DERRIDA’S DECONSTRUCTION
AS A METHOD OF ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE

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By
DEVADASAN. P. (PAROL)

Supervised by
Dr. A. KANTHAMANI
Professor

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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Chapter V

‘America is deconstruction’
- Derrida

‘LATE’ DERRIDA:
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5.1 From the Deconstructive Turn to the Pictorial Turn

The classification of the voluminous writings of Derrida into different periods is a topic of discussion among his commentators. According to Richard Rorty, “Derrida’s work divides into an earlier, more professorial period and a later period in which his writings become more eccentric, personal and original”. Rorty sees Derrida more involved in public project during the earlier period but in the later period, he seemed to have turned away from philosophy and toward literature, as having written as a writer rather than as a philosopher. This Rortian approach as Gasche’ observes, sees the early Derrida as in search of “the mysterious transcendental ‘conditions of possibility’ dreamed up by Kant” and getting entangled in “the thoroughly deceptive question” of such transcendental notions. This is proved to be false, even according to Norris.

Labelling of Derrida’s early work as an example of professional philosophy, according to Francis Ferguson, is the outcome of recognizing it with Rorty’s own earlier work, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. Ferguson is not certain that whether he can divide up Derrida’s career and
speak authoritatively of its different eras. For Ferguson, the continuity of Derrida is the continuity of philosophical analysis in which ‘writing’ and ‘reading’ receives a place of genuine philosophical analysis. It is here Derrida practiced a ‘noncannonizing’ approach to the text. He makes two points:

1. Nothing divides the text and the world. Both text and the world are similarly touched by the distribution of emphasis.
2. No complete interpretation: Reading distributes emphases; it redistributes emphases, and it alters relative weight. Texts are continuously open to re-marking.

W.J.T Mitchell, on the other hand distinguished three major periods in the philosophical career of Derrida. These are:

1. The early ‘radical’ phase was deconstruction of Western metaphysics from Plato onwards and it was oriented towards questions of language, writing and literature and technical discussions of center/margin etc.
2. The middle defensive period connected with the de Man affair and,
3. The late Derrida period with the moment of moving to the ‘borders’ of deconstruction.

These three periods convey an inherent appeal in which deconstruction was first discovered, defended in the second and deconstructed in the third period.
The ‘lateness’ is the lastness, finality, finitude, and of course, death itself-leads to the problematic of the post-*deconstruction*, that marked the final decade of Derrida’s life. If limit is characterized by death, the question whether deconstruction is dying is significant. Mitchell quotes Derrida as saying that deconstruction *is* clearly *dying*. Unlike death of person, deconstruction has been clearly dying for quite awhile ……. it continues dying for sometime to come. In the US (as against France), ‘deconstruction still seems to be dying quite a bit.’

It looks as if there is nothing that waits to be deconstructed. It does not have a definite limit. Even if nothing is there, there is something that cannot be deconstructed. It is here Derrida remarks that deconstruction as moving towards its borders, to the edges of the conditional, to the realm of the limit or the limitless, the unconditional and unconditioned, the pure, the absolute, and ideal – in short, the undeconstructable to which he sometimes gave the name of justice’.² So not everything is meant to be deconstructed; there is something which is not deconstructable. This is justice. ‘Deconstruction is justice’.

This is also the period in which Derrida comes to the public sphere with topics other than philosophy such as politics, ethics, religion and even in the urgent issues of the day, he also responded to events and contemporary issues at the invitation of others and speak out with surprising unpredictable
results. This is also the period in which a ‘pictorial’ turn takes place in modern studies of culture and media. If, in the world of ideas, the closing of the case is the equivalent of death, nailing the coffin shut, Derrida’s effect on thought was precisely one of continual resurrection, the insistence on opening ourselves to what is to come, or (in more anxious modes) what threatens to come back.3

This continual resurrection is obtained by means of analysis. It is an analysis that began in terms of binary oppositions and which has exercised in larger socio-political context in the later period, which can be called ‘a parallax view’, as termed by Slavoj Žižek, an intervention that changes the angle of vision ever so slightly, with momentous consequences.4 Such momentums consequences are more felt in the ‘late’ rather then the ‘early’ Derrida.

During the late period, Derrida is also responsible for moving beyond the “linguistic turn” (as Rorty described) in the human sciences toward a ‘pictorial’ turn, thus marking a swerve from language to images where he invokes spectrality, imagination, fantasy as ‘graphemes’, echoing the ‘philosophemes’ or ‘phonemes’. The various figure that are evoked are image, morphe, eidos and especially phantasm. He is also said to have renewed the traditional disciplines such as aesthetics, iconology and art history, and the emergence of new formations such as visual culture, and the
study of media, as well as its equality important *immateriality* – that renders all things or objects – all “beings” in other words – un canny”.\(^5\)

Among the very large number of topics that Derrida had discussed during this period, some of them are as follows:

(1) Political sovereignty, democracy and rogue states (2) law and justice (3) animal rights (4) the university (5) the idea of Europe (6) television (7) the ‘return’ of the “Abrahamic” religions of the book (8) secularism (9) religion (10) hospitality (12) violence (13) terrorism and the war on terror (14) Capital punishment etc.,

Let us take some of the above topics as specimen for discussion. *Firstly,* the deconstruction of sovereignty. It appears in his work *Voyous,* at the outset of which Derrida put the concept of sovereignty into question after that in several other texts, it occurs and vindicates that sovereignty is not just the modern system of states and its international components but it is also ethics, law and human relations.

Speaking about the ‘rogue’ state, D state that the rogue state “does not respect the state duties before the law of the world community……. it scoff at the law…… it betrays law, always as an exception……….. looking at times this angle, and citing Chomsky’s *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs* and Robert Litwak’s *Rogue States and U.S Foreign Policy,* Derrida confirms that “the most perverse, violent and destructive of Rogue
States would thus be, first the United States and occasionally its allies’ (V, p 139).

The meaning of sovereignty as supreme authority within a territory associated with historical sequence of sovereigns (God, King, people, nation, will) dates from the time of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) when interference with other states governing prerogatives became unacceptable. Following upon the ontotheological right of a sovereign, by Carl Schmitt, Derrida states that “a sovereign is defined by his capacity to decide the exception [and he has] the right to suspend the law”. In the U.S it is manifested itself in the right of the President. In such contexts, the meaning of sovereignty is linked with the use of force and the principle of might is right.

Derrida’s deconstruction also tries to demonstrate the non-democratical features of sovereignty. Here “the idea of a sovereign is contradictory (one over many), the concept of exception (being above the law), the notion of the death penalty (contravening the right to life of the citizen), and the fact that “only small states ever see their sovereignty contested and disputed by powerful states……. Powerful states never allow their own sovereignty to be challenged.” Besides, there is the non-democratic role of the U.S in “playing a virtually sovereign role among sovereign states, it also dominates the inner circle of United Nations. The
non-democratic Security Council is therefore exercising a sovereign unilateralism and it makes Derrida to say that

‘As always, these two principles, democracy and sovereignty, are at once and by turns indissociable and in contradiction with each other. For Democracy to be real, in order to grant space to a right to assert its idea, and to become actual, it requires the cratie [power] of the demos [people] – in this case of the global demos. Thus it requires a sovereignty, namely a force stronger than all others in the world. But if the constitution of this force is indeed destined in principle to represent and protect this global democracy, it in fact betrays and threatens it at the outset.’

Despite the aporias of sovereignty found in modern democratic forms, Derrida tries to preserve it in its limited and shared forms. Derrida’s own political prophetic words in the context on the ‘War on Terror’ is expressed as follows:

‘The idea and even the practice of shared sovereignty, that is, of a limitation of sovereignty, has been accepted for a long time now. And yet such a divisible or shared sovereignty already contradicts the pure concept of sovereignty…….. The
deconstruction of sovereignty has thus already began and it will have no end.⁸

Here Derrida asks, how are we to reconcile unconditional auto-homy (the foundation of any pure ethics, the sovereignty of the subject, of the ideal of emancipation and of freedom) and the hetero-nomy that imposes itself upon all unconditional hospitality worthy of this name?

In its very foundation, sovereignty therefore functions with autonomy, freedom and force “Human rights post and presuppose the human being as sovereign (equal, free, self determined)” (V, p. 128). Again, “All the fundamental axiomatics of responsibility of decision (ethical, juridical, political) are grounded on the sovereignty of the subject, that is, the intentional auto-determination of the conscious self (which is free, autonomous, active etc.,)” (WA, p. xix). Derrida’s conclusion is that one cannot simply ignore the sovereign self, its liberty, equality, responsibility and power any more than the sovereign nations state”. In his late texts, Derrida extends the meaning of sovereignty to God, ruler, reason, nation-state, people, subject, the asylum city, university and domicile.⁹

The political pragmatism of Derrida also operates under the name of negotiation. It adopts a well-known double strategy/gesture signaled by the deconstructive formula. For example, in connection with the matter of nation-state sovereignty, Derrida vehemently declared that “according to the
situation, I am antisovereigntist or sovereigntist – and I claim the right to be antisovereigntist here and sovereigntist there” (D & D p. 153). But being an unconditional sovereigntist, Derrida put the sovereignty again into question. In either case, sovereigntist and anti-sovereigntist are not two separate, dissociated positions, instead they haunt one another like that of other Derridean quasi-transcendental concepts. What is working here is the key pragmatic feature of Derridean deconstruction which is the conditionality of the unconditional. This is hereby supports Derrida’s gesture to Gasche’s condition of impossibility on Norris’s condition of possibility, but given both, it embodies a double-gesture. What I want to draw from this, this binary equivalent offers no support to Gasche or Norris, but to Derrida. There is no reason to think of them as Kantian categories.

Derrida’s usage for rewriting of the university and of the authority appears in his famous work ‘The University Without Condition’, such a rewriting is essential since Derrida is inclined to turn the question of some mutation in the essence of the university back toward the university’s permanent non-conformity with its most fundamental claims. Taking university’s own permanent non-conformity with its own fundamental claims, Derrida remarks the university of excellence turns out to be the sheer fact of administration. In different to knowledge – and to our own careers, the fact of our professionalism is the ongoing institutions of this indifference. It could be done within the terms of its dailiness ie its classrooms and curricula, the
teams thrown which use recognize one another work, the means of our governance. It is a process of university within the infinite ruin. To do this might be to discover a process of university in the infinite ruin of the university. It is the ruin what he calls university in deconstruction. Because there were no university apart from its reinvention at every moment in each of its parts or as if the responsibility for what one might call la chose universitaire. Here University is the origin of the absolute if we take this as a name for or imagination of la chose universitaire.

According to Stephen Melville, this proposition resembles Hegel’s own propositions, as for example in the Phenomenology’s exposition of the speculative proposition. A repetition of this can also be found in Heidegger. Heidegger makes out clear that what Hegel means in such phrasings of absolute knowledge, according to which the meaning is “knowledge self-moving and in its own shape.” Here the absolute knowledge is first of all not relative and thus that it is not knowledge of anything external to it in any sense. It says that

“For knowledge to be qualitatively other than relative knowledge, for it to be other than a knowledge which is carried over to what is known and is bound there, it must remain bound but must liberate and absolve itself from what it knows and yet as so absolved, as absolute, still be a knowledge. To be ab-
solved from what is known does not mean “abandoning” it, but “preserving it by elevating it”. [HP, p. 15].

Now let us turn our attention to how Derrida deals with the notion of ‘justice’. Derrida places deconstruction on the side of justice. Deconstruction is the undeconstructive demand, desire, and need for some notion of a justice to come. He says

Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructable. No more than deconstruction itself. If such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice. It is perhaps became law…….. is constructible, in a sense that goes beyond the opposition between convention and nature, it is perhaps insofar as it goes beyond this, opposition that it is constructible and so deconstructable. 

Both justice and deconstruction are Kantian regulative ideals, neither they are teleological horizons for which we might plan in some projected futurity. They are what arrives or simple what happens. The above understanding conflicts conflate with the understanding one normally comes across in the west. It is this symptomatic understanding that led Norris to valourize Derridianism as a species of Kantianism throughout his writings. It is this understanding that prompts writers to call the ‘Algerian Jew’ and the ‘Palestinian Christian’, (Said,) bracketing the Continental Habermas, with
whom Derrida shared the response to 9/11. Not only that Derrida comes closer to Habermas but it was said that Habermas was keen that Derrida respond to this in this way and he only signed it.

Deconstruction acts like a earthquake, a violent disruption in the system of structure of checks and balances. It has no specific method. The role of deconstructor is like that of seismologist who traces the disturbances, locate their origins, describe their qualities. Following Walter Benjamin this can be called the nature violence of deconstruction.

Here if Derrida expresses that there is no method of deconstruction, for the question of Freddy Tellez that to deconstruct really is to battle, Derrida’s reply comes as follows:

    Indeed, if you take deconstruction as a method, with its own logic, its tradition, its modalities of application, and so on, it can become something like that. And it is becoming that. Thus, when it is received, it becomes that…… that deconstruction is talked about as if it were some kind of grand method, a new logic, a kind of logistics then, too, in the military sense………

    So I think that if deconstruction involves war, I find it much more interesting as a war in you sense, as a nomadic war, if you will, a war consisting of small clandestine operations rather than a big war and battle in which the lines need to be brown.12
5.2 Kantian or not? Gasche/Norris

One major reason for Kantianising Derrida is seen in the way Derrida subscribes to enlightenment ideals of reason; another reason is that Derrida uses the phrase ‘condition of possibility’ and ‘conditions of impossibility’ in more or less similar version to convey a Kantian-like image. Both are not favoured in the writings of late Derrida, where it becomes almost evident he is not subscribing to those ideals, nor is he using these terms except to make a double-gesture which leads to ‘heterogeneity’ and thenceforward to deconstruction. What makes late Derrida interesting beyond mere superficial reality is that he hones up the analytical skills to such an extent that he both deconstructs in overcoming limits, and at the same time returns to analysis in a more succinct sense in which he is both a filtered reader and of both texts and images.

Derrida has often been criticized for collapsing the genre-distinction between philosophy and literature and deconstruction has been described as one offshoot – ‘a philosophical offshoot of wider post-modernist or counter – enlightenment drift. Rortian reading of deconstruction in ‘philosophy as a kind of writing’, states that ‘we should take Derrida with a large pinch of ironic postmodernist salt when he goes on about differance – with – an a, logocentrism, the western ‘metaphysics of presence’, and such like deconstructive variants on the old idea of philosophy as a quest for ultimate
(albeit, in this case ineffable) truths (Rorty 1982; also 1989 and 1991). According to Rudolph Gasche, ‘Derrida is in the business of providing philosophical arguments, or that he has somehow ‘radicalized’ the project of philosophy by showing that it generates conceptual problems beyond its own power to contain or comprehend (Gasche 1986, 1994). Rorty finds that Derrida himself once was subject to this same unfortunate delusion. This can be traced out in his early work on Husserl and his echt-deconstructionist yet minutely analytic and distinctly philosophical body of writing on Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Husserl and others.

Commentators like Gasche find in these texts the deployment of a ‘quasi-transcendental’ modes of reasoning and arguments emanated from the spirit of Kantian project of enlightened critique and at the same time questions that project with regard to its own values, presupposition and unthought axiomatics. This aspect of Derrida’s work, according to Rorty, we should ignore, rather we should view him as playing ‘bad cousin Derrida’ to ‘honest old uncle Kant’ and as making the point-in his later texts – that philosophy is indeed a ‘kind of writing’ in order to shake off its self-image as a privileged discourse of reason and truth. ‘So if we want to carry on reading ‘early’ Derrida then we had much better to do so in the spirit of postmodern ironists who have picked up a lesson or two from ‘late’ Derrida, instead of supposing (like Gasche’ and Norris) that the late texts only make any kind of sense if one treats them as performative elaborations of themes first broached – to
more convincing effect – in the work of Derrida’s early period.\textsuperscript{13} The well-known Derridean critique of traditional binary concepts and the eccentric focus on margins remain today powerful tools of analysis.\textsuperscript{14} This stands in full support of the perspective we have developed here in the thesis.

No doubt the readings of Kant scattered across the late works incisive and productive, but they are to be gathered under such political headings as cosmopolitans in responsibility, decision, justice, forgiveness, force, reason (that is reason of state), where he is in mood to above or return to a Kantian standpoint.

Mitchell raises with an inquisitive blend of truth and horror:

Derrida invoking the Enlightenment? This will only surprise those who forget that it was the enlightenment and the Goddess of Reason that presided over the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. Reason is on the side of both terror \textit{and} counterterror. This insight is crucial to the understanding of deconstruction as a rational operations, one that traces the fault lines in any system or structure\textsuperscript{15}

It can be said that Derrida’s commitment to democracy, justice and internationalism shows that he is a political optimist, while his ubiquitous nuances and qualifications displayed a seasoned scepticism alert to conscious and unconscious deceptions. As a gifted writer, Derrida was always capable
of finding motifs previously, in retrospect surprisingly unnoticed. Further, similar to that of Kant’s account of the profession of the book in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Derrida construes that texts have often been used to guide practice (to serve as the method for choices that one would otherwise not known how to make). In Kant’s account, doctors, lawyers, divines need not have experience but can always point to their guiding rules, to this texts and these techniques for generating experience when one fails to be able to point to experience that one already has.

With reference to Norris’s book in the *Contest of Faculties*, Kant contests, whereas Norris deconstructs, thus both miss the ‘real’ conflict, which forms the staple of Habermas’s philosophical discourse. Here let us see how Dr. Kanthamani defends Habermas against Norris’s unsympathetic reading.

“What gives us the initial shock is the question as to how these two incompatible motifs become the simultaneous targets of Norris’s critique. To begin with, deconstruction is poised to contest or deconstruct the Kantian presumption of autonomy of faculties of pure reason, as reflected in the tripartite distinction between the cognitive, ethical and the aesthetic on the one hand, and again it targets the valorizing of the one as a model over the others, especially the aesthetics over the others. On the other hand, it also finds their commensurability in the way it makes aesthetics as playing a
mediating role in the way Kant has done in his *Conflict of Faculties*, which remains just an extension of the first or second *Critique*. Thus the alleged *modus vivendi* is more a movement from the first to the second *Critique* and more natural at that, even while granting that the first is a sort of mirror image of the third, rather than the less natural movement from the third to the second, with all the fractal imago, and this is what that is posed to celebrate the above interface with that alleged idea of *sensus communs*. That is, no doubt, post-modernism also wants to differ from it by privileging the aesthetical, but at the same time, it ends up with creating a rift between different phrase regimes. As Norris tells us, there are two sides to the post-modernist stance against metanarratives. On the one side, they set their hearts against any conflation between them, by proscribing any extrapolation between one regime (the cognitive) to the other (the aesthetic), and running the risk of ultra-nominalism, and secondly, they are also equally against accepting a revisionist reading of this as privileging, aesthetics, which is supposed to provide a model for political practice. The aesthetizing of political on the other hand, emerges as the inimitable source and model for all forms of aesthetic ideology, but it is only too weak since it ends up with the consequent potential for an ‘inverted Platonism’. Such an inverted Platonism inaugurates a dangerous vision of society with its anti-realism or scepticism or irrationalism and it is thought that deconstruction has the true potency for realistic counter and it is, therefore, the best candidate for sponsoring an
ideologierkritik. Calling the above as yet another transcendental illusion, Norris suggests that the most appropriate tool in this contest is provided by deconstruction: we must deconstruct the aesthetic ideology, as it was demonstrated in the theorization and practice by Paul de Man within the precincts of literary criticism. This tantamounts to showing that the functions of literary criticism still depends on textual close-reading. In brief, whereas deconstruction mediates theory and practice, post-modernism divides their unity. One can safely attribute the analytical motif to the former, but not to the later. That is, deconstruction extents the Kantian theme of the condition of possibility of each of the above three faculties in the direction of marking out the conditions of impossibility as the further, much less understood, limits of the Kantianzed critique, here being the critique of literal or aesthetic discourse, and thus it is well motivated to follow a close Kantian reading of Kant. So, there is a specific need to push the argument in one direction. The Kantian beginnings of deconstruction are amply attested to by holding that deconstruction starts off where Kant leaves off. This bespeaks of a contrast to his later thesis which characteristically abandons it in favour of a quasi-differentiation between ethics and aesthetics where his motto seems to be: ethicize aesthetics before aestheticizing politics. It seems to be clear that by virtue of the acceptance of the above analytical divide, Norris cannot relish the thesis, which shows that the stuff that makes deconstruction as well as post-modernism are both offshoots of the analytical traditions in philosophy.
Norris has no patience for any such argumentation that could possibly show that they are rooted in analytic traditions. If so, he can hardly convince any analytic philosopher about the soundness of his enterprise by simply showing that deconstruction is tolerably arguable and hence it can fall within the analytical mode of discourse while post-modernism falls without. Conversely, the above interface can be sustained to stay, Norris things, only when it becomes fine-grained enough to withstand the onslaughts both from post-modernists as well as from contra-post-modernists (hermeneuticists) like Habermas. The deconstructive contesting can, therefore, be defended for its analytical rigour against the attacks leveled against both by post-modernists and hermeneuticists alike. Norris’s analogy between epistemic and evaluative concerns (a similar analogy is warranted in the context of Foucault’s pre-revisionary reading of Kantian individualist ethic, where Norris’s difficulties about ascetic-aesthetic interface become much more apparent) in lieu of the contest, may not work after all by simply granting the analogy between taste for the beautiful and the desire for justice. In what follows, I shall directly defend Lyotard’s version of the aesthetic-aesthete interface for providing a far more superior analytical paradigm, depending on materials which Norris hardly utilizes for arriving at the so-called truth about post-modernism, and thereby indirectly defend the Habermasian completion of the project as providing a more coherent convergence between analytical and post-modernist ethos."
5.3 The Post-Deconstructionist Tools of Analysis

A best example of the role of Derrida as a philosopher on the public sphere can be drawn elaborately in the context of Derrida’s own response at the 9/11 incident. Here Giovanna Borradori’s attempt to gather the responses of the two leading philosophers of our time, Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, is quite remarkable. The philosophers in the rival paradigms replied differently. When Habermas defended it registering no quarrel with modernism, Derrida rejected it. The matter becomes a **querelle** between modernism and post-modernism. What is to be noted in this context is that both look at the holocaust as an event of the past that move them to reflect. In general, it was mixed with issues on secularism, globalization, constitutional history, the role of UN for the peace of the world etc. But in the case of Derrida it is something more than that for which we focus our attention. Here the role of Derrida as ‘philosopher deconstructor’ is expressed as follows.

A ‘philosopher’ (actually I would prefer to say ‘philosopher-deconstructor’) would be some one who analyses and then draws the practical and effective consequences of the relationship between our philosophical heritage and the structure of the still dominant juridico-political system, that is so clearly undergoing mutation. A ‘philosopher’ would be
someone who seeks a new criteriology to distinguish between ‘comprehending and justification’.  

This new method of ‘comprehension and justification, is exercised in his response to 9/11 discussions organized by Giovanna Borradori. It is remarkable for its almost clinical and analytical tone and for its emphasis on the fantasmatic, speculation, and mediated character of terrorism. Derrida argues that “the real terror consisted of and, in fact, began by exposing and exploiting…… the image of this terror by the target itself”. Derrida viewed terrorism and the so-called war on terror in terms of a cold war that becomes the major global image of conflict. The attack of September 11 therefore acts as a cold in the head, a global head cold that had now mutated in an “auto-immunitary process…… that strange behaviour where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, ‘itself’ works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself against its ‘own’ immunity”. (PTT p. 92-94)  

By selecting the image autoimmunity as a tool for analyzing modern terrorism, it becomes an image with considerable surplus value, whose immediate applicability is startling and continues to resonate well beyond the use he makes of it. As stated by Donna Haraway “the immune system is both an icononic mythic object in high-technology culture and a subject of research and clinical practice of the first importance. Here the metaphor plays a double role, its status as “iconic” on the one hand and as an indispensable
research tool on the other. In that sense, it exceeds the meaning of a mere metaphor, a loose analogy to haunt us in the biological figures that are part of the ordinary language for describing terrorism and in the language of biomedical research. By using this image, Derrida tries to brings out the ancient figure of the body politic. The image also directs us to see the collective, society, the nation, mankind, even all things as one body, is reversible. It also states the necessity of our speaking irrespective four interest in the political body or body politic. In that sense, the very notion of immunity as such is originally based in a socio-political discourse not a biological one.

The words *heilig*, *holy*, and *sacrificial* connect Derrida’s concept of the autoimmunitary in his earlier thinking about religion and about sacrifice as an essential feature of the three “religions of the Book”. The Latin words *immunitas* and *immunis* have their origin in the legal concept of exemption, “a sense that returns in the notion of diplomatic immunity”. In the broader sense, the whole theory of the immune system and the discipline of immunology is riddled with images drawn form the sociopolitical sphere of invaders and defenders, hosts and parasites, natives and aliens and of borders and identities that must be maintained. By taking terror as autoimmunity, Derrida is bringing the metaphor home and at the same time he sends it abroad extending it to the limits of the world.
The bipolar image thus creates a situation in which there is no literal meaning but it resonates between two images such as the bio-medical and the political. The absence of literal meaning thus caught us in the circuit two realms of discourse. For Derrida, this admission of ignorance is crucial because the real politics of the autoimmunity metaphor, beyond its power to deconstruct all the easy, Manichean binary oppositions that have structured the war on terror; is the restaging of terrorism as a condition that needs to be thought through analytically, systematically, and without moral tub-thumbing, exactly as we would approach the diagnosis of a medical condition.²⁰ It also says in order to address terrorism with any hopes of an effective cure “a mutation will have to take place in our entire way of thinking on topics like democracy. Sovereignty, globalization, military power etc. What is to learn in this context is that it says that pre-established certainties are exactly the wrong medicine.

A clue that is to be derived from the metaphor (and the literal operations) is that there are two systems in the human body that are capable of learning. One is the nerve system and the other is the immune system. It learns by clonal selection, the production of anti-bodies that mirror the invarding antigens and bond them, killing them. The implications of Derrida’s intentions to use the image is here more explicit. It means that the appropriate strategy for international terrorism is not war, but rational, open, public institutions of international justice.
Adapting Marshall MacLuhan’s term the “central nervous system” of the social body, Derrida calls the “techno-economic power of the media”, which has been traumatized by an image – the spectacle, the word, above all the number as enigmatic name 9/11. This image, the spectacle of destruction of the Twin Towers, has been cloned repeatedly in the collective global system. In other words, the attack was not immediately on the immune system but on the nerve system. When the nerve system is in a state of panic, anxiety, depression etc., the immune system has a tendency to respond in appropriately as well. Here Derrida gives a proper reply for those who calls him as an obscurantist or nihilist.

It is once again a question of the Enlightenment, that is, of access to Reason in a certain public space, though this time in conditions that techno science and economic or telemedia globalization have thoroughly transformed…… if intellectuals, writers, scholars, professors, writers and journalists do not, before all else, stand up together against such violence, their abdication will be at once irresponsible and suicidal.21

In the context of the above para, Derrida is reminding us the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. It says it was the Enlightenment and the Godess of Reason that presided over the Reign of Terror. This insight according to W.J.T Mitchell is crucial to the understanding of deconstruction
as a rational operation, one that traces the fault lines in any system or structure. Finally Mitchell asks, is deconstruction itself a species of autoimmunity? The answer is that Derrida places deconstruction on the side of justice, of the undeconstructable demand, desire, and need for some notion of a justice to come.

5.4 Euro-centric/Indo-centric

Whether deconstruction is Euro-centric or Indo-centric is also a matter that needs discussion. There are Indian writers like Gurbhagat Singh etc., who finds parallels of deconstruction in the very many eastern philosophies such as Tao, Zen, Sunyavada, the philosophy of Nagarjuna etc. Before coming to that discussion I wish to focus my attention on the European context in which deconstruction has taken place.

According to Derrida to be means to inherit. This concept of inheritance in general, Derrida has been pointed out in his brief remarks devoted in Specters of Marx. It says that one is an heir even before one explicitly assumes or rejects a particular inheritance. According to Derrida “that we are heirs does not mean that we have or that we receive this or that, some inheritance that enriches us one day with this or that, but that the being of what we are is first of all inheritance, whether we like it or know it or not”. Derrida, further states that “inheritance is never a given, it is always a task”; it is something still before us, to which we have to bear witness as that which

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“we are insofar as we inherit”. This task is above all in being for Europeans by means of which they assume the memory of Europe. This does not gives any nostalgia or traditionalist fervor, for them. At the same time, being understood as a task, the affirmation of this inheritance becomes a call for a radical transformation of what has been handed down. The prime duty of the European therefore is to take responsibility for this heritage, that is the modern tradition of reflecting on European identity.

This European identity is always established in relation to alterity to the other, the non-European. Responsibility toward this heritage therefore also becomes the responsibility to the other. It consist in the double injunction of being faithful to “an idea of Europe, [to] a difference of Europe, but [to] a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in “its own identity” (O.H. p. 29). In other words, the responsibility Europeans bear for all of the traditional discourses on European identity, of which “old Europe seems to have exhausted all the possibilities” is thus a responsibility toward responsibility, indeed, toward the concept of responsibility itself (O H p 26). What is more specific in these lines is that for Derrida, the prime responsibility of the European is one toward the tradition of the discourses and counter-discourses concerning his own identification. This has been made more pointedly clear in ‘For What Tomorrow…… A Dialogue, in which Derrida remarks that “the concept of responsibility has no sense at all outside of an experience of inheritance”.
It is this perspective in the first two chapters of The Gift of Death that Derrida engages Jan Patocka’s views on the genealogy of European responsibility as it is presented in Heretical Essays In the Philosophy of History. Not only Patocka’s views, in The Gift of Death, also engages the views of Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas and Søren kierkegaard etc.,. The main tenets of the European responsibility can be stated as follows. It is the responsibility that require the invention of a new way in which to renew, revive, or replay the figure, concept or idea of Europe. European responsibility is first of all, this openness to both traditions of responsibility, namely Platonism and Christianity. Above all it is the responsibility of uncompromising willingness to assume the challenge posed by the aporetic nature of inheritance itself- that is, it shows its capacity to negotiate contradiction in the absence of handed down rules or norms. Apart from the historical and cultural intra-European cultural differences for which it is being hospitable, the name of Europe stands for the demand of unconditional receptiveness of the tradition of the non-European other. It means that Europe is the idea of an identity predicated on aporetic demands hence it becomes a mode of being that has a infinitely open structurality rather than a closure. The conclusion is that ‘Europe, neither a figure nor a concept, neither an idea nor even an idea in the Kantian sense – all of which presuppose a formal unity of what they represent or name – is something that can be realized only by way of approximation, something whose very
conception remains open, still, perhaps forever – unfinished, name, something to come.\textsuperscript{125}

Derrida’s reference to heritage does not imply that he would dismiss the notion of tradition. But in contrast to Gadamer, Derrida does not hold that tradition to be homogenous. Even though repeatedly he notes that “it is no longer possible to use seriously the words of tradition and that in the end all concepts of tradition have to be put aside”, he also “reaffirms the necessity of making recourse to them, at least, in a crossed-out fashion. Responsibility to the tradition and its deconstruction go hand in hand”.

Seen in this light Derrida may not agree to the Indo-centric reading. He is Euro-centric. Derrida remained resolutely and self-consciously Euro-centric in philosophy and politics, sovereignty pertains to the domicile.

However we shall consider a down-to-right pedestrian reading of deconstruction (Gurbhagat Singh). Many thinkers argue that deconstruction is much closer to the many so-called ethnophilosophies such as Tao, Zen, Sunyavada, the philosophy of Nagarjuna, varieties of Sufism and the like, but no one has established this is so. Gurbhagat Singh in his ‘Western Poetics and Eastern Thought’, says that the absolutist dynamics of the deconstruction are fashioned out of our acute dualism or Dvaita, as the Upanishadic text would say. When the Upanishad defines Brahman or the Totality of what is by technique of negation as \textit{Neti-Neti} or Not-Not, it is pointing up the danger
of what Derrida has called “the presence”. The Upanishadic text tells us of the identity of the self or Atma with the totality-of-what-is, in terms of nothing or not which means in the Derridean sense “the absence”. The relation that the Upanishad sets up is not with an absolute that is separated from the world or creation, but with the totality-of what is.\textsuperscript{26} Singh takes the Upanishadic Atma as close to being the Derridean signifier \textit{minus} the problematic of Derrida as it cannot liberates itself from it meaning-centered or transcendental semiology. He registers no comparison. Derrida’s play of the language differential is a-worldic and for that reason a-historical, a-environmental and alienistic, which would not be the case if we follow the Upanishadic ‘relation’ of the self with the Totality-of-What is.\textsuperscript{27}

Gurbhagat Singh also reads Nagarjuna, the second century A.D. Buddhist philosopher with that of Derrida. According to Nagarjuna, it is not possible to intuit or to attain in the faculty of prajna unless the absolute is understood as the unconditioned form of the conditioned world. In his famous work \textit{Vgrahvyavartani}, Nagarjuna, suggests a middle path according to which “there is not the slightest difference between \textit{samsara} and \textit{nirvana}. By doing this, in other sense, Nagarjuna was attacking the absolute concept that bypass the world, because it is not possible to absolutize rationally since everything is co-dependent. The co-dependence has also been called emptiness or Sunyata, we cannot equate this sunyata to Derridean differance. If sunyata is an expressional luminosity of balance realized by the seeker in
an experience of cosmic equilibrium, Derridean differance is theoretically non-expressive. Although both Buddhist and Derridean frameworks speak of text that is empty, the very idea of emptiness is different. In the former if the sense of emptiness is a balance a relativity experienced by the seeker or reader if we apply the theory to the enterprise of critical reading, the totality of the text would be constituted by a non-schizophrenia or dialogistic energy, whereas in the latter, the emptiness would come out the *differance*, the play of the signifier that has obliterated the signified and has become an intuition.

If we consider Derrida’s views on religious secularism, mysticism (mysterious tremendous) etc., it is clear that nothing warrants a comparison. But Robert Magliola, another scholar, also finds parallelism between Nagarjuna and Derrida. To him, Derrida is Nagarjuna in a modern western garb. Such a comparison, according to Harold Coward, is not compatible with the very essence of the idea of these philosophers because for Sankara and Nagarjuna, language must be cancelled for the real to be experienced, for Derrida the real is most directly experienced in the very centre of language (there is nothing outside of the text). This is no direct comparison.

Compared to the above, it is comforting to know that Coward also finds so many parallelisms and contrasts between Sankara and Derrida somewhat precisely on the following points. (1) The relation of language to the real (2) Sankara *versus* Derrida on the nature of the real and (3) The end
goal: language as a call for action versus a revelation of intuitive knowledge. There must be a direct comparison between the non-directly and the binary code but no one has taken it very seriously.

Coward’s study begins with the often quoted and much discussed Derridean phrase, ‘There is nothing outside the text’. This Derridean phrase as has been discussed by many, Coward says, does not indicate a denial of God on reality that led to a new form of nihilism, instead, it reflects the Derridean notion of the real which is presented in the very dynamic of language itself. Bhartrhari’s description of language as beginninglessly intertwined with all consciousness and identified with the real in the fore of the sabdatattva, Coward says can be found almost very near to this Derridean phrase. But at the time we come to Sankara this situation seems changed. Sankara disagrees with the grammarians identification of language with Brahman and in that sense the Derridean phrase ‘there is nothing outside of the text’ does not come under Sankar’s percept. For Sankara Brahman, the real, exists as separate from language in that when language is cancelled out (as in the final direct perception prompted by tat tvam as) Brahman alone remains. Language as part of maya is ultimately unreal. However, only by means of language as Veda, the Brahman, the real can be realized. For such a realization even the language of Sruthi, has to be cancelled out or transcended. This is because the essential characteristic of language is difference which is antithetical to identity or monism explained by Sankara’s
Advaita theory. The difference of all language is part of *maya* which conceals Brahman from our vision.

Now let us discuss the points Derridean departure from Sankara. If difference is part of *avidya* which has to be overcome in the case of Sankara, it is difference as manifested in the dynamic tension of language that is the real for Derrida, says Coward. Similar is that of Saussure, Derrida says, all language finds its source in *difference*. The movement of ‘*differance*’ is the arche-trace in which contains the possibility for all speech and writing. The real is the dynamic expressive difference of language. All thought, speech and writing exists at the moment of difference and makes possible the opposition between signifier and signified. The term *avidya* which in Sankara stands for the obstruction of the knowledge of the real, a functional parallel of which can be found in Derrida in the form of one of the opposite of language over other and thereby destroying the dynamic tension between the opposites. Thus according to Coward, it is the tension between the opposites which is for Derrida the hallmark of the real. Since these opposites are not maintained in dynamic tension, but placed in a hierarchical order of first priority, many of traditional philosophy has engaged in a privileging of identity over difference.  

This Derridean notion of *differance* can be considered as a critique of Sankara’s emphasis on identity. In the words of Coward, on closer analysis,
the two are seen to be engaged in a similar philosophical tactic. Just as Sankara would use the conceptual term ‘identity’ as simply a hint or pointer as to the nature of the real, so also Derrida admits that his use of ‘difference’ to indicate the nature of the real must be constantly deconstructed. Both Sankara and Derrida agree that the conceptual oppositions that make up language are the obstacles that get in our way of the experience of the real. Identifying oneself with either of the terms that make up these oppositions (e.g., ‘identity’ for Sankara, ‘difference’ for Derrida) is the trap of language that must be overcome.\textsuperscript{32} If Sankara’s philosophy speaks of transcending the language altogether, Derrida’s enquiry rests within the language taking a middle position between the pair of opposites. Hence, Coward says that both Sankara and Derrida have a practical goal in mind in their philosophy of language. This is the goal of spiritual self-realization.\textsuperscript{33}

The many parallels that Coward finds between Sankara and Derrida are far away from the term deconstruction as meant by Derrida. The practical goal of spiritual self realization as attributed by Coward in the case of Derrida may be due to the Derridean quest for the other. It is this quest of Derrida, makes Norris to define, Derrida as a transcendental philosopher for which the latter restricted his reply with a simile.

In Sankara’s method of realizing the self by means of negation, at the end of it, language itself is denounced to a formless, qualityless, timeless state.
in which the other in the form of supreme is found. Compared to this, the
Derridean notion of the ‘other’ is inextricably linked with the language and
the concept of difference. The existence of the ‘other’ between the tensions
of oppositons of language and beyond the limits of language in many
respects varies and the latter outweighs the former. Because as Wittgenstein
said, the limits of our language is the limit of our world, and the differance
and the play of words cannot go beyond the very realm that language restricts.
In that sense, the comparison of Derridean deconstruction with that of
Sankara’s philosophy is not quite compatible with. Hence it can be said that
ethnophilothes like Sunyavada, the philosophy of Nagarjuna, varieties of
Suifsm etc. show affinities with parts of deconstruction, in so far as they
transcendentalize extrasubjective authority, they are not quite “the same
thing” as deconstruction. But in so far as they locate agency in the radically
other (commonly called “fatalism”), the exorbitancy of the sphere of work in
the ethical as figured by Derrida has something like a relationship with
them.34

5.5 Research Findings and Scope for

1. The Proposed interface between analysis and deconstruction is deemed
to work at two levels.

(a) To bring Derrida with all the evidences one could muster to the fold
of the major as well as other analytical tradition.
(b) To defend the interpretation against narrow reading of Derrida as an analytical philosopher (cf. Norris) by suitably widening the tradition.

2. Such a widening was duly supported by theses (genetic affiliation and its consequent continuum hypothesis) from Føllesdal.

3. A major shake-up of this idea is from the recently held symposium ‘Arguing with Derrida’, which christens Derrida as doing what is characterized as conceptual philosophy. Derrida’s reply in this context is very enlightening and it offers a boost to the thesis.

4. It was found to be methodologically worthwhile to cut the whole thesis into a half-a-dozen major theses, which were liberally thrown into three motifs.

5. Although it cannot be claimed that the understanding of Quine and Davidson cultivated by Wheeler is exactly to the point, it is enlightening to know that the broad comparison has a general pay off.

6. This is not so in the case of Staten whose book opens up a new way of understanding Derrida’s encounter with Husserl.

7. Many deconstructive notions such as Pharmakon, differance, supplement etc., have been elaborately worked out taking such consideration to the ‘logic’ behind them – a unique logic which feeds into the aporia.
8. Motif 3 handles Norris but not as it is received, but a serious attempt is made to look at his interpretation from a critical point of view. Pace Kanthamani who has criticized Kantianism on very specific grounds, we have toned up in the light of other theses.

9. Incidentally it has become necessary to look at the Austin – Derrida debate within the answer of speech – act philosophy of language. It is agreed on all hands (Simon Glendinning, A.W Moore including Norris) that the debate convey something extremely important. That is, they talk past to one another. This means that they meet at certain points. What exactly the point at which they meet. A hint is thrown at the way normative/parasitical/deviant expressions pose a binary challenge for a deconstructionist.

It is found that deconstruction throws up this idea but it is not fully worked out.

10. All these six theses and three motifs are better seen in the backdrop of analytic philosophy from Frege up to Searle. A succinct account distinguishing the different modes of philosophical analysis have been presented in the original form so as to enable to draw subtle points of comparison.
5.6 Scope for Research

The above theses of interface is not complete with a fresh look into normative deviant expression which has come to the fore in recent discussions of Derrida especially by Norris. This is likely to yield a more full-blooded interface which has not so far seen the light of their day. It also bears comparison, some interesting line of discussion that is taking place within cognitive science.
Notes


3. Ibid. p. 224.

4. Ibid. p. 223.


8. Ibid. p. 235.


11. Ibid. p. 286.
18. Ibid. p. 280.
19. Ibid. p. 281.
20. Ibid. p. 283.
23. Ibid. p. 292-93.
24. Ibid. p. 293.
25. Ibid. p. 311.
27. Ibid. p. 49.


29. Ibid. p. 13.


31. Ibid. p. 15.

32. Ibid. p. 15.

33. Ibid. p. 16.