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 121/2003, p. 63)

Again, the reduction is rejected. The outside remains problematic. The *hylē*, as the "already constituted", is also aligned with what is "passively" constituted (outside), and Derrida applies this across Husserl's works:

> [a]s soon as the pure content of sensation is admitted [then is] not the theme of passive genesis, taken up fifteen years later by Husserl, already announced? (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 121/2003, p. 63; also cf. 1954/1990, p. 233/2003, p. 143)

Derrida is quite happy to simplify Husserl's work across four decades to his own system. One recognises his commitment to his own demand.

Pure Logical Grammar as Conventional Basis

Now a basic Husserlian distinction is required. Husserl aims to provide a systematic basis for thinking, and thus his analysis sets out some of its basic components. His "pure logical grammar" (Husserl, 1900-01/2002, vol. 2, p. 71) sets out a *formal* interaction amongst judgment, logic and "ontology". The latter are, simply, constituted relations of essences which arise from an intention directed at an "object". Setting aside "form" until further on – "apophansis" is "judgment in the logical sense" (Husserl, 1913/1952, p. 371; 1929/1969, p. 70). A correspondence between apophansis and ontology is drawn on the basis that thought (intentionality) has a universal logical underpinning (Husserl, 1913/1952, p. 409). To show their basic interlinking, Husserl employs a fundamental proposition of the form "*S* is *P*" (cf. Husserl, 1900-01/2002, Vol. 1, p. 18). In brief, one predicates[15] a characteristic *P* of the subject *S*. The latter, in turn, is the object of ontology. Judgment then follows from the logical predication about this "object". One might think of apophansis simply as "judgment", logic as "what one uses to judge with", and ontology as "what is judged of". While Husserl thought that these overlapped, Derrida is interested in their shortfall.

First, Derrida addresses ontology. In brief, after a reduction, intentionality no longer addresses a natural object, and the general essence (*eidos*) is constituted instead of the natural world. From this, eidetic ontologies arise, which *do* correlate to a "world". Derrida summarises:

> [t]he existence of the world is the correlate of certain experience-patterns marked out by certain essential formations. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 145/2003, p. 79)

For Derrida this presupposes what is *already given*

[14] Derrida only glosses Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900-01) here, and omits *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929), suggesting that his argument against *Experience and Judgment* (begun from 1918-19) applies. I will not address Derrida's address to Husserl's years from 1891 to 1900, or after 1931.

[15] I use "predicates" instead of "asserts" in order to avoid confusion with the "affirmation" of a judgment.

even as an essence:

> *always* and essentially, eidetic reflection will presuppose an *already* constituted *ontology*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 228/2003, p. 140; emphases added)

The groupings of essences which demarcate how the world appears thus find that their existence depends upon a problematic outside. For Derrida, eidetic phenomenology itself fails because of his simple criterion.

The Shortfall of Judgment

The shortfall of judgment is apparent in Derrida's analysis of apophansis in *Experience and Judgment* (Husserl, 1939/1973, §§1-16). There, Husserl deems the "world" a horizon of possible judgments, which appear as believed evidence. Apophansis needs no reduction, for judgment does not, ostensibly, deal with external objects. However, active judgment still judges of passive "substrates" of judgments. These, Husserl says, are antepredicative: *already there*. Derrida suspects that Husserl re-creates an inside-outside, and thus a problem of origin. Secondly, this work inaugurates Husserl's turn to "genetic phenomenology". The object, Husserl says, contains a sedimented history of past judgments. These are "evident" to active judgment. Phenomenological analysis, from within the horizon of possible judgments, can then strip off prior judgments *in regressus* to explicate the object *in progressus*. This project, were it completed, would reveal the original judgment in its lifeworld.

Derrida now turns to arguing that Husserl's own address to the problem of origin does not succeed. The problem is that Husserl deems the origin pre-given (Husserl, 1939/1973, §10). First, Derrida counters that predication of a "history" falls short, as any regression through sedimentations finds the object already given, and thus there *may* always be a further term. Moreover,

> it is not known whether the regression that has to be effected to return to antepredicative existence has to end in a sensuous reality or in an absolute indetermination. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 193/2003, p. 114)

Note, a fortiori, that this is *indeterminate,* and *not* false. For Derrida, judgment can neither *affirm nor deny* outcome of a predication. This will be furthered below. Here, it undermines the entire genetic project. The "passive" substrate of judgments – what one actively judges "of", just as one judges of ontological objects – simply reproduces the most basic problem. It is

> a genesis that itself took evidence for granted, and which *could easily be assimilated to a simple empirical genesis*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 186/2003, p. 109; emphasis added)

Again, Derrida is willing to reduce Husserl's work over two decades to the simplest inside-outside criterion. As a measure of their divergence, Husserl deems the precedence of the passive to be the *solution* for phenomenological appearance:

> anything built by activity necessarily presupposes, as the lowest level, a passivity that gives something beforehand. (Husserl, 1931/1960, §38; in Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 231/2003, p. 141)

For Derrida, who does not accept the reductions, it is the *problem*.

The "Joint": A Mechanical Model to Understand Derrida

At this divergence, Derrida's system will be clarified. As he does not problematise metaphor until 1964 (cf. Derrida, 1964, p. 446 fn.), I will import a term from *Of Grammatology* (1967) – the "joint" (*brisure*: also "break", "hinge", etc.), which, we are told, underpins the way that all metaphysics, bound as it is to inside-outside criteria, can be thought.[16] The joint

> marks the impossibility that a sign [can] be produced within the plenitude of a present. (Derrida, 1967a, p. 102/1976, p. 69)

The concept "joint" indicates *both* a separation and a connection. For now it is seen for its separation. Every object or structure has an inside and an outside, between which lies a "joint". Thus, in a mechanical model, there are at least five directions to query: outside to its outside, outside to inside, inside to outside, inside to its own inside, and overall shortfall (everything to its outside). When one pole on any joint is taken as a locus from which to question – that is, as a hypothetical starting-point – then the other side is unjustifiable because of shortfall, and therefore *problematic*. *Every one* of Derrida's arguments above, and likewise those below, can be treated as a direction upon a joint.

I will show this in Derrida's analysis of active and passive synthesis, the "most systematic" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 215/2003, p. 153) aspect of his research.

[16] See also "Implications" (Derrida, 1972/1981, p. 14).

First, the outside cannot certify its outside

The passive constitution outside cannot justify its presence from outside. That is, the *already* constituted is outside its own constitution. Thus – a problem of simple idealism – the passive cannot justify its presence:

> [t]he supposed transcendental passivity is thus not absolutely originary here and refers us to a preceding moment of constitution. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 198/ 2003, p. 118)

"Preceding" here does not necessarily imply the "temporal" – for one cannot determine that an outside will be temporal (Derrida, 1954/1990, pp. 153-154/ 2003, p. 86) – but rather "outside", as "already" there.

Second, the inside cannot interact with the outside

Moving further "inward", the active inside cannot connect with a passive outside, for

> the active synthesis that inaugurates the possibility of a piece of eidetic research is *always preceded by* a passive synthesis. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 235/2003, p. 144; emphasis added)

The passive synthesis is already there.

Third, the outside cannot interact with the inside

Nor can the passive synthesis interact with the active inside. For example, Husserl says that the passively constituted is "not intentional". The active itself constitutes the passive. But

> is that not precisely to include formally in the activity what is really and "in itself" foreign to the constituting intentionality? (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 231/2003, p. 142)

The passive is "foreign" because – for Derrida – it is outside constitution.

Fourth, the system cannot reach its outside

Next, there is overall shortfall. Husserl *also* says that there is something of the active in the passive (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 199/2003, p. 118; cf. Husserl, 1939/1973, §23a). But, assuming that the active is intentional and the passive is not, then the active could not be truly met within passivity:

> [t]o say, as Husserl does ... that passivity is a moment of activity is to make use of an abstract concept of activity. (Derrida, 1954/ 1990, p. 231/2003, p. 142)

Thus the activity in passivity remains outside genuine contact with the active. However, even if there *were* a real moment of the active in the passive (which Derrida would not accept), then the passive would no longer be passive:

> [t]he passive synthesis … is thus a constituting [active] moment of the unity of intuition. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 233/2003, p. 143)

Even if the active does interact with the passive – as an entire systematic unity – the system still falls short. Derrida summarises:

> Why does any constitution start with a synthesis of passivity and activity? ... These questions, which were being posed from the very first moments of phenomenology, are still without an answer. (Derrida, 1954/ 1990, p. 199/2003, p. 118)

As a result, Derrida determines that, overall, "genesis is never met" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 198/2003, p. 117).

Fifth, the inside cannot justify the inside: Form

Given this shortfall, the "outside" is constituted inside only as *formal*. In an insistence on active and intentional constitution, phenomenology itself creates a formal idealism. But, in this phenomenology, even form is a problem, in that it *cannot appear.* It could do so only as an essence, but then the form which allows that essence to appear remains outside. For, given the "already",

> if passivity [as form] is placed *inside* a constituting sphere of activity, the problem is only pushed one stage further back [outside]. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 123/ 2003, p. 64; emphasis added)

Not even form can account for its origin; it is the innermost problem. *Form in any judgment, logic, or ontology is problematised.* Thus formal idealism is created from the *Ideas* to the *Cartesian Meditations* (Derrida, 1954/1990, pp. 183, 232/2003, pp. 107, 142).

Alternatively, if form *were* somehow given from outside, then

> genesis does not start off … from an essence, from a *predicate*, but from [a passively constituted] antepredicative reality [and] one would have to admit that knowledge has *made a jump*, from the evidence of the given to the ... judgment. (Derrida, 1954/1990, pp. 183-184/2003, p. 107; emphases added)

To allow judgment of a predicate (outside), the latter needs to "jump" inward (across a joint). Neither solves the problem.

Parenthesis: The Method

This approach to directions upon joints creates a method. An either-or choice sets the limits, in accord with a demand for absolute solution. This is applied to the outcome: it must be *affirmed* as absolutely true or false that objects which are predicated are either present or absent. Then Derrida poses a *conditional*: for example, "Suppose there were a completed passive synthesis" is the antecedent, followed by "then the outside would not be able to interact with it". But the ontological element in the antecedent would not be acceptable in the first place. Moreover, neither would its "opposite", "Suppose there were completed active synthesis". Thirdly, even were the interactions to unify an object, the system would still fall short.

Evident, therefore, is that *neither side in itself, or in interaction, solves the problem of origin, and each is precluded in advance by the same problem; thus each side is posed hypothetically.*

Even in his first work (cf. Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 129/ 2003, p. 68), Derrida calls some of the problems he finds "aporias" (I will touch on his later use further on). As he came to reflect upon his early use of the term, he drew it from Aristotle's "*diaporeō*", as a situation where

> "I'm stuck, I cannot get out, I'm helpless." (Derrida, 1993b, p. 13/1996, p. 33)

Derrida brings himself close to this point in 1954. At every turn, he poses an either-or choice requiring absolute *distinction* of an object in active and passive constitution, when what Husserl clearly means is an interweaving constitution within the reduction. Derrida notes that Husserl

> ... merely indicates the impossibility of a "language" that would distinguish strictly between passivity and activity. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 199/2003, p. 118)

Derrida's method arises from his own demand.

III. Temporising and the Joints

The spatial elements now set out, we come to time, the seat of Husserl's constitution (cf. Husserl 1928/ 1964, §§16-17; Derrida 1954/1990, p. 159/2003, p. 90). Here Derrida applies *shortfall*. In Husserl, the "presentification" represents a memory – let us say, of a dog barking – which is no longer immediately within sense-perception, and so cannot be indubitable. However, the retention, for Husserl, is a part of primary memory. Here, if the dog is barking, then this sound could pass through the now-point of my consciousness, yet be restored to experience (*Erlebnis*) by retention. This is *indubitable*, in that it returns immediate evidence (Husserl, 1928/1964, §§16-17; I §78). But, for Derrida, retention is shielded by the reductions from needing to answer origin. He begins:

> [i]t is an *a priori* necessity of the perception of time and the time of perception that an originary impression have some temporal density. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 120/2003, p. 62)

Derrida insists on some natural time. He does not accept Husserl's temporal reduction. Thus he rapidly simmers protention and retention down to his joints.

Retentions and Protentions Cannot Justify the Outside

To answer the problem, retention would need to present a real impression. Husserl, however, does *not* require this:

> Husserl does not present the *a priori* necessity of this synthesis [retention and originary impression] as ontological – and especially not real – but as phenomeno-logical. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 120/2003, p. 62; Husserl, 1928/1964, §12)

For Husserl, pure phenomenological processes have a special status as intentional but not real (cf. the noema, above). But Derrida especially needs them to be real:

> [b]ut so that this originary impression may be intentional ... must it not as such "announce" a real object that is constituted in the same way since it is aimed at it originarily? (Derrida, 1954/1990 p. 120/ 2003, p. 62)

Even *assuming* that a process were a real object, retentions fall short of the outside, as

> retention … implies a synthesis or a passive genesis of a new "now", [but if] the constitution and retention of the past were active, they would, like any pure activity, *shut themselves up* in the actuality of an originary now. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 163/ 2003, p. 93; emphasis added)

Retentions, thus, shut themselves up "inside".

Time Accounts for its Outside

The joint is applied to temporal predication too. Given that, as explained earlier, pure logical grammar fuses logic and ontology, since absolute time is "outside" the ontological, this holds also in respect of what can be predicated of it. The objective time is thus *antepredicative*. At Husserl's insistence, this is "passively received by consciousness" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 201/2003, p. 119). But this passivity – as ontological substrate or received prior judgments – does not allow for predication of its outside:

> antepredicative time ... is still the foundation of absolute temporality, but this latter involving the coupling activity/ passivity, it is not known what is the first condition of its constitution. (Derrida, 1954/ 1990, p. 200/2003, p. 119)

Predication falls short of original time.

Space Cannot Account for Time Inside

Now – to unite the sections on space and time above – space/time *interaction* also cannot account for origin (a systematic shortfall). If time is indeed fundamental, then spatial elements should devolve to original time inside themselves. Husserl "does not ask himself" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 161/2003, p. 92) this, and, for Derrida,

> at *the interior* [the inside] of the spatial *hylē* ... , the problem of the constituting becoming is still being posed. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 161/2003, p. 92; emphasis added)

Note, for now, the word "becoming" (*devenir*). Time as becoming is *not denied*, but is a *problem.* For, similarly, fixing upon an object in time precludes its realisation, as one has only

> [a] suite of [moments of] objective time, whose genesis is already completed. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 202/2003, p. 120)

Time, that is, has already become. This is a problem because, to be seen, an object or essence needs to be *fixed,* intemporal. It halts the sequence of time it should fit into:

> the temporality described is fixed; it interrupts the whole movement of constitution at a certain moment. (Derrida, 1954/ 1990, p. 202/2003, pp. 120-121)

In effect, space in constitution – as a cessation of time – is *outside* temporal movement. As Derrida explains in 1967:

> [s]pace is 'in' time [yet it] opens up as pure "outside" 'within' the movement of temporalisation. (Derrida, 1967b/1973a, p. 86; cf. 1954/1990, p. 96)

Secondly, time as become can only be found outside its own movement, and hence is not itself. Similarly, time cannot be objectified (spatialised) *into* itself (what Derrida calls "irreducibility"). It is always outside its origin. Since, for Husserl, space and time allow *a priori* synthesis, then synthesis is jointed in three directions: space is outside time, time is outside space, and the living now is outside time. *Synthesis is not simple*. This is arrived at mechanically: becoming is outside the temporal (living) intention which would fix its origin, and the having-become is outside its temporal origin. Therefore, Derrida says in *Of Grammatology*, spacing sets out

> the *becoming-space* of time and the *becoming-time* of space. (Derrida, 1967a, p. 99/1976, p. 68; emphases added)

The problem of "becoming" also arises from the earliest bases.

IV. Forward and Backward

This leads to a model which this paper will explain via the terms "forward" and "backward". For, since time cannot justify its outside, it cannot account for its temporal progress:

> How can it be affirmed of a reality ... that it is lived *before* being intentional if absolute evidence is made into an intentional act? One has the right to determine the *hylē* as lived *only from* that moment when an intentional morphé has come to animate it. (Derrida, 1954/1990, pp. 153-154/2003, p. 86)

The outside is beyond determination of either space or time. The origin of what comes from the "back" (earlier in time) is a problem. As will be seen, it cannot even be distinguished from what came from the "front" (a *telos* which appears).

The *Telos* as Problem Forward

Derrida sets this out in three areas – science, history, and explication of the object. In the *Cartesian Meditations* of 1931, Husserl introduces the notion that there is a "teleological ideal" of an ultimate science, explicated in phenomenology. Thus the *telos* is something that would need to be achieved by an intentional object moving "forward" in time. But,

Derrida argues, if an object

> managed to [achieve its *telos*], on the one hand, the sense that it would thus produce would not have its foundation in any existence, on the other, it would mark the end of its own becoming: two mythical or metaphysical consequences that would suspend the originary intentionality and temporality of lived experience. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 232/2003, pp. 142-143)

If the object *had* become, it would be divorced from its origin (foundation) in time. Time – posed hypothetically – remains outside the joint, and thus "metaphysical". But, if the object were determined, it would no longer be becoming, and its undeniable temporality would be outside, and thus again metaphysical. The joint "forward" to the *telos* could be crossed only if time were set aside.

Explicating the Object as Problem Forward

Just so for the structure of adumbrating an object – a "thing", for Husserl, being a kind of essence (cf. Husserl, 1913/1952, §15). For Husserl, a phenomenological object is given "in itself", even if only partially, and then adumbrated forward in the service of knowing it completely (cf. Husserl, 1900-01/2002, vol. 2, p. 220). Thus a thing perceived at any particular moment, such as a table, for example, would be seen anew and more fully in the next moment. However, the series can never be exhausted. As Derrida notes of *Experience and Judgment*:

> intentional referrals are in principle infinite and, to that degree, never take on the absolute of their sense. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 235/2003, p. 144)

There is always shortfall.

These arguments thus apply to any intentional object, iterated toward its completion. Explication will never reach the outside. Derrida later points out that Husserl insists on this inevitable shortfall himself (cf. Derrida, 1967b/1973a, p. 101). But, in 1954, this is Derrida's own demand.

History as Problem Forward

The problem of "history" – in theory, "backward" – is then set on this base. Regression toward the lifeworld should unpack a history, but the latter ends up being inside, as intentional alone:

> [h]istory will thus be only the intentional chain of meanings. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 234/2003, p. 144)

Since intentions are explicated forward, in the living present, regression and explication, *in progressus* and *in regressus*, become indistinguishable. For

> this infinite totality of sedimentations is an idea: the idea of an absolute and completed history or of a teleology constituting all the moments of history. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 185/2003, p. 108)

History is also a *telos*. Seeking for genesis in history and *telos* in ideal science, one structure emerges, in that they are both teleologised moments, explicating in inner time, with an undecidable object always outside. The teleological ideal already "precedes" the historical object:

> teleology could not be given to a concrete subject in an originary clear evidence. To be faithful to its mission, *it had to precede any active constitution*. (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 153; emphasis added)

There is undecidability at front and back, "indefinite in its past and in its future" (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 143). What would come from outside – in the genetic, scientific or epistemological projects – cannot even be affirmed as "in front" or "behind".

That a temporised consciousness cannot distinguish between origin at front and back is still emphasised in *Spectres of Marx* (Derrida, 1994):

> what stands in front of it must always precede it, like its origin: before it. (Derrida, 1994, p. xix)

At least one part of the model of spectrality is already set in the 1950s.

Ego and Object Differ from Identity

This loss of the object applies just as much to the ego as object. In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl wishes the "transcendental ego" to provide a basis for synthesis, by positing only what it already knows in "self-constitution". But

> the transcendental ego ... is what it is solely in relation to intentional objectivities. (Husserl, 1931/1960, §31)

However, Husserl firstly (from inside to outside) makes the transcendental ego an *eidos* (Husserl, 1931/1960, §34). How then can it have intentionality to relate to existence? For

> [i]n *separating* the transcendental from pure existence, a constituted "*eidos*" is made out

> of the first. (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 137; emphasis added)

The transcendental ego falls short of the outside. Secondly (from inside to its inside), the actively constituting ego could only be constituted by an ego which is already there (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 141). The active, Derrida decides, has an "irreducible passivity" inside it (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 141). All the problems of active-passive interactions return, and Derrida concludes that

> [w]e remain *on this side of* absolute originarity (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 137; emphasis added).

The ego cannot *affirm* itself as it *falls short* of its *object*. This is a base for 1967, where an Ego posits its own absence (death) by asserting its presence:

> [m]y death is structurally necessary to the pronouncing of the I. (Derrida, 1967b, p. 108/ 1973a, p. 96)

For

> [w]hat can look at itself is not one. (Derrida, 1967a, p. 55/1976, p. 36)

As noted, Derrida arrives at this reasoning by pointing to a "joint" in pure logical grammar between what is intended and what can be judged as found:

> [w]e draw this conclusion, then, from the idea of a pure logical grammar, from the *sharp distinction* [joint] between the meaning-intention [permitting apophansis] and its "eventual" fulfilment by the intuition of the object. (Derrida, 1990/ 2003, p. 97; cf. 1967b/1973a, p. 57)

At this point – in both ordinary object (ontologically outside) and ego as object – there is a structure of a *differing in identity, in synthesis, which resists affirmation of identity*. This mechanic becomes fundamental for Derrida in later years, [17] as it is the ultimate source where a problematised subjectivism and objectivism become indistinguishable. All of this follows from the bases above.

V. Synthesis and Contamination

We can now draw the above toward the basic "law" with which we began. The divorce from original certainty is a problem of identification. But the latter is the basic form of *synthesis*:

> the fundamental form of synthesis [is] identification. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 222/ 2003, p. 135)

Were an intentional object identified, it would be determined, in a priori synthesis, in an intuition. From the above – inside-outside and forward-backward joints – it is now clear that this synthesis will not occur. *The "already" prevents basic identification.* Positing identity misses "authentic genesis" (Derrida, 1990/2003, p. 143). Synthesis and identity – intuition – thus becomes the locus of a *problem*.

But, at this seeming death of all identity, I come to the next, crucial aspect. *In no instance is a joint (a hinge) a pure scission.* It would also be a connection. Indeed, Derrida does *not deny that there is* a basis upon the given in synthesis. When Husserl's phenomenology, in 1931, becomes the ego explicating itself, Derrida says:

> there is the risk of transforming the passive synthesis, *the only foundation of objectivity so far, the only certainty of an access to being as being*, into a pure activity of the subject. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 235/2003, p. 144; emphasis added)

It is undeniable, for Derrida, that there is being. As a result, the inside-outside is not simply a judicative criterion which insists upon failure of the given, but it also insists upon failure of the *perfectly* given; thus one cannot deny *dependency*. For example, it is only

> because [hyletic material] appears as already constituted in *its very being* … that consciousness *can experience* originary constitution. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 121/ 2003, p. 63; emphases added)

Derrida never denies the experience. Just so, the sedimented history of an object depends upon what must already have been given. Accordingly, Derrida continues by stating that

> phenomenological history presupposes real history. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 233/2003, p. 143)

History itself is *never independent of* what was already given from the "outside".

Just so for time. As Derrida insisted, inner temporality does not escape natural (or psychologistic) time, for after a reduction

[17] cf. *Aporias*: "[a]s soon as these totalities are over-determined, or rather contaminated … they are no longer identical to themselves, hence no longer simply identifiable and to that extent no longer determinable" (Derrida, 1993b, p. 7/1996, p. 24).

> the autonomy it seems to have acquired is only a modality *of its dependence*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 184/2003, p. 108; emphasis added)

Insofar as phenomenology is based on time, then the problem of origin is one of unsolved dependence. Hence this applies to every major relation. *Shortfall is just as much a dependence as a failure of relation.*

This points to the methodical aspect of the problem: it is not *givenness* that fails. Rather, *explanation of givenness* fails. Instead of Derrida the anomist, one finds the most frustrated idealist, demanding an absolute solution without success, and thus bound within his system.

"Logic" as Pointing to the Problem

This system, thus, cannot determine (affirm) solution either way. Indeed, although Derrida only aligns his work with the word "logic" later,[18] and does not assess alternatives, his basis does lead to one criterion:

> In all good logic, the absolute ante-predicative must not receive *any determination*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 190/ 2003, p. 112; emphasis added)

Husserl – who allows the antepredicative (*outside*) to be a substrate of judgment – does not use a 'good' logic. The word "determination" already appears, as a caveat against careless affirmation of the outside, for

> [d]eterminations, … referring to a pregiven *with which they have only external [outside] relations*, are then perforce *conventional*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 190/ 2003, p. 112; emphases added)

Logic should not determine what is outside, on pain of being "conventional". Derrida already takes an "unconventional" stance toward judgment. First, his either/or limit allows only affirmation or denial. But when he seeks to affirm an identity, an outside prevents determination. Further, when he attempts to *deny* the outcome, he is reminded of the dependency. Apophantically, one cannot affirm or deny that an ontological object is present or absent. For, whenever one wishes to "respect originarity", and thus "refuse" to determine the sense of an object, one finds that "it is not so easy":

> by trying to strip it out absolutely, one even more nearly runs the risk of contamination. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 22/2003, p. xxxiii)

[18] cf. Derrida, 1972/1981, pp. 196-197.

This is Derrida's use of the term contamination in 1954 – of which he reminds us in 1990 (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii/2003, p. xv). The *joint*, which arose from either-or limits, does not permit denial either. This is reflected in "Différance" of 1968, when Derrida says:

> In this way we question the authority of presence or its simple symmetrical contrary, absence or lack. We thus interrogate the [either-or] limit that has always constrained us ... to form the sense of being in general as [ontological] presence or absence. (Derrida, 1968/1973c, p. 139)

This applies, from 1954, to every aspect of the problem of origin.

Return to the Basic "Law": Synthesis and Contamination

We can now see, in a basic fashion, why Derrida names the question which imposes itself on his oeuvre: "How can everything begin with a complication?" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii, quoting 1954 [in 1990], p. 12/2003, pp. xv, quoting 1954 [in 2003], p. xxv). When there is no "pointlike" synthesis, then there is a scission preventing its affirmation. The problem of the "already" is unsolved. But this does not mean that one can insist on (affirm) even the non-pointlike, for synthesis is not a separation. Thus it is a "complication".

This allows us to go back to the beginning to see how contamination impacts on synthesis:

> All the [either-or] limits on which phenomenological discourse is constructed are examined from the standpoint of the fatal necessity of a "contamination" ("unperceived entailment or dissimulated contamination") between the two edges of the opposition: transcendental/"worldly", eidetic/empirical, intentional/nonintentional, active/passive, present/non-present, point-like/nonpointlike, originary/derived, pure/ impure etc.) ... . (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii/ 2003, p. xv)

Every element can be explained by the process above. First, the transcendental is not real, and thus predication "falls short" of a real world. Second, Husserl's eidetic explication is "outside" the empirical basis, to which it is nevertheless connected. Third, the nonintentional *hylē* remains outside the intentional noema, preventing material data from entering pure phenomenology. Fourth, the passive, made non-intentional, severs affirmation across the "joint" to the active, without allowing denial. Fifth,

the essence ends up being a formal constitution without passive empirical givenness; hence the indeterminacy which prevents pointlike synthesis of reality (seventh). Thus, non-presence can neither be affirmed nor denied, and so on.

Second, any major term in this system can also be reached from any other. For example, the "eidetic" – second, above – ends up being an active constitution without affirmable link across the joint to a passive outside, the indeterminacy which arises thereby prevents pointlike synthesis of reality – sixth – and so on. In every case, *there is a complication of synthesis.*

This sets out the basic interaction by which contamination interacts with Derrida's "law". For, as Derrida continues,

> the quaking of each border com[es] to propagate itself onto all the others. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii, cons./2003, p. xv)

Thus contamination is not merely a simple opposition of two limits which fails because they interpenetrate one another. *Contamination is systematic.* This can be understood by distinguishing outset from outcome. The problem is first *posed* within absolute – and thus oppositional – either-or limits. Only then does the simple opposition fail.[19] Consequently, when there is contamination, this would be because *all* of the options – logical, ontological, apophantic, eidetic, intentional, and so forth – have a mutual inability either to be separated from or to solve the problem of origin. Contamination is a shared "relation" of every term via the problem of origin, as an "unperceived entailment" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii/2003, p. xv). The unperceived would be separation, the entailment would be inseparable relation.

Contamination as Prison

It now becomes clearer how difficult, even claustrophobic, the "problem" is for one who demands solution. It is plangent that the young Derrida thus finds only a "prison" (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 183, cf. 231/2003, p. 107, cf. 142). For Derrida had

> tried to define in this way the [either-or] *limits* of the *inescapable* idealism of *any philosophy*. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 226/2003, p. 138; emphases added)

However,

> [the] race toward the originary is permanently and essentially condemned to failure. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 204/2003, p. 122)

Derrida has revealed his own critical system clearly.

Derrida's Early Affirmation

However, note that Derrida *affirms* the conclusion of idealism (thus *determining* the problem). His early work has not yet applied its reasoning consistently. Hence this early Derrida does allow a further "answer" – "dialectic". It is applied to all of philosophy:

> Any reflection must begin by assuming this idealism [which ignores the "already"]. It is this which authorises us to speak of a dialectic philosophy as the only possible philosophy of genesis. (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. 226/2003, p. 138)

Lawlor has already pointed out well how the ontological side of this outcome arises from Cavaillès and Tran Duc Thao (Lawlor, 2002, pp. 47-66). My point is that Derrida arrives at this via reasoning upon the joints: when there is a concern for knowledge, leading to either-or choice, an (undeniable) base upon time, and inability to affirm or deny of a joint, then dialectic follows.

That said, Derrida has not yet recognised that the system which traps him in iterated inability to affirm or deny could offer some relief by refusing the affirmation in the first place. Thus he comments in respect of the passage from 1954 to 1967 that

> through these moments, configurations, effects of *this law* [the] "contamination" of the origin receives a philosophical name we have had to give up: "dialectic". (Derrida, 1954/1990, p. vii/2003, p. xv; emphasis added)

Dialectic is "given up" – at least – because the absolute either/or choice which impels it (in apophansis, ontology, logic and method) will no longer be affirmed.

Summary

While the relations in regard to particular content (eidetic/empirical and so forth) have been pointed out above, the system is more general, allowing for application elsewhere. Derrida begins with a demand for absolute solution to the origin of the object. But the object is already there, and thus never originally affirmable. Hence relations fall short, which gives rise to the "problem". The absolute either-or framework

[19] It is often noted that the later Derrida seeks to avoid either-or oppositional logic (cf. Hobson, 2004, pp. 57-59). But here Derrida first *imposes* it in order to refuse its determination.

then sets the "limits", requiring affirmation or denial from apophansis, and full presence or absence from ontology. This interaction creates an "inside-outside" distinction with an absolute criterion: only if the outside is solved is there knowledge. But, as the "already" prevents such determined presence, this leads to a method: "either" one element "or" the other, but neither may be determined in the first place (each is predicated *hypothetically*), nor may overall outcome anyway. Now, as constitution is the ground of the problem, this leads to (at least) three interdependent models: spatial elements fail to answer the problem of origin, as each element is beset by an inside-outside problem (a joint), the temporal model replicates the problems, and "becoming" keeps the inside across the joint from its outside. Front and back (*telos* or origin) become indistinguishable, as modification forward or backward (of history, genetic project, object) does not attain the outside. Ego and object become indistinguishable as problems by the same mechanism. These results, as egoic and apophantic inability to affirm (cross the joint), lead to the opposite side of the problem – presence cannot be excluded. Each joint is a dependency as much as a scission. Apophansis thus *cannot affirm*, *nor deny*, the logical predication, and hence ontological presence/ absence cannot be dismissed. Method thus can find no either-or outcome of an identity or presence. This creates the "law" that drives Derrida's system: constitution never leads to "simple" synthesis (in any either-or limit). Rather, each element has a shared locus through the problem of origin, allowing each to depend upon the others but nevertheless to be separated from them. This interweaving is the system of *contamination*.

Again, any term in the above can be reached from any other. One can understand Derrida when he says later that, when *différance* becomes a term substituted for the problem of origin, it

> can refer to the whole complex of its meanings at once. (Derrida, 1968/1973c, p. 137)

Conclusion, Context and Some Ways Forward

This paper has suggested how an interrelated system linking Derrida's early and later thinking might be developed from the "law" (or, at least, "sort of law") of 1954 referred to by Derrida in 1990, and, as again suggested by Derrida, relating his notion of "contamination" to this "law". The system set forth in this paper begins from the problem of origin of the object, a demand for solution, judgment, either-or limits, inside and outside, and shortfall from determination, and hinges mechanically on the directions and joints posited. While my approach here to Derrida's work addresses "internal" imperatives, both internal and external approaches, of course, remain crucial. For Derrida is neither robot nor island. I have followed his "law" simply as he asked us to.

As has been noted at various junctures in this paper, particular elements of this suggested model are not, in isolation, novel in the context of readings of Derrida's later work (for instance, those of Leavey, Hart, Hobson and Hurst). No other reading, however, has yet, to my knowledge, drawn these elements back to Derrida's early work, and hence could not yet relate them to the "law" of 1954, nor develop a basis from it. So, too, while Lawlor (2002) has provided the first thorough reading of Derrida's path from 1954 to 1967, Lawlor also omits Derrida's "law", and thus does not yet encompass, for instance, Derrida's *demand*, and the interactions of judgment with the system. Hence my relations of shortfall, the directions, joints, and inability to affirm or deny, along with the method and the system, driven by the "law" of 1954, are, insofar as I am aware, departures from all readings of Derrida to date, pointing to new directions.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to caution that, while Derrida in 1990 could refer to a "logic" applying across his oeuvre, Derrida in 1954 was as yet unaware of this and had, indeed, not yet understood its nascent method. One component in the task of joining the early work to the later would be following the coming-to-cognisance of this awareness.

As to how collaboration could proceed, I will set out two ideal but related poles. The first is that of theoretical overview, and the second that of the historical. In respect of the first, I will here give an early and a later example. In *Of Grammatology* of 1967, Derrida turns to question linguistics, asking whether speech can avoid "contamination" by writing (Derrida, 1965, pp. 1033-1040; 1966, pp. 23-30; cf. 1967a/1976, pp. 30, 34, 41), that is, whether the latter can be kept outside, as Saussure (1916/1983, p. 46) wishes. Here, Derrida no longer "make[s] a choice" (apophantically), as a "Yes" or a "No" (bivalent) outcome, of a presence or absence (Derrida, 1967a, p. 91/1976, p. 62). However, Derrida still *poses* either-or difficulties to Saussure, upon consecutive joints, just as he did to Husserl. For example, Saussure wishes to keep language outside the phonic – but then

> "the thing that constitutes language" is … unrelated to [outside] the phonic character of the linguistic sign. (Derrida, 1967a, p. 63/1976, p. 42; referring to Saussure, 1916/ 1983, p. 21)

Again, Saussure wishes to keep the written word "outside" the natural relation to speech (Derrida, 1967a, p. 51 ff./1976, p. 35), but the *gramme* and

phonē (originary units of possible writing and speech) become inseparable. Thus Derrida interweaves hypothetical problems upon the joint. He makes this interweaving clear, as

> [t]he outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was always [already] present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa. (Derrida, 1967a, p. 52/1976, p. 35)

Hence "there is no longer a simple origin" (Derrida, 1967a, p. 55/1976, p. 36). Yet the *demand* for solution remains:

> [t]he grammatologist least of all can avoid questioning himself about the *essence* of his object in the form of the *question of origin*: "What is writing?" means "where and when does writing begin?" (Derrida, 1967a, p. 43/ 1976, p. 28)

The basis still applies in the transition to Derrida's linguistic work. As a later example, in setting out his first justice-law aporia of 1990, Derrida writes that

> [t]o be just, the decision of a judge, for example, must not only follow a rule of law or a general law, but must also assume it ... by a reinstituting act of interpretation. (Derrida, 1990/2002, p. 251)

A judge – or better, a *judgment* – must be made of an object, the general law. But from inside to outside: if the judgment is made "after" the law, the origin of the law outside (before) is unaccounted for. Alternatively, if the judgment is made inside, the origin of the law inside its "re-instituting" act is unaccounted for. The judgment can be neither affirmed nor denied as just. Again, Derrida requires absolute solution, while each either-or term is posed hypothetically.

The second approach is the historical, and this would need to be slower and more collaborative. For example, of all the quotes from *Of Grammatology* above, only one is an addition to the book version of 1967 – the refusal of either-or choice (Derrida, 1967a, p. 91/1976, p. 62). The articles of 1965 and 1966 make no mention of it. Indeed, nor does Derrida overtly recognise in the articles that the limits of either-or choice should apply to his *own* approach. He applauds Heidegger's "crossing out" of Being as an "erasure" (for writing "Being" affirms it, even though it is a problem of origin) (Derrida, 1965, p. 1029; cf. Heidegger, 1956, p. 13). But only in 1967 does Derrida include his own erasure, and add that

> [t]he outside is the inside. (Derrida, 1967a, p. 65/1976, p. 44)

It seems that the inability to affirm either-or choice as leading to erasure crystallised between 1965 and 1967. A faithful historical progress should try to allow for this nebulosity, and chance of inter-disciplinary overlap, to coalesce at its own pace. But, by the same stroke, it opens the way for such dialogue; here, it begins to consider the limits of a systematic approach, about which I cautioned at the outset. Hence I point to the above not to simplify Derrida's work, but to highlight the hard path we would need to follow, by broader assessment and careful historical increments, in the task of preparing Derrida's oeuvre for posterity.

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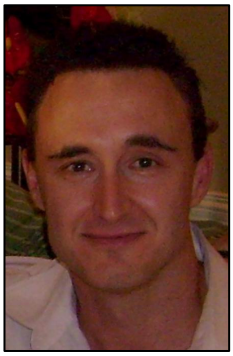
About the Author



Dino Galetti graduated with a degree in English from the University of Natal in 1991, primarily focused upon literary theory and post-structuralism. After a career in advertising, he returned to academia in 2004 with a view to offsetting some of the potential dangers of nihilism in Derrida's work, only to discover a parallel set of philosophical inspirations. In the course of this research he found it necessary to move continually backwards in the history of philosophy, proceeding from Levinas to Heidegger, Husserl, and logicism, and then to Hegel, transcendental logic, and Aquinas. He pursued his postgraduate studies in philosophy at Stellenbosch University, St. Augustine College and the University of the Witwatersrand, and is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Johannesburg.

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