INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF DERRIDA

In a Nutshell

Derrida is a contemporary French philosopher who inaugurated the school of deconstruction. Deconstructionism, a body of ideas closely associated with post-structuralism and post-modernism, is a strategy of analysis that has been applied primarily to linguistics, literature, and philosophy. Derrida published three major works in 1967 which introduced his radical approach to texts: Speech and Phenomena, Of Grammatology, and Writing and Difference. His greatest influence has been in philosophy and literary criticism in the United States where the above works were translated and published in the 1970's.

Biography

In 1930, Jacques Derrida was born to Sephardic Jewish parents in Algeria. After military service in France, he began his studies in philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris in 1952. Derrida attended Harvard on scholarship in 1956-57. He was a lecturer in philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris from 1960-1964, then he was professor of philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superieure from 1965-1984. Derrida was the founding director of the College International de Philosophie in Paris, and was most recently the directeur d'etudes at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. For more than a decade, beginning in 1975, Derrida lectured regularly in the United States at Johns Hopkins, Yale, Cornell, and the University of California at Irvine. Derrida's ideas inspired the critical skepticism associated with the so called Yale School of deconstruction.

Main Concern

Jacques Derrida's main concern was to critique metaphysics and its impact on the theory and practice of philosophy and writing. He rejected two main characteristics of Western philosophy: meaning is grounded in metaphysical presence, and time is oriented to its end. Derrida posed two main alternative ideas: meaning is an affair of language's systems of difference without positive terms, and writing is prior to speech.

In other words, Derrida sought to persuade others to reject Western metaphysics by claiming and demonstrating that written words did not stand for spoken words which did not stand for thoughts which did not stand for Truth, or God, which were not referents of the metaphysical world. On the contrary, Derrida suggested the interpretation of a written text in a certain way.

Deconstruction
Derrida's strategy for demonstrating the fallibility of metaphysical thinking was to deconstruct texts.9 Derrida's deconstruction was a complex response to a variety of twentieth century theoretical and philosophical movements including the phenomenology of Husserl,10 the structuralism of Saussure,11 and the psychoanalysis of Freud.12 The deconstruction of Derrida was also a critique and continuation of Nietzsche's13 negative reaction to all the above and Heidegger's14 deconstruction of philosophy and metaphysics.15

The twofold task of Derridean deconstruction sought to expose the problem of centered discourses16 and displace the boundaries of metaphysics.17 Through deconstruction Derrida sought to expand the conceptual limits of the meaning of the text imposed by metaphysics, preferring to explore meaning in the margins18 of the text through unrestricted semantic play and limitless interpretation.19

Summary of Three Main Works

Of Grammatology (1967) may have been Derrida's most programmatic statement. It identified Derrida's central concerns about speech and writing and interacted with Saussure, Levi-Strauss, and Rousseau, and their view that speech preceded writing. Speech and Phenomena (1967) was primarily a critique of Husserl and his distinction between two modes of signification: indication and expression.20 Husserl posited the primacy of speech to writing and advocated a metaphysical phenomenology. Derrida took issue with both of these ideas. Writing and Difference (1967) contained a variety of essays written between 1959-1967, on Levi-Strauss, Artaud, Bataille, Freud, and Foucault. It demonstrated Derrida's approach and was designed as a reader to accompany the other two works of the same year.

Summary of Other Works

Dissemination (1972) was a collection of essays on Plato, Mallarme, and Sollers. Margins of Philosophy was a collection of essays on various subjects including an important essay entitled, "Differance." Glas (1974)21 was devoted to Hegel22 and Genet.23 Truth in Painting (1978) was a collection of essays on art. It included interaction with Kant, and Van Gogh. The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond (1980) included fictional love letters and two essays on psychoanalysis. And Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question (1987) was devoted to Heidegger's use of the terms, geist, geistlich, and geistig.

DERRIDA'S WAYS AND WORDS

A systemization of Derrida's thought or method may not be directly found in his works. His approach was not systematic or structured. Derrida did not explicitly propose his philosophy and approach, he demonstrated it. What was "known" about his thinking was derived by exploring his texts. Derrida, however, employed a characteristic style and utilized a body of specific terms and phrases. An investigation of his style and some of his terms may help the Derridean prospector extract some of his golden thoughts.24
Writing Style

Jacques Derrida consistently exercised an extremely difficult writing style. This style demonstrated his understanding of the nature of texts. He purposefully employed a minimal amount of convention and structure.25 One of Derrida's chief English translators, Alan Bass, wrote, "Derrida is difficult to read not only by virtue of his style, but also because he seriously wishes to challenge the ideas that govern the way we read."26 What made Derrida's texts difficult to read was his frequent use of the terms of classical philosophy without any explanation, his close attention to the resonances and punning humor of etymology, and his dense, elliptical style.27

Another feature of Derrida's style was the purposeful absence of a preface, introduction, conclusion, or thesis statements before, after, or in, his essays. Most of his work read like a fragment of a former work anticipating a future work. This strategy left the reader to explore the meaning of the words in his text in the absence of context and structure. Derrida also refrained from stratifying the material within his essays.

One other important feature of Derrida's style was his exclusive use of essay. While he published several books, each book was either a single lengthy essay or a collection of essays. Sometimes Derrida's essays were thematically arranged, but not always, and they were not always arranged coherently.28 This practice was presumably designed to demonstrate that the final word, or the defining statement about something, could never be written about anything.29

Metaphysics, Speech and Writing

Derrida's chief concern was undermining the metaphysics of presence and its influence on speech (phone) and writing. The ideas of Western metaphysics wrongly predisposed the way philosophers analyzed the relationship of speech to writing, and wrongly predisposed the way philosophers analyzed the relationship of speech and writing to presence. Derrida wrote,

The privilege of the phone does not depend upon a choice that could have been avoided. It responds to a moment of economy. . . . The system of "hearing (understanding) - oneself-speak" through the phonic substance--which presents itself as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore nonempirical or noncontingent signifier--has necessarily dominated the history of the world during an entire epoch, and has even produced the idea of the world, the idea of world-origin, that arises from the difference between the worldly and the non-worldly, the outside and the inside, ideality and nonideality, universal and nonuniversal, transcendental and empirical, etc. . . . It is therefore as if what we call language could have been in its origin and in its end only a moment, an essential but determined mode, a phenomenon, an aspect, a species of writing. And as if it had succeeded in making us forget this, and in willfully misleading us, only in the course of an adventure: as that adventure itself.30
Derrida proposed an alternate way of looking at writing and speech. This alternate way had no referent in the metaphysical realm. He sought to deconstruct verbal and written signs that had their source in the logos, particularly signs which had their source in truth. Derrida wrote,

The "rationality" . . . which governs a writing thus enlarged and radicalized, no longer issues from a logos. Further, it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification of truth. All the metaphysical determinations of truth, and even the one beyond metaphysical onto-theology that Heidegger reminds us of, are more or less immediately inseparable from the instance of the logos, or of a reason thought within the linage of the logos, in whatever sense it is understood: in the pre-Socratic or the philosophical sense, in the sense of God's infinite understanding. . . . Within this logos, the original and essential link to the phone has never been broken.31

Derrida made a few concise uncharacteristically direct statements on this matter of metaphysical presence. These statements came close to distilling his voluminous musings on the whole matter. He wrote, "There is nothing outside the text; all is textual play with no connection with original truth."32 In another earlier text, Derrida defined play as "the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence."33 Derrida also wrote, "The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."34

In addition to upending the Western metaphysical idea that meaning is grounded in metaphysical presence, Derrida rejected the idea that time was necessarily oriented to its end. He suggested that writing was prior to speech. When Derrida wrote, "there is no linguistic sign before writing."35 he was probably making two claims: there is no referent in an-other-world-realm which corresponds to the written sign, and time is not linear, oriented necessarily to its end. In other words the ideas of before and after betray a Western concept of time.36

"In a Certain Way"

One of Derrida's many defining phrases was "in a certain way." According to John P. Leavey, Jr., Derrida's deconstruction can be generally reduced to this simple phrase.37 Philosophers, according to Derrida, must be read in a certain way, a deconstruction way. Derrida's certain way meant the continual rereading of philosophers. In a certain way also meant a way that cohabited with itself. Deconstruction deconstructed itself. Derrida wrote about a certain way in two of his chief works,

What I want to emphasize is simply that the passage beyond philosophy.38 does not consist in turning the page of philosophy (which usually amounts to philosophizing badly), but in continuing to reread philosophers in a certain way.39
The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategies and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work.40

"Difference" & "Differance"

Another defining Derridean term was "difference." G. F. W. Hegel's influence on Derrida was profound. Derrida's dependance on the difference motif to explore meaning was shaped by Hegel's emphasis on opposites. Derrida acknowledged his dependance on Hegel when he wrote:

The horizon of absolute knowledge is the effacement of writing in the logos, the retrieval of the trace in parousia, the reappropriation of difference, the accomplishment of what I have elsewhere called the metaphysics of the proper.

Yet all that Hegel thought within this horizon, all, that is, except eschatology, may be reread as a mediation on writing. Hegel is also the thinker of irreducible difference. . . . the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing.41

Tracing difference was one way Derrida explained his process. He generally set out to trace a word or words back and forth, or forth and back, on a continuum line between irreducible opposites. His tracing enlarged and expanded meaning. This process explored the difference between opposite terms without a bias for either term. In other words, Derrida might have written about truth by writing about error, or he might have written about theology by writing about atheology.

One of Derrida's most celebrated and most dense essays was entitled, "Differance." It was part of the collection of essays in Margins of Philosophy.42 "Differance" was a term Derrida coined presumably to make the point that no referent stood in the metaphysical realm for it. He sought to make difference more different than it already was. Differance was a term which was meant to express both usual meanings of difference at the same time: deferral (spacio-temporal) and different (not identical).43 Derrida had high hopes for this neograph and its ability to help eradicate the metaphysical approach to signification. About differance, Derrida wrote,

It [differance] derives from no category of being, whether present or absent. And yet those aspects of differance which are thereby delineated are not theological, not even in the order of the most negative of negative theologies, which are always concerned with disengaging a superessentiality beyond the finite categories of essence and existence, that is, of presence and always hastening to recall that God is refused the predicate of existence, only in order to acknowledge his superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of being. . . . Differance is not only irreducible to any ontological or theological--
ontotheological-- reappropriation, but as the very opening of the space in which ontotheology--philosophy--produces its system and its history, it includes ontotheology, inscribing it and exceeding it without return.44

"Structure, Sign and Play"

The essay entitled, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," dealt with several core issues in Derrida's schema. As the title of the essay implied, three ideas inhabited this essay and these ideas found their way into much of Derrida's work.

For Derrida, the prevailing structure of written texts was rooted in Western metaphysics so that the structure of writing was centered. This centering functioned to orient and balance the structure thereby limiting the play of the structure.45 In other words, a centered structure limited meaning. Derrida's alternate strategy was to de-center the text thereby increasing play and opening up the exploration of meaning.

Regarding the sign, signifier, and signified, Derrida wrote, "The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."46 The signifier is different from the signified. In Derrida's scheme, that which was really different was irreducibly different. Therefore the signifier was always opposite the signified, the signified was all there was. He wrote, "If one erases the radical difference between signifier and signified, it is the word "signifier" itself which must be abandoned as a metaphysical concept."47

Summary of Derrida's Ways and Words

An investigation of Derrida's form may speak as clearly about Derrida's overall world view and scheme as an investigation of the content of his writing. Derrida wrote in a manner that demonstrated, more than it set forth, his understanding of the nature of writing. His essays were penned in the margins like the work of a poet, rather than "pinned-in" the center like the work of a metaphysician. Derrida wrote without regard for the truth, like a novelist. He wrote like a thinker not a philosopher grounded in metaphysical presence. He wrote with little concern for the reader or for structure. Derrida's density at play--very long play--demonstrated that he simply wrote about... to get at meaning. Since the text was all there was, Derrida wrote for Derrida, who wrote for Derrida, who wrote for Derrida...

Derrida's chief contribution to modernity's boiling cauldron was his radical critique of metaphysical philosophy. This critique may have inaugurated post-modernity. Metaphysical presence was the common foundational principle of all Western philosophical approaches. Derrida sought to deconstruct this kind of philosophy which read texts in a particular way. He proposed that texts should be read in another way, a certain way, a way that played with words outside the constraints of convention, a way that traced the vast differe/ances between irreducibly opposite terms to explore meaning, a way that always understood the irreconcilable differe/ance between the signifier and the signified. Derrida wrote about writings in Derrida's way.
CRITIQUE

Others

There is no common opinion about the man, the message, or the value of Jacques Derrida. Can Derrida be Christianized? Clarence Walhout answered this question in the following way,

[N]o. At the most fundamental level Derrida's radical epistemology is opposed to traditional Christian articles of faith. But encounter and dialogue with Derrida can be fruitful, for in conception of language and in his conception of history Derrida stands opposed, as do Christian theorists, to formalist conceptions of textual autonomy. . . . [T]he Christian critic needs to respond constructively to the challenge of his thought.48

About Derrida's deconstruction, Horace A. Underwood wrote, "What discourse can one create which will prove the existence or presence of God? Deconstruction (merely) reminds us of that, and once again demonstrates the failure of all philosophical theories that seek to pin down the Absolute. Philosophy has been disproving the proofs of God for millenia [sic]; so also deconstruction."49

Alexander Nehamas suggested that, "a careful reading of Derrida's work shows that he is less relativistic and nihilist than his opponents fear, and less innovative and original than his proponents wish."50

Alan Jacobs recommended the rejection of deconstruction. To accept deconstruction was to give up the Christian mission of purifying the dialect in order to proclaim the message of peace and the kingdom of God, only to be left with the command to play.51

Personal Critique

Style

Jacques Derrida was an extremely consistent writer-thinker. His cryptic propositions and his playful manner were logically consistent if his basic premise was correct: meaning is not grounded in metaphysical presence. Heidegger and Nietzsche anticipated and agreed with Derrida but inconsistently wrote about the death of philosophy in a style that employed the very same structural philosophy which they pronounced dead.52

Derrida's style was an important and necessary aspect of his approach. But, his style may also prove to have been the most vulnerable characteristic of his total approach. Reading Derrida could be invigorating. If one's purpose was merely to read, to explore, to evaluate a topic from one of a number of related or unrelated perspectives, Derrida's writings could be amusing. Derrida's ways and words could stretch the most effaced mind. If the investigator's purpose for reading Derrida, however, was to understand, or to apprehend a final word, or discover some truthful proposition, then the reader would have been very disappointed.
The Derridean style may serve to militate against the proliferation of Derrida's main concern. While Heidegger was vulnerable to Derrida's critique that he declared philosophy's death by using philosophy's metaphysically grounded terms, Derrida may be vulnerable to the criticism that he declared philosophy's death by using playful, uncentered, tracing terms that were ultimately only meaningful to Derrida himself.

In other words, Derrida could not explain his method clearly without violating the chief principles of his thinking, or without demonstrating that his thinking was wrong headed. For this reason, there may be very little danger of Derridean textual deconstructionism penetrating the barrier which separates those on the highest floors of the ivory tower from everyone else. There is, however, a very real danger that the results of the Derridean world view will continue infesting popular culture. Popular culture is likely to become increasingly uncertain about absolute truth.

Language

Derrida contributed to the study of the communication enterprise in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, his discourse heighten the awareness of mankind's common experience of being misunderstood. What writer is confident that all or any of his texts have been completely or correctly understood? On the negative side, Derrida asserted that centered, or structured, texts were meaningless. This assertion, however, goes against common experience. For what writer claims that he is always and absolutely misunderstood?

Perhaps the reason there is a substantial degree of understanding and meaningfulness in texts is that all men are bearers of the image of a God who signifies truly and meaningfully. Perhaps the reason why there is a notable degree of misunderstanding and meaninglessness in texts is that the image of God in all men has been corrupted by sin in the Fall. Perhaps God's judgment upon mankind at the Tower of Babel produced a confounding of language that is operational in the present moment.

Metaphysical Presence

From Plato to Kant, philosophers and theologians have struggled for a solution which adequately solved the riddle of the relationship between the noumena and the phenomena, between the spiritual world and the material world, between an-other-world and world. Derrida's approach was radically different. His approach was a brilliant, though flawed, attack on the very foundations of philosophy. Rather than attempt to sort out how it was that in any sense the other-world was present in this world, or how occupants of this world might have some knowledge about the other-world, Derrida claimed that the other-world (if it actually was) and this world are irreducibly different. He also argued that constituents of the other-world should not have a privileged status in this world.

Derrida offered a compelling and generally consistent world view that accounted for his experiences as well, or better, than many other world views. But, he failed to offer an
adequate substitute foundation. Derrida's world view became self-defeating at the point when he presumably and necessarily denied that logic applied to reality. He failed the test of undeniability. Derrida offered no proof that structure produced meaninglessness, he only made this claim and functioned as though it were an adequate claim. Derrida could not prove his foundational principle, he could only claim it. Derrida made self-defeating claims, he offered no proof. His approach may have been systematically consistent but it was not undeniable.

Inspiration

The evangelical argument for biblical inspiration is another possible response to Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysical presence. Derrida apparently failed to take into account the possibility that while philosophical metaphysical presence might be wrong headed, theistic metaphysical presence might be the best way to account for all the evidence. The inscripturation of the very words of God in the Bible is an important example of a profound interdiction. The Bible claims to be the work of infinite God (other world) and finite man (this world) and these claims can be verified by the test of systematic consistency.

Incarnation

Another argument against Derrida's world view is an argument for the incarnation. The incarnation, God in the flesh, the Word, is another example of a profound inter-Diction. Perhaps Jesus Christ is the exception to Derrida's irreducible differences. The one exception to irreducible differences that gives referent and meaning to all other differences is the incarnation of the GOD-MAN, Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the world has an example of the other-world in the world. The GOD-MAN Jesus is evidence that there is an-other-world that cuts across this world. Jesus Christ is the certain way, the truth, the absolute signifier, who alone is able to engage in infinite play. For the Godhead alone is omniscient. Derrida would probably not be persuaded by this line of argument, but it must be argued still.


2At least until 1993.

3Metaphysical presence is any one of several possible self-presenting or self-authenticating experiences (God, Truth, origin, arche, finality, telos) which serve as the foundation for the meaning of signs. Makaryk, 589.
4The non-orientation of time to its end undermined the metaphysical linear-time relationship which posited thought prior to speech, and speech prior to writing.

5The idea of "difference" was very important for understanding Derrida. He was heavily influenced by Hegel's opposites. Therefore, Derrida explored meaning by "tracing" back and forth, on the continuum line between two opposites.

6"Without positive terms" meant without giving privilege to one or the other term in the continuum of opposites like good/evil, transcendent/empirical, universal/particular, etc. This phrase was used in "Differance," 403.

7They do not represent, nor do they follow after.

8"In a certain way" is the way of deconstructionism. See p. 10, this paper.

9Every Derridean essay examined for this paper was basically an interaction with another text. In keeping with Derrida's strict method or (a)method, he did not write a deconstructionist manual, or handbook, or guide. He rather confined himself to tracing: writing about writing about writing about writing. . .

10Edmond Husserl (1859-1938), was a German philosopher whose central insight was that consciousness was essentially intentional, in relationship with an object. His chief work in phenomenology was Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy (1913). Makaryk, 365.

11Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was the father of modern linguistics and the founder of structuralism. He taught in Paris and Geneva. Makaryk, 466-468.

12Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the founder of psychoanalysis. He formulated the topographical model of the mind. The mind has three levels of mental experience: conscious, preconscious (unconscious but not repressed), and repressed unconscious. Makaryk, 320-323.

13Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a philosopher, poet, philologist, composer, historiographer, and theothenatologist. He was a negative thinker (nihilist) and suggested that there was no-thing at the bottom of discourse to interpret. He discredited intelligibility and truth. Nietzsche, like Heidegger and Derrida, sought to undermine Western metaphysics. Makaryk, 432-435.

14Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) was a philosopher and student of Husserl. Heidegger profoundly influenced the phenomenology and hermeneutics of continental philosophy. The central question for Heidegger's thought was the question of being. His major work was Sein und Zeit, (Being in Time) (1927). Heidegger, like Nietzsche and Derrida, sought to undermine Western metaphysics. Makaryk, 355-359.

16Centered discourses are centered on (dependant upon, grounded on) a metaphysical referent such as truth, presence, origin, etc. Derrida found vestiges of centeredness in structuralism and phenomenology as well as other more traditional metaphysical expressions.

17Structural and referential boundaries.

18The margin of the text is the opposite of the center. So to find meaning in the margins is to de-center the discourse.

19Derrida would reject the claim that this limitless interpretation was the same as subjective, or free interpretation. He would argue that centeredness restricted meaning and therefore made a text meaningless, but margining allowed one to explore meaning without referent or privileged position in relation to opposites, so as to make the text meaningful.

20Indication is speech, and expression is writing.

21See footnote 25, this paper.

22George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was one of the most influential philosophers of all time. His major works were Phenomenology of Spirit (1807), Science of Logic (1812-16), Encyclopedia (1817-1830), and Philosophy of Right (1821). His main concerns were in the area of developmental history of philosophy and phenomenology. Urson, 125-128.

23Jean Genet (1910-1986) was an influential French novelist and dramatist whose pornographic works expressed extreme rebellion against society and conventions. He wrote an autobiographical novel about homosexuality entitled Our Lady of the Flowers. "Genet, Jean," Microsoft Encarta 96 Encyclopedia.

24It is conceded that Derrida would violently object to the implication that an investigation of his words would produce his thoughts.

25The most challenging of all Derrida's works may have been Glas (1974). According to Alexander Nehamas, "Nobody knows what it is about?" (p. 36) Every page contained two columns. The left column discussed Hegel's Absolute Knowledge and the right column was concerned with Genet (see footnote 25), whose name was a homonym of a French word that meant broomflower. Derrida traced floral motifs in one column and Hegel's Absolute in the other, and both were presumably designed to be read simultaneously. See Alexander Nehamas, "Truth and Consequences," The New Republic 194:14 (October 5, 1987): 31-36.

27 Ibid.

28 "Grammatology resembles the torso of an incomplete system that only seems to be followed by essays and fragments." Behler, Confrontations, 54.


30 Derrida, "Writing Before the Letter," Grammatology, 8.

31 Ibid., 10-11.


36 This attitude about time was also consistent with Derrida's rejection of privileged opposites, i.e., before/after, good/evil, one/many, truth/error, etc. To center, or orient meaning in relationship to one or the other opposite was to confine meaning. In other words, Derrida would have asked, "Why orient meaning in relationship to before, or good, or one, or truth?" While he would have also rejected orienting meaning to after, evil, many, or error, Derrida preferred to move back and forth (trace) in a continuum line between opposites in order to enlarge or enhance meaning, rather than confine meaning by orienting it to only one opposite.


38 Philosophy is said to be dead after Hegel, Nietzsche, and particularly Heidegger, since philosophy is the search for Truth in an-other-world, and an-other-world is not really


41Ibid., 26.

42"Differance" may also be found in Mark C. Taylor, ed., Deconstruction and Context: Literature and Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 396-420.

43Derrida, "Differance," in Deconstruction, ed. by Taylor, 400-401.

44Ibid., 399.

45Derrida, "Structure," Writing, 278.

46Ibid., 280.

47Ibid., 281.


52This is a prevalent critique by Derrida on Heidegger and Nietzsche. For example see Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics an Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," Writing, 79-153.

53The same criticism may be leveled against practitioners of soft post-modernity. It may be said that they only have half a loaf, attempting to undermine various aspects of metaphysical philosophy (an absolute referent in another realm, i.e., truth, God, etc.) using classically metaphysical terms and structures that presumes an absolute referent in another realm.
A secondary critique in this vein of style is a contradiction of explicit action and implied motive. On the one hand, Derrida's style (explicit action) demonstrated that he was not concerned whether his text was understood. But, to write or produce sign and publish implies a wish to be understood. Why else would someone write and publish?

See Norman L. Geisler's description and application of the test of undeniability in Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 133-150.