

„WRITING”, IPSEITY, LITERATURE
On the (con)texts of Deconstruction

My PhD thesis explores the connections between the criticism of the metaphysics of presence and the poststructuralist language conception that have been brought to focus by the writings of Jacques Derrida. Several critical works and reviews have been published about the French philosopher, whose oeuvre has greatly and uniquely determined the philosophical and literary thinking of the past decades; nevertheless, his early career has remained unexplored on several points. Our analysis therefore concerns Derrida's early ideas on phenomenology and structuralism – although we hope the conclusions will touch on the philosopher's whole work. Considering Derrida's early works, we not only examine the argumentation for the central thesis, namely that language, sign, and especially writing do not have an external role in the development of meaning but a constitutive one; we also reflect on the fact that deconstruction operates with this idea and tries it out on authors who have elaborated a paradigm (Husserl, Heidegger, Saussure etc.). Through the reflection on the central idea that criticizes the separation of the (ideal) meaning (considered to be purely intellectual entity) and the function of sign by examining various texts, we attempt, whenever possible, to indicate the covert or less documented thematic relationships between the writings of Derrida. In addition, we try to reveal the *history of effect* on other ideological movements which are important but not sufficiently emphasized or even one-sidedly considered by the philosopher – primarily to the genetic phenomenology of Husserl, to the Saussurian anagram theory and to literary deconstruction.

Our chosen perspective enables us to analyze Derrida's concept of language in considerable detail and to contemplate on the *structured genealogy of Derrida's key concepts* – iterability, trace, différance, supplementarity, arché-writing, representation, gram, inscription, translation – that define the linguistic aspects of the criticism of the metaphysics of presence (of deconstruction) in various contexts and in a subtle network of relations.

Our aim therefore explains why we devote the first and longest chapter of our thesis, titled “Language as arché-writing”, to the close reading of *La voix et le phénomène*, without which Derrida's certain essential premises could not be sufficiently understood. This early work contains in a sense the beginnings of all the later ideas of Derrida. In this section we primarily reflect on the argumentation through which Derrida, refuting the absolutely intimate connection between logos and phoné (transcendental voice), arrives to the conclusion that the trace, the original difference, the sign precedes the concepts of sense, meaning and transcendental subject.

The second chapter of our essay, “Language as différance”, states that Derrida's early thinking was not only characterised by deconstructed phenomenology, but also evaluated the main points of structuralism. Important sources of this evaluation are the chapters of *Grammatology* that discuss the Saussurian linguistics founding structuralism. By examining the genesis of deconstruction, we primarily attempt to point out how this ideological movement radicalises phenomenology and structuralism at the same time and tries to imagine the concept of structure as a differential system of signifiers and the movement of time, which is the basis of all possible synthesis. From this perspective we intend to show that Derrida views the problem of meaning on the basis of the joint operation of time and sign: the sign can only move in time, while time becomes real time in the structure of signs/traces. The parallel movement of temporality and signification, however, creates an almost uncontrollable

aporia in this philosophy. The critical reading of the first two chapters intends to demonstrate that although Derrida rightly criticizes the origin of the constitution of sense – as the origin is not some pre-expressive sense layer (Husserl) or a “transcendental signified” that precedes signification (Saussure), but origin is always born in the process of signification, – he, reading phenomenology and structuralism with preconceptions, does not give sufficient emphasis to the points in these movements which he thought further and radicalized, and from which his own conclusions were drawn.

Our thesis examines the real potential of the *retentional sign* and the *anagram theory* from this point of view, while it also attempts to discuss Derrida’s concept of literature, which is determined by the criticism of phono- and logocentrism and which evolved in the second phase of Derrida’s career. For this reason, the second chapter of our thesis provides a comparison of Derrida’s and Paul de Man’s conceptions of language, text and reading from the point of view of *Grammatology*, through Saussure’s history of effect.

According to the core model of grammatology, the text writes and rewrites itself. If language is approachable from the aspect of its movement, the operation of the text becomes the centre in Derrida’s view, and not the analysis of the utterance, as in linguistics. If thinking works textually, that is, rhetorically or metaphorically, the border between literature and philosophy becomes uncertain: it turns out after all that both philosophy and literature are certain institutionalized ways of writing. Literature, however, is ahead of philosophy in discovering writing. Literature and creative writing thus can provide a model for transcending or criticizing metaphysics. Derrida believes literature to be particularly important – for this reason, after the deconstruction of the phenomenological and semiotic language concept, the third chapter of our thesis, titled “Language as a Babelian event” intends to depict the deconstructive “textual universe” and the interpretability of the relations within it by highlighting a linguistic process that is also called translation by Derrida.