

## DERRIDA'S REFERENCES TO WITTGENSTEIN

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Wittgenstein and Derrida are generally recognized as providing the most radical challenges to traditional ways of doing philosophy. Often this recognition is implicit in the hostile reaction that each has received: both have been denounced for not doing philosophy. The radicality of their challenges to philosophy demands investigation and invites comparison of the two with each other. There have been two book-length studies<sup>1</sup> and ten articles<sup>2</sup> comparing Wittgenstein and Derrida. However, none of these studies discuss—or cite—any of the places where Derrida refers to Wittgenstein.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I hope to address this gap by compiling and organizing Derrida's references to Wittgenstein.

It could be contended that it is not necessary to consider Derrida's references to Wittgenstein when comparing the two. Derrida never examines any text of Wittgenstein as his writings on Husserl, Rousseau, Levi-Strauss, Mallarmé, Lacan, Freud, Condillac, Hegel, Bataille, Artaud, Plato, and Austin scrutinize the texts of those writers. If it can be said that Derrida has never "deconstructed" Wittgenstein, perhaps it can also be said that the various references to Wittgenstein in his writings do not rise to the level of a "response." Furthermore, Derrida has recently said in a transcribed and published conference discussion, "Of course, again, I have to confess that I am not familiar with Wittgenstein."<sup>4</sup> If Derrida is not familiar with Wittgenstein, then it is perhaps safe to ignore these references. But the only way to know would be to examine the references—which, as mentioned above, has not yet been done. These references have not been cited even for the sake of dismissing them.

I have found ten places in Derrida's writings where Wittgenstein is mentioned. A few of these might be considered insignificant; others, however, raise very interesting and important philosophical issues. One of these—the essay "Sending: On Representation"—has several pages devoted to Wittgenstein, enough to be considered a discussion. In this paper, I propose to examine these references.<sup>5</sup> Whatever their ultimate significance for a general comparison of the two philosophers, an exploration of these references will raise issues which are interesting and worthy of consideration in their own right.

Derrida's references to Wittgenstein tend to cluster around three themes. Let me stress the word "tend" here. Not every reference is an example of one of these themes, and many fall within more than one, since the themes are inter-related in Derrida's texts. So I try to use these themes to structure my discussion, but only very loosely. Furthermore, I am not claiming that this way of organizing these references is in any way definitive, nor am I even certain that it is optimal. I merely find them a useful way to explore Derrida's thought in opposition to Wittgenstein's and to air some important issues; others may wish to reconfigure the references in ways more to their liking. The three themes are: (1) the imperative to silence; (2) the relation between philosophical language and "ordinary" language; (3) the question of philosophical nationality.

#### 1. THE IMPERATIVE TO SILENCE

The distinction between saying and showing, what can be said and what can only be shown, which arises in the *Tractatus*, is invoked in "Dissemination":

Yet the impossibility is never simply stated, no more than it was ever simply *shown*. It is not declared merely as a *theorem*, even though on occasion, in the form of reinscribed logicomathematical statements (Hilbert, Frege, Wittgenstein, Bourbaki, etc.), the latent proposition is sometimes roused through the enormous condemned margins of our domestic library (Islamic, Mexican, and Indian mythologies, the Zohar, the Tao T'ö King; Empedocles, Nicolaus of Cusa, Bruno, Marx, Nietzsche, Lenin, Artaud, Mao Tse-tung, Bataille, etc.; and within another margin, more internal or less visible, effaced: Lucretius, Dante, Pascal, Leibniz, Hegel, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and others). The impossibility is practiced. (295-6)

The "impossibility" is the impossibility of the reader situating his or her self with respect to, particularly in placing oneself outside of, Sollers' *Numbers*. It is also the impossibility of the reader doing likewise for the "text in general" (290). Hence the long string of names in parenthesis in a sentence ostensibly about Sollers' book. "Dissemination" is one of the most enigmatic of Derrida's texts, so there can be no question of reconstituting the entire context of this quote. But the following points come readily to mind.

The saying/showing distinction is not explicitly linked to Wittgenstein, although the mention of Wittgenstein's name in the following sentence shows that Wittgenstein was on Derrida's mind. The impossibility which is being discussed here is "never simply stated, no more than it was simply shown." These "simplys" allow the possibility that the impossibility was stated (but not "simply") and/or shown (but not "simply"); they also leave open the possibility that the impossibility was not stated at all and/or shown at all. The saying/showing distinction bears a striking similarity to Husserl's expression/indication distinction, which played a major role in "Speech and Phenomena," and the "simplys" in this passage reinforce this convergence by suggesting that a similar or the same complicated relation is at work. Perhaps some or much of what Derrida says about (and shows and does with) this distinction in *Speech and Phenomena* could be imported into a discussion (or deconstruction) of the use—including the metaphilosophical use—Wittgenstein makes of the saying/showing distinction in the *Tractatus*. However, this possible task is not at issue in what follows in this quote from "Dissemination." Derrida is not here interested in the relations between saying and showing. Instead, he introduces a third term: practice.

Wittgenstein also makes an appearance in Derrida's essay on negative theology "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials." After discussing the difficulty of both delimiting the unity of negative theology and of attributing it to someone, he then says: "Before Dionysius, one may search for it within a certain Platonic or Neo-Platonic tradition; after him up to modernity in Wittgenstein and many others" (74). In itself, this reference is uninteresting, but there is more to come on Wittgenstein—one other explicit reference, and one possible allusion.

The possible allusion follows almost immediately after, in the use of the phrase "family resemblance" to describe what others may see

(first qualification), according to a "provisional hypothesis" (second qualification) of what is negative theology' in discourses of a certain kind, which include Derrida's. His reply to the charges are categorical: "No, what I write is not 'negative theology'" (77). In this latter quote the qualifying quotation marks signal that he is using the term in the manner that others use it, others who may be misapplying it or misunderstanding it. Wittgenstein's name isn't mentioned, and all of the qualifications surrounding the term "family resemblance," although they do not touch the use of the term itself, make me hesitate to call this an allusion or to draw any significant conclusions from it. But it has the appearance of a blunt, albeit implicit (since it is not explicitly set out), rebuff of the later Wittgenstein in the following manner: "My writings bear a family resemblance to negative theology—what others call negative theology—but they are not negative theology—what others call negative theology." I won't discuss this passage further, since I don't want to attribute any great significance to it, but I wished to note it for future consideration.

The next explicit reference to Wittgenstein in "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" comes near the end of Derrida's preliminary explanation of his claim that what he writes is not "negative theology." Again, as in "Dissemination," it is the early Wittgenstein that it is cited, and in this case quoted:

Alien, heterogeneous, in any case irreducible to the intuitive *telos*—to the experience of the ineffable and of the mute vision which seem to orient all of this apophatics, including the prayer and the enigma which prepare its way—the thinking of difference would thus have little affinity, for an analogous reason, with the current interpretation of certain well-known statements of the early Wittgenstein. I recall these words often quoted from the *Tractatus*, for example, "6.522—The inexpressible, indeed, exists [*Es gibt allerdings Uaus-sprechliches*]. It shows itself; it is the mystical." And "7.—Concerning that about which one cannot speak, one must remain silent." (81)

Derrida leaves much unclear in this passage. He says neither what the "analogous reason" is which justifies his claim that his thinking has "little affinity" with, and here there is another qualification, "the current interpretation of" the quoted passages from the *Tractatus*, nor explains the need to bring in an "analogous reason"—do the other reasons not apply? Nor does Derrida explain the need for his denial, since he cites no one who has suggested such an affinity, nor gives

any reason for thinking that those who claim that his views are a variant of negative theology have Wittgenstein in mind.

Derrida does make an important use of these quotations from the *Tractatus*. Immediately following the quotation, he begins a new paragraph in which he extracts the phrase "il faut" ("one must" or "it is necessary") from the last statement of the *Tractatus* in order to introduce one of the key theses of the essay:

The nature of this "one must" ("il faut") is significant here: it inscribes the injunction to silence into the order or the promise of a "one must speak," "one must—not avoid speaking"; or rather, "it is necessary" (*il faut*) that there be a trace. "No," it is necessary that there *have been* a trace, "a sentence that one must simultaneously turn toward a past *and* toward a future that are as yet unrepresentable." (81)

For my purposes, the crucial point is that it is the *il faut* and not Wittgenstein which does the inscribing of itself into the order of Derridean concepts. Although he devotes the next several pages to discussing the "il faut" and returns to it throughout the essay in order to establish connections between it and other important concepts of his, primarily the "trace" and the "secret," he never returns to Wittgenstein in this essay, or tries to show that he finds these connections in the *Tractatus*.

A more positive reference to Wittgenstein's mysticism occurs in "The Force of Law—the Mystical Foundations of Authority":

Discourse here meets its limit—in itself, in its very performative power. It is what I propose to call here the *mystical*. There is here a silence walled up in the violent structure of the founding act; walled up, walled in because this silence is not exterior to language. Here is the sense in which I would be tempted to interpret, beyond simple commentary, what Montaigne and Pascal call the *mystical foundation of authority*. One will always be able to return upon—or turn against—what I am doing or saying here, the very thing that I am saying is done or occurs [*cela mème que je dis qui se fait*] at the origin of every institution. I would therefore take the use of the word *mystical* in a sense that I would venture to call Wittgensteinian. (242)

Derrida is expounding his own views on institutions here, so even with the qualification "roughly," this would seem to be an approving reference to the *Tractatus*. But since Derrida doesn't say which aspect of Tractarian mysticism he means here, and he doesn't explain the qualifier "roughly," the meaning of the reference must await further

explication. Nor should we necessarily take it for granted—as I have just now—that the reference is only to the Tractatus, although that might be a reasonable supposition given the references to the Tractatus which have already been noted. It could be that Derrida interprets the *Philosophical Investigations* as a mystical work (some have), even though he gives no indication of it. There are indications, though, that the difference between the early and later Wittgenstein is not of significance to Derrida, especially with regard to this question of “imperative to silence.” This is why I have stated the theme at such a level of abstraction that it can apply to both the early and later Wittgenstein: the imperative includes the “one must be silent” of the Tractatus as well as the dissolution of philosophy in the later writings.

One of these indications occurs in the essay “Sending: On Representation,” where Derrida is discussing a kind of objection (to his work or/and to philosophy) which he calls “Wittgensteinian”—one which wishes to correct the “bad effects of philosophy” (111)—and within a parenthetical remark says that “if we wish to develop it during the colloquium let us not forget that it was accompanied for Wittgenstein at a given stage of his career, by a theory of representation in language, a picture theory which should be significant to us here, at least as regards what is ‘problematic’ about it” (111–112).

This parenthetical remark suggests that the later Wittgenstein’s objections to philosophy are continuous with his earlier objections to philosophy, and more importantly are somehow tied into and constrained by his earlier thought—else there would be no need for this reminder. Specifically, they would be tied into the picture theory of representation, which would be quite surprising since this is what the later Wittgenstein is thought to have given up. This point must remain somewhat tentative, since it is not explicitly set out. What’s important for my present purpose is much more certain: in this passage, Derrida states the “Wittgensteinian” objection to philosophy in such a way that he takes it to arise in the early work as well as the later, and specifically says so by saying that it was accompanied by the picture theory.

Thus we can read the final passage which I will discuss under this heading, which does not differentiate between later and earlier Wittgenstein, as applying to both. Furthermore, it can be taken to be referring to the “Wittgensteinian objection”—that is the correction of

philosophy by silencing philosophy, but also to what it seems to refer to most directly—Wittgenstein’s style, the lack of discursiveness as an “effacing of work.” The two would be related in Derrida’s view.

The reference comes in section 12 of “Circumfession.” It arises during a harshly critical reference to Proust and after some comments on the syllable “pri”:

and then I remember having gone to bed very late after a moment of anger or irony against a sentence of Proust’s, praised in a book in this collection “Les Contemporains,” which says: “A work in which there are theories is like an object on which one has left a price tag,” and I find nothing more vulgar than this Franco-Britannic decorum, European in truth, I associate it with Joyce, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and a few others, the salon literature of that republic of letters, the grimace of a good taste naive enough to believe that one can efface the labor of theory, as if there wasn’t any in Pr., and mediocre theory at that, to believe that one must and above all that one can efface the price to be paid, the symptom if not the avowal, I always ask what the theory is a symptom of and I admit that I write with the price on, I display, not so that the price be legible to the first-come, for I am for an aristocracy without distinction, therefore without vulgarly, for a democracy of the compulsion to the highest price, you have to [if *faul*] pay the price to read the price displayed, one writes only at the moment of giving the contemporary the slip, with a word, the word for word, you’ll see, giving the slip to all those I’ve just named, i.e., to the sociological program and so many others, that’s the condition for it to take (*pour que ca prenne*), untranslatable locution. (62–64)

This seems to me an extraordinary passage for many reasons, and it deserves extended analysis. I had my own moment of “anger or irony” in reading this passage, particularly in reading the statement “you have to pay the price to read the price displayed.” I will discuss it at length because it seems to get at some of the deepest questions of the philosophical method and politics—which is to say, some of the deepest questions there are—and links them together in a notable way. These questions are intrinsic to the conflict between Derrida and Wittgenstein, so an analysis of this passage is not a digression (even if I can’t provide a definitive reading, and don’t come to any definitive conclusions). I will divide my comments into seven sections:

a. *the list* (Joyce, Heidegger, Wittgenstein): This is a very curious list. There can be no question that Wittgenstein belongs on this list,

since his works can be thought of as attempting to efface the "labor of theory": both in terms of how he wrote, and the aim of his work. Derrida doesn't say which (if either) of these he has in mind, but we can infer definitely the latter from the "*il faut*" of the *Tractatus* discussed above and the discussion in "Sending" discussed below. This doesn't exclude the former, and it is tempting to suppose that the Wittgenstein's method of writing, so different from Derrida's, also contributes to the hostility which Derrida vents here.

However, I don't understand why Derrida would associate Heidegger with the line from Proust. Heidegger's works contain scads of theories, and the labor of theory is as explicit as possible in Heidegger. One of the points of "the path of thought" idea, with its "Wegmarken" and "Holzwege," is that it allows him to publish any train of thought he pursues, without too much concern about how it fits into the others, or where it ends up. (Presumably Joyce is included because of his claim that the author should be outside the work like God, "paring his fingernails.")

Bracketing this question about Heidegger, Wittgenstein is something of an anomaly in this company as far as Derrida's writings are concerned, since Derrida marked his distance from both Heidegger and Joyce in his earliest important work, one written to meet a conventional academic requirement, the *Introduction to Husserl's "Origin of Geometry."* Wittgenstein is not mentioned in this work, and more than a decade would pass before the reference in "Dissemination."

b. *the psychoanalytic element*: The psychoanalytic approach is a subject of this passage, specifically with the words "symptom" and "compulsion." Derrida equates "theory" with "symptom," quite a general and important aspect of Derrida's work. But Derrida's venting of hostility calls for psychoanalytic treatment, as it is itself symptomatic. Derrida is aware of this, and I think is offering his own analysis when he speaks of his jealousy of (I think) these figures, at the very beginning of the next section (13), where he picks up on the "condition for it to take" which "takes" on "the stage" mentioned at the end of section 12. This auto-analysis only invites the further question: What is it a symptom of? What alternative analysis is Derrida trying to ward off by presenting his own?

c. *writing*: Derrida is here defending his writings against what he takes as a challenge from Proust, also Wittgenstein, Joyce and Heidegger. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, this is an extremely im-

portant subject for someone who writes as much as Derrida. On the one hand, he criticizes them for their snobbery and marks a gulf between their writings (as he perceives them) and his—he admits (or confesses (*je l'avoue*)) that he writes with the price on. This would seem to be a sharp split. They think they are taking the price tag off but really leave it on; Derrida writes with it on. The difference would be that Derrida tries to leave the price on for those willing to pay the price, but the others try to remove the price for all. But then he says that—one might think that this is the true confession—that he writes "not so the price is legible to the first-come," which suggests that there is a kind of snobbery behind his method of writing, which would mark an affinity with the other writers, and leave in doubt the significance of the aforesaid gulf. Furthermore, if the price is not legible to the first-come, then it is *effaced and deliberately effaced*—partially, if not completely. So it becomes less and less clear how Derrida's work differs from the others, at least under the terms he uses here. It would seem to be that Derrida does with some sort of awareness what they do naively. This is definitely a significant difference; one might even call it—in line with much else in Derrida's work—the philosophical difference, but is this enough of a difference to put his own writings outside of the category "salon literature of that republic of letters"?

d. *manner of writing linked to politics*: Derrida makes two general claims about writing here. First, that he writes with the price affixed, but not so that it is legible to the "first-come"—that is, those unable or unwilling to pay the price. This is not the first place that Derrida links his writing strategies to politics; in interviews he had spoken of his writing in terms of transformation and resistance.<sup>6</sup> But it is the only place I know of where he discusses his writing strategies in terms of social hierarchy. The second general comment is that "one writes only at the moment of giving the contemporary the slip." This comment harks back to the title of the series in which the book from which he had read the sentence quoted from Proust was published, "*Les contemporains*." One wonders about the relation of this claim to the socio-political issues in consideration here. This seems to be a claim of distinction, and one wonders how it fits in with that "aristocracy without distinction" Derrida is for.

e. *politics*: Derrida's accusation of snobbery ("salon literature," "good taste") is couched in terms of a reversal or superceding, since

he finds it vulgar. The accusation of vulgarity suggests that Derrida has a good taste which is better than the good taste of those elitists, Joyce, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, or perhaps more properly the readers and followers of these writers, since they would be those in the "salon" discussing them. His moment of "anger or irony" would then be the grimace of this "good taste." The question of whether Derrida's accusation is a strategy of reversal or of superceding is important. The allegation of snobism ordinarily brings with it suggestions of egalitarianism, and here those suggestions are brought in later with the terms "democracy" and "without distinction." On the other hand, if it is a superceding, then Derrida is expressing an elitism which goes beyond the others' elitism, a good taste which is higher than the other. There need be no suggestion of egalitarianism in this latter case (although there still might be). Perhaps this is a variation on some supposedly inevitable claim or feeling of superiority which comes with expression of egalitarianism.

The politics of this section is expressed in the two remarkable phrases "aristocracy without distinction" and "democracy of the compulsion to the highest price." Initially, these phrases seem to be absolutely naive (in a passage in which Derrida accuses others of naivety), and even silly and absurd.<sup>7</sup> "Aristocracy without distinction" and "democracy of the compulsion to the highest price" would be claims to all of the good without the bad things which are intimately associated with it, like campaign promises to both spend more and also cut taxes. Perhaps the point is—attempting to avoid the silliness—precisely this absurdity. An "aristocracy" without distinction would be a society in which everyone is "the best," an outright contradiction.<sup>8</sup> The word "aristocracy" requires distinguishing "the best," but such differentiation is denied by the qualifying phrase "without distinction."

Perhaps through this conceptual impossibility, Derrida is attempting to push "the best" to the limits of its meaning, since in a society in which everyone is "the best," the word "best" would have no contrast. Perhaps at the limit, the meaning of the word "best" trembles.<sup>9</sup> I say "perhaps" because I am relying on an admittedly tendentious interpretation of a passage in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in which he discusses Levi-Strauss' concept of the *bricoleur*. There he argues that Levi-Strauss'

concept of an engineer is a theological or mythic concept, and thus that the concept of the *bricoleur* has no contrast:

As soon as we cease to believe in such an engineer and in a discourse which breaks with the received historical discourse, and as soon as we admit that every finite discourse is bound by a certain *bricolage* and that the engineer and the scientist are also species of *bricoleurs*, then the very idea of *bricolage* is menaced and the difference in which it took on its meaning breaks down. (285)

The key word here is "menaced"; when the word lacks a contrast, it's meaning trembles at the limit. Here the absurd, one Kierkegaardian concept, meets up with another, "trembling."<sup>10</sup>

It might be thought that I am devoting too much energy to giving philosophical significance to these phrases. It might be said that Derrida is merely stating his desire, what he is for, not using these concepts in political theory. This is true. But he is using these phrases to attempt to justify or explain why he writes the way he does: he hides the price from the first-comer.<sup>11</sup>

I. "il faut": Here we have an "il faut," one which no doubt deserves as much scrutiny as the one Derrida examines in "How to Avoid Speaking." Derrida says that one must "pay the price to read the price." As I understand this, the slight shift from price as "theory" (in Proust's line) to price as "labor of theory" (what Derrida castigates Joyce, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein for believing can be and ought to be effaced) comes into play. One has to pay the price—do the labor of theory—to read the price—see the theory (or labor of theory).

One might take this to be an entirely descriptive statement, describing a situation which (in some way or other) applies to the reading of any difficult philosopher. One always must decide to read before one can know whether it will be worthwhile, that is, whether the value gained from reading is worth the effort. (One should read this in line with what Derrida has to say about "belief.") This situation is intensified in the case of a philosopher, like Derrida, and one should add, like Wittgenstein, whose theory has implications for the use of language, and who uses language in line with—or claims to express his theories in line with—the implications of the theory. If the difficulties follow from the theory then they can be seen as matters of philosophical consistency, what might be called "performative consistency," and in Derrida's case, this "performative consistency"

would be combined with an entirely laudable refusal to abbreviate or simplify in order to gratify those with abbreviated or desiccated attention spans.

However, I also find something more disturbing in this imperative. It sounds too much like the numbed statement of one reconciled with, and entirely the agent of, the demands of an institution or of the socio-economic system. Such a statement is often couched in the terms of hard "realism"—one has to work, one gets nothing for free, etc., and often is entirely true, which doesn't make it less objectionable. What is disturbing here is the logic of triumphalism, insuring that an explanation is always readily available for any failure whatsoever, that failure is always the fault of the one who fails, who doesn't understand, who—it can now be supposed according to Derrida's formulation—hasn't paid a sufficient price.<sup>12</sup>

I don't think that I am merely reading this into Derrida's expression, since it follows immediately after his advocacy of a "democracy of the compulsion to the highest price." So the question of paying the price is a question of more or less,<sup>13</sup> and Derrida is for requiring that one pay the highest price, and writes to produce this effect. There seems to be no concern here that the price paid is repaid, that the other has engaged in a worthwhile endeavor, worth the time and effort invested.<sup>14</sup> It seems to me that there is always a commitment or representation to this effect when one publishes a text (one which the author may not believe, although I don't doubt Derrida's sincerity on this point), but requiring the other to pay the highest price betrays the sort of smug self-assurance (e.g., in one's calculations) which I understand to be the target of all of Derrida's writings.

g. *the erasure*: Derrida then says that "one writes" only at the moment of giving the contemporary the slip, specifically all those he's "just named, i.e., to the sociological program and so many others." It's not clear why "the sociological program" seems here to be included among those named,<sup>15</sup> but it is clear that he wants to give it the slip. But of course the entire passage under consideration here, beginning with Proust's statement, appears to fall within the "sociological program," since it arises from an attribution of a certain snobbery. I see this as a way of putting "under erasure" what has come before, the statement of a hesitation, but like all such erasures, it is also a clinging to and retention of what is "effaced."

I haven't said anything about Wittgenstein here, not even about his personal wealth, which of course is an important issue in any attribution of snobbery, and is also relevant in considering his manner of composition. But as with everything in this paper, the discussion of this reference is merely preliminary to a comparison of Derrida and Wittgenstein.

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Since the *Tractatus* will not be discussed in the next two sections, one comment about it might be worthwhile before concluding this section. Derrida's references to the *Tractatus*, especially in "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," but also in "Force of Law," invite a comparison with those of the *Tractatus*. Most commentators associate Derrida with the later Wittgenstein—and rightly so. Certainly the theories put forward in the *Tractatus*—such as the authority of formal logic and the picture theory of linguistic representation—are of the sort that Derrida deconstructs.<sup>16</sup> But metaphilosophically, Derrida's views are closer to the *Tractatus* than to the *Investigations*. The failures of philosophy are not simply failures but gaps which mark the limits of what can be said. Once Derrida reaches these limits, his texts then point toward that which is beyond philosophy: they "designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed" (*Of Grammatology*, 14). This use of philosophical discourse recalls the ladder of the *Tractatus*, with the obvious difference: Derrida never simply kicks the ladder away; rather he both kicks it away—by distancing himself from his terms in various ways, such as putting them "under erasure" or using them hypothetically—and holds onto it. There is no question for Derrida of ever ceasing to produce philosophical discourse.

It might be fruitful to think of this question of silence in Derrida and Wittgenstein in terms of Kierkegaard, who was an important influence on the early Wittgenstein as well as on Derrida. One wonders if Derrida would consider Wittgenstein's imperative to silence as he does if it were connected to Kierkegaard's imperative to silence discussed in Problems 2 and 3 of *Fear and Trembling*. Of course, it would be necessary to consider here other discussions of Derrida concerning silence.<sup>17</sup> But here I can only note that Derrida's holding onto his terms even as he puts them under erasure, rather

than claiming to kick the ladder away, parallels a Kierkegaardian point: that "to write a book and to revoke it is not the same as refraining from writing it. . . ." (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 621).

## II. RELATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL LANGUAGE TO ORDINARY LANGUAGE

In "Sending: On Representation," Derrida's dispute with Heidegger is the main event. The heart of the text is Derrida's recounting of Heidegger's view of modernity as the age of representation—the age in which relations to beings take the form of representation. Although people had these sorts of relations in the past, the current epoch, or sending of Being, is dominated by representation as a relation and as a conception. He then explains why he takes Heidegger's views on representation as the most important: (1) Heidegger is the only one to treat the various aspects of representation, such as image and delegation, together. (2) Heidegger works through language, especially the historicity of philosophical language, without "predetermining" language as representation. (3) Through the historicity of philosophical language, Heidegger raises the issue of philosophical nationality.<sup>18</sup> Derrida concludes by raising problems for Heidegger's views, and sketches his own views and how they go beyond Heidegger's, especially beyond toward the "unrepresentable" (135).

Even though Wittgenstein is not the main event in this essay, he does occupy an important place. Wittgenstein is explicitly referred to twice, and this is the only text of Derrida's where the references rise to the level of what could be called a discussion. In addition there are two possible allusions to Wittgenstein, one of which I take to be more definite than the other.

The first mention of Wittgenstein occurs before the explication, the third part of the introduction. The first and briefest part of the introduction is a quote from Bergson on the word "representation." Then Derrida proposes that one imagine the following situation: French is a dead language, and on a text "we would read" the following idiomatic sentence: (*On dirait alors que nous sommes en représentation*) "One might say that we represent something" (107). Since this lecture was presented to a conference of French speaking philosophers, the situation imagined—that French is a dead language—is a

vertiginous one. From his discussion of this situation, Derrida draws attention to an aspect of language in general: that "a context is never able to be saturated for the determination and *identification* of a sense" (110).

At this point, Derrida says that given this situation, an attempt at understanding what is meant by representation could follow one of two paths: either compile a lexicon in the "common language," or try to speak of representations—the thing or things, not the word. Doing the latter follows from:

presupposing an implicit and practical knowledge on this subject, basing ourselves on a living contract or consensus, believing that in the end all subjects competent in the *franca lingua* understand each other about this word, that the variations are only contextual and that no essential obscurity will obfuscate discourse about representation. . . . (111)

We would presuppose that there could be no irremediable misunderstanding as to the content and the destination of the message or the sending named "representation." In a "natural" situation (as we also say a natural language) one could always correct the indeterminacy or the misunderstanding; and it is at bottom by philosophy that one would correct philosophy, I mean the bad effects of philosophy. (111)

The "bad effects" of philosophy follow from abstracting a word "from every context and every use value, as if a word were to regulate itself on a concept independently of every contextualized function, and in the limit independently of any sentence" (111).

The last phrase—"independently of any sentence"—connects to another, later, reference to Wittgenstein. In *Memoires—for Paul de Man*, Derrida refers to a claim by Austin:

Austin says, in no uncertain terms that words do *not* have a meaning, and that it is absurd to look in a dictionary for something like the *given* meaning of a word. Only sentences have a meaning, and the dictionary can only help by informing us about the sentences wherein conventions authorize the usage of these words. This is practically what Wittgenstein says in the first words of the *Blue Book*. (112)<sup>19</sup>

Derrida then "problematizes" this claim by noting that, if true, a title would have no meaning because it is not a sentence, making it a dangerous parasite (115). Current conventions cannot completely

govern the quasi-meaning of the word (and title), "because everything depends upon contexts which are open, non-saturable, because a single word (for example, a word in a title) begins to bear the meaning of all the potential phrases in which it is to be inscribed (. . .), and because inversely, no phrase has an absolutely determinable 'meaning': it is always in the situation of the word or title in relation to the text which borders it and which carries it away, in relation to the always open context which always promises it more meaning" (115-116). One can note the similarity of these claims with those which Derrida advances in the introduction to "Sending."

Returning now to "Sending," Derrida then says of this objection to de-contextualizing:

You will recognize in this type of objection (let us call it roughly "Wittgensteinian," and if we wish to develop it during the colloquium let us not forget that it was accompanied for Wittgenstein, at a given stage of his career, by a theory of representation in language, a picture theory which should be significant to us here, at least a regards what is "problematic" about it). In this situation, philosophical common usage always tries to stop the philosophic vertigo which catches it up by its language, and to do that by a movement of which I was saying just a moment ago that it was philosophical (philosophy against philosophy) but which is also prephilosophical, because in it one behaves as if one knew what "representation" meant and as if one had only to adjust this knowledge to a present historical situation, to distribute the articles, the types or the problems of representation in different regions but belonging to the same space. (111-12)

This passage, although stated in an impersonal mode, provides the materials for three objections to the "Wittgensteinian" objection. First, as I noted in the previous section of this paper, Derrida notes that this objection accompanied Wittgenstein's "picture theory" of language, setting up a continuity between the earlier and later philosophy. The objection would be that the later attempts to dissolve philosophical problems is somehow still bound to, or tainted by, the early theory. Second, Derrida avoids considering the objection as "anti-philosophical."<sup>20</sup> That is, he does not differentiate between the therapeutic as anti-philosophical over against the theoretical or foundational as philosophical, as is usual in discussions of Wittgenstein. He makes the point that it is philosophy which corrects the bad effects of philosophy.<sup>21</sup> This philosophical aspect of the objection would seem to be the presupposition which he attributes to the

"Wittgensteinian objection": that the implicit understanding that all indeterminacies, obscurities and misunderstandings can be corrected.<sup>22</sup>

It must be noted that Derrida imputes these presuppositions to Wittgenstein,<sup>23</sup> they are not found through a "reading" of the sort typical of Derrida's writings. Some of these alleged presuppositions have more immediate plausibility than others. That Wittgenstein is discussing "implicit or practical knowledge" is hardly contestable, but I can't recall any place where he says that language use is based "on a living contract or consensus." Even with regard to "implicit or practical knowledge," a lot depends on the way this is interpreted in Wittgenstein's writings. Many writers try to turn the later Wittgenstein into a foundational theorist by treating this theme as a traditional philosophical foundation. (Generally, these writers interpret Wittgenstein in this way because they believe that this makes his views better, better than if his views were anti-philosophical and/or better than the views of other foundational theorists. If Derrida were to make such a move, it would be because he sees Wittgenstein's views as worse—worse than his own.) This move effaces the originality of Wittgenstein's meta-philosophical views. Without more detail in Derrida's treatment, it is not clear whether his imputation converges with these interpretations.

The third objection would hinge on the two key phrases "the philosophic vertigo" which these objectors wish to stop, and the "essential obscurity" which these objectors believe does not or will not exist. These phrases, marking key themes in deconstruction, provide the materials for an external objection to Wittgenstein, one of the form, "he doesn't realize what I've figured out." Derrida would be saying that Wittgenstein hasn't realized that not every philosophical obscurity is a confusion, that there are essential obscurities which govern the rest of the discourse, mark limits to it, and point beyond philosophical discourse in a vertiginous manner.

Wittgenstein doesn't reappear in "Sending" until after Derrida turns to his explication of Heidegger's views on representation. He is alluded to, but not mentioned, in Derrida's "third justification" for the focus on Heidegger. There Derrida discusses the xenophobic contribution of one Lachelier to the meeting of the Society for French Philosophy in 1901, eighty years prior to Derrida's presentation of this paper in 1982 to "a congress of French-speaking philosophical

societies"—as it is described in the translator's note (137). Because the main point of Lachelier's contribution is to purge French philosophy of Germanicisms, this passage will be discussed in the next section on philosophical nationality. But for the present purposes, it is important that Derrida provides a general formula for the relation of philosophical and natural language: "the violent contamination, the graft that takes badly and which in truth ought to be rejected, of philosophical language on to the body of ordinary and natural language" (127). This formula describes this relationship from the perspective of Lachelier, although it is stated in a way that it is suited to the "Wittgensteinian objection" as well. The allusion to Wittgenstein is even more direct a bit further: "And one can see Lachelier dreaming of a *therapeutics of language* . . ." (127; my emphasis). Aside from the allusion to Wittgenstein, it is important to note that this condemnation in terms of "violent contamination" is not Derrida's; this is clear from his treatment of philosophical views of "contamination" elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Derrida gives another formula for the relation of philosophy to ordinary language (or rather to "so-called ordinary language") in an interview, with written replies, in 1988:

Philosophy finds its element in so-called natural language. It has never been able to formalize itself integrally in an artificial language despite several fascinating attempts to do so in the history of philosophy.<sup>25</sup> It is also true that this formalization (according to artificial codes constituted in the course of a history) is always up to a certain point, at work. This means that philosophical language or languages are more or less well-defined subsets within natural languages or rather the uses of natural languages. (*Points*, 225)

(Wittgenstein is lurking in the background here, and is mentioned twice further down in Derrida's answer as an example in a discussion of the question of philosophical nationality.) The key move made here is the statement that formalization is at work within ordinary language. The shift from the analysis stated in terms of Lachelier's views is a shift from the claim that the graft comes from the outside to the claim that it somehow arises from within. Derrida's analysis of the complicated inside/outside relation, at the heart of so much of his work, is also at work here.

There are other passages in Derrida's writings on the relation of philosophical language and ordinary language. One which is not general, and where Wittgenstein is not at issue, is in the opening of

"Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," where Derrida says with regard to the concept of structure and the word "structure": "their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the *epistème* plunges in order to gather them up to make them part of itself in a metaphorical displacement" (278). Another, which is more general, is to be found in Derrida's response to Stephen Mulhall's paper at the *Ratio* conference. In a discussion of Austin he says: "For me *there is only ordinary language*—philosophy too is 'ordinary language.' But since there is no opposed term here, since 'there is only ordinary language,' this concept is empty. The reference is to something which is simply an open space for transformation. Thus it is on the question of the delimitation of 'ordinary language' that the issue of 'metaphysics' and 'metaphysical origins' arises" (416). The distinction between formal and natural language is also discussed at the beginning of "The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics":

How to determine this language of philosophy? Is it a "natural language," or a family of natural languages (Greek, Latin, Germanic, Indo-European, etc.)? Is it rather a formal code elaborated on the basis of these natural languages? These questions have an old history, doubtless going back to the origin of philosophy itself. But they cannot be re-elaborated without displacing the pairs of concepts which constitute philosophy. These pairs, for example natural language/formal language, language/speech, etc. having been produced by philosophical discourse, belong to the field which they are to dominate; which without stripping them of all authority, makes them incapable of mastering the relation of philosophical "discourse" to its constraints. (*Margins of Philosophy*, 177)

Here, I only wish to make three quick points about these passages. First, in "Sending," it is not clear why Derrida doesn't use the word "supplement" to describe the relation between philosophy and ordinary language, since this would seem to fit here. In any event, this deserves investigation. Second, the shift from the side of philosophy in the "Structure, Sign and Play" passage to the side of ordinary language in the latter interview may be significant. Third, the reference to metaphor in "Structure, Sign and Play" is of crucial importance, and any further consideration of this point would have to consider Derrida's claims about the relation of philosophy and metaphor, especially in "White Mythology" and *Speech and Phenomena*.

After concluding the "third justification of his recourse to Heidegger ('in sending')," Derrida then raises two questions. In the second, he refers to a possible objection (to his views, it would appear), one that involves Wittgenstein. He never spells out the relation between this objection and the previously noted "Wittgensteinian objection," although they seem—at least in Derrida's discussion—quite similar. The whole passage deserves careful reading, but for reasons of brevity, I will quote two parts most pertinent to the present discussion:

One might object, and I take this objection seriously, that in ordinary situations of ordinary language (*if there are such things*, as we ordinarily think) the question of knowing what we envision under the name of representation is very unlikely to arise, and if it arises it does not last a second. It is adequate in this way to a context which is not saturated but reasonably well determined, as it precisely is in what we call ordinary experience. (128; emphasis added<sup>26</sup>)

Given that words always function in an (assumed) context destined to assure in the normal way the normality of their functioning, to ask what they can mean before and outside every such determined context is to study (it might be said) a pathology or a linguistic dysfunction. Philosophical questioning about the name and the essence of "representation" before and outside of every particular context would be the very paradigm of this dysfunction. It would necessarily lead to insoluble problems or to pointless language games, or rather to language games which the philosopher would take seriously without perceiving what, in the functioning of language, makes the game possible.<sup>27</sup> (129)

Derrida then states that "this type of problematic" can lead to "the most diverse developments," naming Wittgenstein, Peirce as well as "the most diverse champions of analytic philosophy and speech act theory" as among "its more or less Anglo-Saxon representatives" (129). It is worth noting that Wittgenstein is given no privilege here, not even the privilege of having the objection referred to with his name.

The crucial point is that this objection, although it covers much of the same terrain and seems so similar to the previous objection, is used to introduce an objection that Derrida levels against Heidegger. Here Derrida says what he takes to be the positive aspect of this objection: it challenges the presumed unity of a semantic center of philosophical usage:

is there not in all this a decentering in relation to the *Auseinandersetzung*, which we too readily consider a point of absolute convergence? And in this decentering, even if we do not necessarily follow it along the Anglo-Saxon tracks I have referred to, even if we suspect them of being still too philosophizing in the hegemonic sense of the term, and if in truth they had their first defenders in Central Europe, will there perhaps be found the incitement to a problematic of a different style? It would not be a question simply of submitting so-called philosophical language to ordinary law and making it answer before this last contextual court of appeal, but of asking whether, in the very interior of what offers itself as the philosophical or merely theoretical usage of the word representation, the unity of some semantic center, which would give order to a whole multiplicity of modifications and derivations, is to be presumed. (129)

This de-centering would seem to arise from the introduction of context. Could one also connect this de-centering to the private language argument? When Thomas Baldwin did so in 2000, in a paper presented in Derrida's presence at the *Ratio* conference, Derrida replied in this way:

But as to what you call the similarities between Wittgenstein's private language argument and what I say about absence, I will simply say this (without objecting to Wittgenstein but trying to justify my own non-reference to the private/public distinction). This distinction, taken literally, has an enormous history, an enormous political history, cultural history, and I wouldn't use it lightly. I would certainly say that *différance*, is, let's say, a limit to interiorisation, to intimacy, to the inside—so that when you take into account the necessity of *différance* you have no pure interiority, no pure inside. However, I wouldn't call this inside "private" for the reasons I gave a moment ago, and I wouldn't call the outside "public" either. Nevertheless, perhaps what I am saying is in agreement with the spirit of Wittgenstein's analysis. Wherever *différance* is at work—and that is *everywhere*—every re-appropriation "inside" encounters a limit. So there is no pure "inside" everywhere there is *différance*. That, by the way, is why one cannot simply speak of "human language" either, but only of marks or traces which hold also for animals. Still a trace is immediately *not* "private." In the structure of the trace you have something that perhaps Wittgenstein would call "public," but that I would simply call "beyond my absolute re-appropriation": it is left outside, it is heterogeneous and it is outside. In short, then, perhaps there is here a possible link with Wittgenstein, but it will have to be reconstructed around the history of these notions of "private" and "public," and I am too concerned with and interested in politics and history to use them so easily. (403–4)

This comment provides some suggestions for a direction to take in such a comparison, but, given all of the "perhaps"s, we are left with only suggestions.

Returning to the passage from "Sending," along with the positive repetition of this objection, Derrida makes clear that he does not agree with the way analytic philosophers—and Wittgenstein—have followed this de-centering. It's not clear what he means by the objection that they are "too philosophizing in the hegemonic sense of the term." But if we connect this with his earlier discussion of the "Wittgensteinian objection," it would seem to mean that it presumes that there could be no "essential" misunderstandings or obscurities. Thus, this hegemony is the same one which he picturesquely describes a bit later in this passage as "submitting so-called philosophical language to ordinary law and making it answer before this last contextual court of appeal." It is the hegemony exerted over philosophical language, or rather "so-called philosophical language," presumably only "so-called" because that which is supposedly outside of philosophy, "ordinary law" and the "contextual court of appeal" would be philosophical as well.

Derrida then uses this idea of semantic de-centering to criticize Heidegger. I won't explore this criticism here, but it is worth noticing that following this, Derrida turns to the question of representation in Freud, especially with regard to the attempt by Laplanche and Pontalis to systematize Freud's writings. Here is one part of Derrida's discussion:

At all events, when Laplanche and Pontalis say about the word *Vorstellung* that "its meaning [*l'acception*] is not modified by Freud at the beginning but the use he makes of it is original," this distinction between meaning and use is precisely where the problem lies. Can we distinguish between the semantic content (ultimately stable, continuous, self-identical) and the diversity of uses, functions, and contextual surrounds while assuming that these latter cannot displace, indeed totally deconstruct the identity of the former? (134)

With Wittgenstein in mind, it's hard to ignore this passage, where Derrida pinpoints the problem in Laplanche and Pontalis' text as their reliance on the distinction between meaning and use. My point is not that Derrida is making the same point as Wittgenstein does in the "Blue Book" and *Investigations*, when Wittgenstein proposes that we think in terms of use when we think of meaning. Derrida speaks

of deconstructing the distinction, and "deconstructing" is a particular form of questioning (hence the comment is made in the form of a question), one which involves a kind of complication. This complication does not involve a sweeping away or dissolution of the problematic, as Wittgenstein's approach does. Nevertheless, it is interesting that there is a convergence of some sort here. Derrida pinpoints this problem in exactly the place that one would who had in mind one of Wittgenstein's most famous ideas. I think that one could call this a reference, intentional or unintentional, of Wittgenstein, even if it is not a citation or even an allusion.

### III. THE QUESTION OF PHILOSOPHICAL NATIONALITY

In "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand," Derrida lets us know, by means of a list of philosophers' names, that Wittgenstein was among those he read in his seminar on "Nationality and Philosophical Nationalism." Other than this one reference, the only other allusions or references to Wittgenstein in the context of "philosophical nationalism" are in the two texts which we have considered above: the passage on Lachelier in "Sending: On Representation" and the written interview on philosophical language. We can take a closer look at these two now.

In the passage on Lachelier, it must be remembered, Wittgenstein is not mentioned. But I have found an allusion to him in the "therapeutics of language" which Derrida finds in Lachelier, especially given the position of this passage in between two passages referring to Wittgenstein and ordinary language. The question which arises with regard to Wittgenstein is: what is the relation between the therapeutics of language that wishes to purge language of philosophical usage and the xenophobic desire to purge one's own language of foreign words, which seems to be Lachelier's main interest? Derrida says that the xenophobia "concerns" the domestic case:

I do not have time to dwell on all this but I would only like to indicate that this truly xenophobic mistrust with respect to philosophical importations into ways of talking is not only concerned, in Lachelier's symptomatic text, with the invasion of French by German, but in a more general and more domestic fashion with the violent contamination, the graft that takes badly and which in truth ought to be rejected, of philosophical language on to the body of natural and ordinary language. For it is not only in French, and coming from

German philosophy, that these unhappy traces have been left. The trouble has already begun with the body of the German language, in the relation of German to itself, in Germanic German. (127; my emphasis)

Derrida finds this domestic case of language therapy in the following:

And after some interesting allusions to Hamelin, Leibniz and Descartes with respect to the use they nevertheless made of the same word Lachelier concludes in this way, and this is the point that matters to me: "There would be grounds for inquiring whether *Vorstellung* was not derived from *sich etwas vorstellen* (to represent something to oneself), and whether the Germans themselves were not shocked when people began to use it in philosophical style." (127)

The answer to the question of the relation between the two cases is that they are the same problem—this is stated by the phrase "the trouble" which I have emphasized. There is only one trouble here, "the trouble" ("le mal") which has already commenced in the domestic case. This trouble is stated in the formula "violent contamination, the graft which takes badly and in truth ought to be rejected." If this is so, then it would appear that the domestic case of "therapeutics of language"—which is Wittgenstein's project—would be morally suspect, in the same way and for the same reason, as the xenophobic case.<sup>28</sup> We have here the schema for another objection, or more precisely perhaps, a deconstruction, of Wittgenstein's later work.

Wittgenstein's later work would have to be re-analyzed with this in mind in order to establish that this logic of "contamination" is at work there. For although one can readily recognize Wittgenstein in the "therapeutics of language" and "the graft that takes badly and which in truth ought to be rejected, of philosophical language on to the body of natural and ordinary language," I don't offhand recall any place where Wittgenstein's work clearly follows a logic of "contamination." If one wishes to examine, with a Derridean eye, the most obvious images Wittgenstein uses for the experience of philosophical problems, one would look to his thought that with philosophy "language goes on holiday" and that the task of his therapy is to "let the fly out of the fly-bottle." The first of these involves an idea of "work" and "usefulness" (which might raise socio-economic issues, and would have to be compared with the socio-economic criticism of Wittgenstein that Derrida raises in "Circumfession"), and the second

involves the experience of freedom and imprisonment. These images suggest that a graft might be useless or constraining, but need not be a contamination of the original body. From a Wittgensteinian point of view, the "graft" might in some sense be already at work from within, since we are after all "misled by language," but the interpretation of what is at work would be false, and philosophical problems are based on mistaken conceptions. Derrida's opposition to this idea that the presuppositions underlying philosophical problems are simply mistaken is expressed in "Sending: On Representation":

But to determine language as representation is not the effect of an accidental prejudice, a theoretical fault or a manner of thinking, a limit or closure among others, a form of representation, precisely which came about one day and of which we could rid ourselves by a decision when the time comes. (113)

This passage of course merely situates the problem. In order to resolve it one would have to look at the question of truth (in a way that would not beg the question against either philosopher), in order to try to fit Wittgenstein's views into this "logic of contamination." I think that, among other things, one would have to consider presuppositions, as well as their variety and manner.

A different way of raising this question would be to consider Wittgenstein's later work with regard to linguistic xenophobia such as Lachelier's. One doesn't find this in his writings, and one would have to ask why this is. If Derrida is right, and linguistic xenophobia is merely a continuation of the logic of the "domestic case," then why is this not to be found in Wittgenstein's writings, which seem to be a pretty clear example of the domestic "therapeutics of language?" Not only is it the case that this xenophobia cannot be found there, but the basic ideas of Wittgenstein's views on language would seem to preclude any such xenophobia. Wittgenstein recognizes that language changes over time, and if a word fulfills a use in some language-game, its foreign origin is irrelevant. If this is so, then one would have to wonder if Wittgenstein's thinking did not indeed follow a different schema than those which Derrida finds within what he calls the closure of metaphysics. More generally, we have reached the issue of the historicity of language, on which the views of Derrida and Wittgenstein would have to be compared.

I have already noted the way Derrida formulates the relation of ordinary language to philosophical language in the later interview

"Is There a Philosophical Language?" That formulation arises in answer to a question on "philosophical indentity" and language. Later, in answer to this question, Wittgenstein is used by Derrida twice as an example (I mean as two examples) to his claim one cannot "establish a simple correspondence between a national philosophical tradition and a language, in the ordinary sense of the term" (226). Wittgenstein's is an example of a work which is overdetermined in relation to national language (Austin is also thus cited), and the interpretation of Wittgenstein's work by French specialists is an example (Heidegger is the other) of a reception outside of the language of origin "that is reassimilated with difficulty by the very people who speak or think they speak this language of origin" (226). "As for French specialists of Wittgenstein, neither Germanophones nor Anglophones are very interested in it, to the point that one cannot even say they resist it" (226).

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is important to note that this paper is limited as to the specific period of time covered. As Derrida continues to write, changes in this schema—loose as it is—will have to be made.<sup>29</sup> It came to my attention after I had written the main part of this paper that a newly published article by Derrida, a memorial piece for Gérard Granel, refers several times to Wittgenstein.<sup>30</sup> Here Derrida speaks of Wittgenstein's relation to Judaism, which apparently Granel wrote about. I have not changed this paper to take this article into account, but I mention it here for the sake of (an attempt at) completeness. In spite of this limit, and the other limits noted, I would like to offer some concluding remarks.

Tracking Derrida's references indicate a number of paths that one might want to follow if one wishes to investigate a Derridean reading of Wittgenstein. One might try to find a "logic of the graft" or "logic of contamination" at work in Wittgenstein's writings. Or one might try to find there any of the presuppositions which Derrida suggests one will find, such as the presupposition that there is no "irremediable misunderstanding," or that Wittgenstein's attempted anti-philosophy is still philosophical. Or one might look to see if Wittgenstein's "private language" argument somehow goes awry through precipitous use of "private/public" terminology. None of these charges is

persuasive as they stand, in part because they are external criticisms—which of course they must be since Derrida has provided no close reading of Wittgenstein—and in part because no attempt is made not to beg any questions against Wittgenstein. But I don't think they can be ignored.

The failure of Derrida to provide a close reading of Wittgenstein is hardly a failure from Derrida's viewpoint. The only positive reference which unambiguously refers to Wittgenstein's later philosophy is Derrida's recognition of a "decentering of meaning" in Wittgenstein. This phrase expresses very well what leads some to think that Derrida's and Wittgenstein's projects are congruent. But in this discussion of the "decentering of meaning," Derrida gives no privilege to Wittgenstein, whom he lists indifferently among many others: Peirce, analytic philosophers, and speech act theorists. Clearly Derrida feels that Wittgenstein is too inconsequential a philosopher to merit close attention. So the project of bringing Wittgenstein and Derrida into contraposition goes beyond, and against, his own thinking on the matter.

Obviously, this paper is written from a different perspective. As I see it, Wittgenstein's later work is of the greatest philosophical significance, as is the confrontation between Wittgenstein and Derrida. Perhaps this is best demonstrated by two of the general issues at stake in this study: the relation of philosophical language to ordinary language, and the political/hierarchical aspects of philosophical style and method. These issues strike at the very heart of philosophy, questioning what it is and what effects it has.

These issues highlight the great difference between the metaphysical positions of Wittgenstein and Derrida, a difference I have tried to indicate with the phrase "imperative to silence." Whereas Wittgenstein aims to dissolve philosophical questions by finding their mistaken presuppositions, Derrida aims to complicate philosophical questions by finding essential (or quasi-essential) obscurities which govern the rest of the discourse, mark limits to it and point beyond philosophy in a vertiginous manner. These metaphysical positions provide not only a radical challenge to traditional ways of doing philosophy, but they also provide a radical challenge to each other.

Given the number and the complexity of the issues which would have to be determined in order to decide between them—or perhaps

to decide against them in favor of traditional approaches—it seems to me that it would be impossible to wrap up this confrontation in a single study, and I cannot offer any such conclusion here. On the contrary, the main point of this paper has been to show that consideration of this confrontation has scarcely begun.<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

1 Staten (1984); Garver/Lee (1994).

2 Gene (1973); Altieri (1976); Mulligan (1978); Margolis (1983/1994); Law (1989); Winspur (1989); Truong Rootham (1996); Sonderegger (1997); Sasidharan (1999); Stone (2000).

3 Derrida's first reference to Wittgenstein was in *Dissemination*, published in French in 1972, although not in English translation until 1981. Derrida's most extensive discussion of Wittgenstein, in "Sending: On Representation," was published in English translation in 1982, prior to the publication of the majority of the comparative studies cited above.

4 *Ratio*, p. 403.

5 Some difficulties present themselves when trying to determine what is to count as a reference to Wittgenstein. In the essay "Force of Law," Derrida uses the adjective "Wittgensteinian," but not the name "Wittgenstein." In the *Ratio* conference mentioned above, Derrida refers to Wittgenstein by name several times (after professing his lack of familiarity), but these references are all in the discussions, now transcribed and published. And then there is this problematic text: "This work is altogether first rate. It is informative, faithful, rigorous and completely original in its problematization. It is an original theoretical advance which I believe will mark an essential step forward in the field." Neither mentioning the name "Wittgenstein" nor the adjective "Wittgensteinian," this text appears on the back cover of Henry Staten's book *Wittgenstein and Derrida*, signed by one "Jacques Derrida." If one were in a Derridean frame of mind, one might try to make this text and its problematic topology the centerpiece of this paper. The place of its appearance—on the back cover, neither simply inside nor simply outside, of a book, one which is titled with the name "Wittgenstein" (and the name "Derrida")—and its problematic position vis-à-vis Derrida's "oeuvre" (will this text find a place in Derrida's "Collected Works?") raise so many Derridean questions, notably with regard to the book, the title, the preface, the

signature, the counter-signature, the inside/outside, the oeuvre, the name, the proper name, debt, the gift, citationality, the institution, among others.

6 See the interviews in *Points*, especially pp. 56–64, 116, 200.

7 In addition, "democracy of the compulsion to the highest price" seems to be merely, well, compulsive.

8 There are two non-contradictory senses in which one could construe the phrase. An "aristocracy without distinction" could refer to an hereditary government whose claims to superiority are utterly false. Thus, "an hereditary government of oafish mediocrities" is a perfectly good meaning for the phrase. But I don't think this is what Derrida has in mind. Alternatively, one could take "distinction" to mean "honors" or "rewards." An "aristocracy without distinction" would then refer to a society in which those who govern or direct others receive no honors or rewards. This would put Derrida in line with Plato and Nietzsche (cf. *Gay Science*, secs. 293 and 301), but such a society would not be "without vulgarity" as specified by Derrida. In the passage under discussion, the phrase "democracy of the compulsion to pay the highest price" would seem to be an equivalent to "aristocracy without distinction," and thus the best guide to its meaning. I conclude, for these reasons and also because of the link to Kierkegaard discussed below, that the contradictory meaning is the correct one.

9 There is an interesting juncture of Derrida and Wittgenstein here, which has not been mentioned in the literature. Wittgenstein takes the use of a word without a contrast as a metaphysical use, and as a misapplication (*Blue Book*, 46). Because Derrida doesn't refer to Wittgenstein here, I leave a detailed comparison on this point for another paper. (Derrida's discussion of "ordinary language" in the interview in *Points* which is quoted in the next section would also be considered here. There he says that, because of the continuity of philosophical with ordinary language, ordinary language lacks a contrast.)

10 "But it is Kierkegaard to whom I have been most faithful and who interests me most: absolute existence, the meaning he gives to the word subjectivity, the resistance of existence to the concept or the system—this is something I attach great importance to and feel very deeply, something I am always ready to stand up for" (Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*, 40). For Derrida's relation to Kierkegaard, see my "Situating Derrida: Between Kierkegaard and Hegel," *Philosophy Today*, Winter 2000, 388–403.

11 Of course, according to Kierkegaard, an absurdity can't be known to be a justification. Can it then be a justification? Here I think that an answer depends on a resolution of the conflicts between Derrida and Wittgenstein.

12 It is often the statement of one who has suffered through the requirements of a system, and having risen within the system wishes to defend it to those being initiated.

13 The "more or less" seems to cause problems for Derrida. Deconstruction aims at a certain tension, a kind of vertigo, but all of the tension is drained from certain concepts and situations when they become matters of "more or less." Such matters of quantity are dismissed in *Of Grammatology* as falling under the "style of pure empiricity." Derrida there says that "propositions of essence can never be made to fit a scale" (129).

14 Many have found the rewards of reading Derrida to be very high, and I am one of them. But the costs are also very high, and I can attest to those as well.

15 One can't help but feel that Bourdieu is lurking in the background here. It would be worthwhile to consider Derrida's other discussions of the "sociological program." Derrida's specific comments on Bourdieu can be found in *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?: Right to Philosophy 1*, pp. 62-65.

16 One must remember, however, that deconstruction is not a rejection of metaphysical theories. Derrida explicitly says so in reply to a paper at the Ratio conference: "I have insisted again and again that I am not 'rejecting' metaphysics. I do not 'reject' metaphysics" (403). Also see my paper "Situating Derrida," where I argue that deconstruction aims to make metaphysics "tremble" but not to reject it.

17 See, for example, *Negotiations* pp. 56-7, 89-90, 107. Here, as in Kierkegaard, "silence" doesn't exclude talking.

18 The last is my interpolation, since in his discussion of philosophical nationality, Derrida doesn't mention Heidegger.

19 I can't find this in the opening of the "Blue Book"; it sounds more like section 3.3 of the *Tractatus*: "Only propositions have sense; only in the nexus of a proposition does a name have a meaning." The opening of the "Blue Book" instead seems insusceptible to Derrida's criticism of Austin, since it is here that Wittgenstein broaches the idea that the meaning of a word is its use (4-5). Thus, if words have a use within titles, it should follow that they have meaning.

20 He makes the same move in *Who's Afraid of Philosophy*, I think with much more justice, against those who wished to eliminate the required year-long course in philosophy in high school in France.

21 Derrida presumably includes Wittgenstein's anti-philosophy within the law he posits in "The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics": "According to a law that can be formalized, philosophy always reappropriates for itself the discourse that delimits it" (*Margins of Philosophy*, 177). It isn't clear that Derrida's arguments against Benveniste in that essay are helpful in his claim against Wittgenstein.

22 Having these presuppositions are also, according to Derrida, "pre-philosophical": "because in it one behaves as if one knew what 'representation' meant and as if one had only to adjust this knowledge to a present historical situation . . ." (112).

23 Initially, he attributes these views to those who make "a type of objection (let us call it roughly 'Wittgensteinian') but within the parenthetical remark, left open in my quotation, he says that this objection "was accompanied for Wittgenstein, at a given stage of his career," thus attributing them to Wittgenstein.

24 See *Of Grammatology*, p. 34, where Saussure's accusation of contamination of language by writing draws Derrida's fire.

25 One might note here the similarity here with Derrida's first reference to Wittgenstein in "Dissemination," which could be discussed in this context as well.

26 I have emphasized this qualification, which is always significant for Derrida and would seem to be his own questioning interpolation into a statement of the objection. The particular meaning of "questioning" and of hypothetical qualifications like this one for Derrida is discussed in my "Situating Derrida."

27 It makes a significant difference, at least with regard to Wittgenstein, how one fills in the referent of the phrase "what makes the game possible." If this refers to the way one is misled by language, then it would be unobjectionable, but the phrase has a foundational or transcendental ring to it that might push Wittgenstein in a traditional direction.

28 Here one would need to consider Derrida's analysis of spirit in the works of Husserl and others, showing that the thematics at work in Heidegger's "Nazi writings" is also at work in others.

29 Derrida was still alive when this paper was finished.

30 "Coronae Vitae (fragments)" in Jean-Luc Nancy and Elisabeth Rigal, eds., *Granel-L'ecclat, le combat, l'ouvert* (Éditions Belin, 2001). Many, many thanks to Michael Naas for informing me of this paper.

31 I am grateful to Michael Naas and Stephen David Ross for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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