EARLY AND LATER DECONSTRUCTION IN THE WRITINGS OF JACQUES DERRIDA*

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In this article I claim that a distinction should be made between an "early Derrida" and a "later Derrida," similar to the one made between Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein of the *Investigations*, or between Heidegger before the *Kehre* and Heidegger after it. Acceptance of such a distinction enables us to understand Derrida's teachings more clearly, to solve a disagreement in Derrida scholarship, and to understand his deconstruction as less contradictory. I shall also explain the reasons for, and causes of, the change in Derrida's teachings and distinguish between those aspects that changed and those that did not.

I

Derrida's special method of analysis, which he calls deconstruction, is the main theme of his writings. In Derrida's early work, deconstruction operates on dichotomies. There are many dichotomies, but the most important ones are: essential and accidental, central and marginal, typical and atypical, being and non-being, presence and absence, pure and impure, stable and changing, certain and dubitable, general and limited, clear and vague, simple and complicated, atomistic and compound, immediate and mediate, original and secondary, conscious and unconscious, real and apparent, serious and playful, internal and external, signified and signifier, literal and metaphorical, transcendental and empirical, spoken and written, voiced and silent, soul and body, meaning and form, intuition and expression, and nature and culture.

These dichotomies are understood by Derrida to have several characteristics. First, the two terms in each dichotomy are traditionally interpreted as distinct from one another: the essential has traditionally been taken to be distinct from the accidental, the central from the marginal, the signified from the signifier, etc.

Second, one of the terms in the dichotomy has traditionally been preferred to the other: the central has been traditionally preferred to

the marginal, the pure to the impure, the mediate to the immediate, the transcendent to the empirical, etc. Derrida notes some exceptions to such preferences, but claims that they are only exceptions. Moreover, he tries to show that in some texts where this preference does not seem to exist, it in fact does.

Third, Derrida claims that the disfavored term has been frequently conceived as the imperfect, "castrated" version of the favored one. The disfavored term is taken to have the characteristics of the favored term in only a partial, imperfect way. Hence, the disfavored term is taken to be conceptually dependent on the favored one.

Fourth, and finally, it is not accidental that some terms are preferred to others. The favored terms can be grouped together. For example, presence is traditionally associated with being rather than non-being; with consciousness rather than with unconsciousness (what is conscious seems more present to us); with the typical, central, and essential rather than with the atypical, marginal, and accidental (what is typical, central, and essential is more fully present to us than what is not); with voice, the real and stable rather than with silence, the unreal and the changing (for obvious reasons); with the certain, immediate and literal rather than the dubitable, mediate, and metaphorical (again, for obvious reasons); and with the spoken rather than with the written (for reasons to be discussed below).[1]

In Derrida's opinion, the existence of the dichotomies in various contexts is frequently tacit, and the preference for the first term over the second is sometimes even denied. So are the connections among the favored terms. To Derrida, the uncovering of these dichotomies and the relations within and among them is part of his philosophical achievement. He calls the preference in Western philosophy (and Western civilization generally) for the first terms in the dichotomies "logocentrism."[2] Derrida's overall project is to destroy logocentrism

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[1] *See, e.g.*, JACQUES DERRIDA, DE LA GRAMMATOLOGIE 23 (1967) [hereinafter DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE]; *see also* Jacques Derrida, *La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines, in* JACQUES DERRIDA, L'ECRITURE ET LA DIFFÉRENCE 411 (1967).

[2] To the best of my knowledge, Derrida never specifies whether in his opinion logocentrism is only or mostly a Western phenomenon. But in his view, logocentrism is tied with phonetic-alphabetical writing whereas the pictographic Chinese writing is free from this bias. *See* JACQUES DERRIDA, MARGES DE LA PHILOSOPHIE 119-23 (1972) [hereinafter DERRIDA, MARGES]; *see also* DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1, at 41. Moreover, in a few places he mentions that a certain logocentric phenomenon pervades all *Western* civilization. *See, e.g.*, JACQUES DERRIDA, POSITIONS 19 (1972) [hereinafter DERRIDA, POSITIONS]. Furthermore, he deconstructs only Western texts. This is strange since other Eastern alphabets (e.g., the Indian Devanagri) are not pictographic, and, at least prima facie, there seem to be strong logocentric elements in Eastern cultures as well (e.g., in Chinese Daoism and Confucianism).

by means of deconstruction.

Derrida emphasizes some dichotomies more than others.[3] It has already been shown above how the dichotomy of presence and absence is connected to other dichotomies. In fact, the phenomenon of presencing (of preferring presence to absence) is so important to Derrida that he calls philosophy "the metaphysics of presencing."[4]

Another such dichotomy is that of speaking and writing.[5] Speaking has been traditionally favored over writing, according to Derrida, because the latter has been seen as an imitation, or signifier, of the former. Moreover, speaking can take place at the time of thinking, and thus has an element of immediacy and presencing in it, whereas writing does not. The preference for speaking over writing, then, corresponds to the preference for signified over signifier, original over imitation, immediate over mediate, and presence over absence, and thus is part of the logocentric tradition.[6] In Derrida's opinion it is such an important part of logocentrism that it deserves a special name, "phonocentrism."[7]

Some of the preferences Derrida discusses are obvious. It is clear that in most of Western tradition, being has been preferred to non-being, stability has been preferred to change, and the essential has been preferred to the accidental. It is less obvious that speaking has been preferred to writing or nature to culture. I shall not elaborate here on how Derrida tries to prove that such preferences do in fact exist. Many of his writings are dedicated to uncovering—in some cases more convincingly than in others—these preferences in the writings of Rousseau, de Saussure, Levi-Strauss and others.

II

But how precisely does deconstruction operate? What are Derrida's methods of deconstruction and how does he justify their use? In Derrida's early writings his general strategy is to show that in fact the favored term is never self-sufficient and pure.[8] Derrida shows that the preferred term is always related to the disfavored term and hence,

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[3] The status of the emphasized dichotomies in Derrida's writings is not completely clear. It is uncertain whether emphasized dichotomies are taken to be more logocentric than others, whether they are taken to pervade others and actually influence them, or whether the practice of emphasizing a dichotomy is merely a heuristic device for Derrida.

[4] *E.g.*, DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1, at 191.

[5] *Id.* at 42-45.

[6] *Id.* at 23.

[7] *Id.*

[8] Derrida himself usually does not see the ways of deconstruction as strategies he uses, but as processes that happen in the text by themselves which he merely uncovers.

in Derrida's opinion, is in some sense dependent upon it. Thus, one of the arguments that Derrida uses in order to deconstruct the speaking-writing dichotomy is that writing can do the job that speech cannot: it can technically repeat speech where and when speech itself is not present. But this repeatability is a necessary condition for speaking to make sense at all.[9] Derrida seems to argue, perhaps under the influence of Wittgenstein's private language argument, that only because speech has a fixed meaning which can be repeated in different contexts can it make sense to us at all. But if this essential characteristic of writing, namely repeatability, is a necessary condition for speaking, then writing is not secondary to speaking, as it has traditionally been viewed. On the contrary, speaking is secondary to writing.

Likewise, in what may be called the main body/supplement dichotomy,[10] it is the main body which is traditionally favored. The supplement is taken to be an external, inessential addition to the main body. Hence, whereas the main body is understood to be independent of the supplement and self-sufficient, the supplement is not understood to be independent of the main body. But Derrida tries to reverse the traditional relationship between the two concepts. According to his analysis, the supplement can perform as such only because (1) there are some characteristics common to it and to the main body and (2) because there is something missing in the main body which can be supplemented. For example, in Rousseau's *Confessions*, writing is needed to supplement speaking since there is something which both it and speaking can do (namely, emphasize Rousseau's worth as a thinker and human being), but writing does it better than speaking.[11] Hence, in one sense at least, the supplement is an essential part of the main body and can even be seen as logically prior to it. The deconstruction of this dichotomy is important in Derrida's writings, since once the supplement is emphasized and taken to be prior to the main body, many deconstructions which hitherto seemed absurd look more plausible.

A close but still somewhat different strategy is to show that the distinction between the two terms in a dichotomy does not hold. Once the distinction is collapsed, the two terms are reduced into one. Thus, for example, Derrida claims that since signifieds and signifiers are never completely independent of one another, the distinction between them should not be accepted.[12] Hence, signifiers should not be

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9 DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1, at 65.
10 Derrida himself does not use the term "main body" but only the term "supplement."
11 DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1, at 205.
12 DERRIDA, POSITIONS, *supra* note 2, at 28-30.

understood as referring to signifieds, as they traditionally have been, but only as referring to other signifiers. This deconstruction, too, is important in Derrida's writings. Again, once deconstruction stops referring signifiers to signifieds (for example, physical objects, intentional states), but only to other signifiers, many of Derrida's deconstructions seem less absurd. Put differently, once a text is understood as not referring to anything outside it, it is easier to interpret it in any way whatsoever.

A third strategy for demonstrating that the favored term is never self-sufficient and pure is to show that it is part of an infinite series of terms, each of which is favored in comparison to some terms and disfavored in comparison to others. This shows that there are no absolute, pure terms (which might have existed at the ends of the chains if the chains were finite). Moreover, it is shown that preferability is relative to a context and hence that, in some sense, the context is prior to it. Thus, for example, Derrida shows that for Rousseau, writing is a supplement to speech, but speech is a supplement to nonverbal activity. Again, in Rousseau's *Confessions*, the recollections of Maman are a substitute for Maman herself, but Maman, in turn, is a substitute for the mother herself who, Derrida thinks, will also be a substitute for something.[13] On this basis Derrida concludes that there is an endless chain of such terms, all relative to each other.

A fourth strategy is to apply a distinction onto itself reflexively and thus show that it itself is imbued with the disfavored term. For example, Derrida shows that when Aristotle and other philosophers discuss the nature of metaphors (and thereby the distinction between metaphors and non-metaphors), they use metaphors in the discussions themselves. Hence, Derrida claims, the effort to delineate a purely non-metaphorical communication fails. Non-metaphorical speech or writing is dependent, in some way, on the metaphorical.[14] Similarly, Derrida points out that philosophers who condemned writing still used it in the process of condemnation.[15]

Derrida takes all these cases to show, first, that the disfavored term is all-pervasive and inescapable, whether recognized and wanted or not. Second, the distinction between the favored and the disfavored terms is never clear-cut; the disfavored term is part of the nature of the favored one and is assumed by it. Hence, the favored term is never pure. Third, Derrida concludes that the traditional way of seeing the hierarchical dichotomy is wrong, and hence it is also wrong

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[13] Derrida, Grammatologie, *supra* note 1, at 219-26.
[14] Jacques Derrida, *La Mythologie blanche*, in Derrida, Marges, *supra* note 2, at 301.
[15] Jacques Derrida, La Dissémination 182-88 (1972).

to see the disfavored term as a deprived version of the favored term and as dependent upon it. On the contrary, the relationship between the two terms should be reversed, and the hitherto favored term should be seen as dependent on the hitherto disfavored one.[16]

But the deconstructive inversion is not to be understood as merely reversing the order of the hierarchy in the dichotomy by switching the places of the favored and disfavored terms. Since the characteristics of the deconstructed, newly-understood unfavored term are now seen as common to both terms, the distinction between them does not hold, and the whole dichotomy collapses. For example, Derrida says about this deconstructed, newly-understood writing:

> The thesis . . . must forbid a radical distinction between the linguistic and the graphic sign. . . .
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>   . . . [F]rom the moment that one considers the totality of determined signs, spoken, and a fortiori written, as unmotivated institutions, one must exclude any relationship of natural subordination, any natural hierarchy among signifiers or orders of signifiers. If "writing" signifies inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign (and that is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing in general covers the entire field of linguistic signs. In that field a certain sort of instituted signifiers may then appear, "graphic" in the narrow and derivative sense of the word, ordered by a certain relationship with other instituted—hence "written," even if they are "phonic"—signifiers.[17]

Pre-deconstructed speaking and writing, then, can be seen as narrow and somewhat distorted derivations of deconstructed speaking and writing, which Derrida, for this reason, sometimes calls "arche-writing."[18] The same is true for absence in the dichotomy of presence/absence or for supplement in the dichotomy of main body/supplement. The hierarchical, dichotomic distinction between the pre-deconstructed favored and disfavored terms collapses when the deconstructed disfavored term is revealed as basic to both.

Deconstruction functions, then, by bringing to the surface some tacit aspects of the two terms and thereby introducing a new understanding of their nature. According to this new understanding, some of the characteristics of the disfavored terms, previously taken to con-

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16 DERRIDA, POSITIONS, *supra* note 2, at 56-57.

17 JACQUES DERRIDA, OF GRAMMATOLOGY 44 (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak trans., 1976); *see also* DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1, at 65.

18 *See, e.g.*, DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1, at 65-86, 202; *see also* DERRIDA, MARGES, *supra* note 2, at 14.

stitute their inferiority in dichotomic hierarchies, are in fact common and essential to both the disfavored and the favored terms.

But in all the examples above, Derrida succeeds in making his point for only a few aspects of the terms discussed. Moreover, even with those few aspects, he does not always succeed in making his point fully. Hence, some might object that the deconstruction only emphasizes some hitherto unnoticed aspects of traditional dichotomies, but does not undermine them altogether. Derrida would fully agree with this view, although he might emphasize the deconstructed aspects of the dichotomies more than his critics would. He would say that the hierarchical dichotomy is partly retained in the deconstruction,[19] thus constituting an interplay between the pre-deconstructed and deconstructed dichotomies. Rather than being a harmonious synthesis, the interplay consists of an aporetic alternation between the dissatisfying emphasis on some aspects and the unsatisfying emphasis on others.[20] This interplay is called by Derrida "*différance*," a word he created by adding the French noun suffix *ance* to the verb *différer*, which means both to differ and to defer. According to this understanding, then, deconstruction does not simply replace a pre-deconstructed dichotomy with a deconstructed one. The two facets of the dichotomy continue to relate to one another in disharmony.[21]

The deconstruction, as it has been presented thus far, seems to have the following characteristics: first, although it is untraditional, it still can be said to "make sense" according to the regular use of this term. Even the interplay between the pre-deconstructed and deconstructed dichotomies can be said to make sense, although it is hard to accept.

Second, the deconstruction operates primarily in the framework of dichotomies. Thus, in Derrida's earlier writings the deconstructed term has only one other term as its "other," rather than any other term whatsoever.

Third, this deconstruction frequently retains some of the features of the pre-deconstruction. The deconstructed, disfavored term differs from the pre-deconstructed one, but not radically and not in all aspects.

Fourth, Derrida's strategies seem to be analogous, by and large, to regular arguments. He relies on references and citations from the texts he discusses to argue for what seem to be stable conclusions concerning new dichotomies and their new terms. It is true that some of

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[19] DERRIDA, MARGES, *supra* note 2, at 14.
[20] DERRIDA, POSITIONS, *supra* note 2, at 56-57.
[21] Jacques Derrida, *La Différance, in* DERRIDA, MARGES, *supra* note 2, at 1.

these arguments seem very weak. For example, in Rousseau's *Emile* Derrida uncovers only a three-link-long chain of supplements and in the *Confessions* only a four-link-long chain of supplements. Derrida chooses to conclude from his examples that there are long, perhaps endless chains of such terms, but his examples could as easily have justified the conclusion that all chains are finite, having at their ends pure, absolute terms. Likewise, although Aristotle and other philosophers do sometimes use metaphors when they discuss the nature of metaphors (and thereby try to demarcate between metaphors and non-metaphors), their language is neither exclusively nor even primarily metaphorical. One can easily see how these philosophers could have expressed their views concerning metaphors equally well without using any. Again, the condemnation of writing is, of course, presented to us in written form, but could just as easily have been presented in spoken form (as it probably was initially). In all of these cases, then, Derrida's claim that the disfavored term is all-pervasive is not sufficiently substantiated. But although these arguments are weak, arguments they are.

Even the way the writings are written is quite conventional. *De la Grammatologie*, for example, reads by and large like a regular book. It argues in a more or less organized fashion for a thesis, namely that there is in our culture a pervasive phonocentric bias that should be eliminated. Further, it is easy to distinguish between Derrida's own views and those he outlines but does not agree with. Similarly, it is easy to tell when the texts discussed are already deconstructed and when they are not. Even the physical layout of these writings looks conventional.

In all of these ways, the deconstruction in Derrida's earlier writings is not radically different from, for example, Freud's understanding of the conscious/unconscious dichotomy, which makes the newly understood unconscious, rather than the conscious, the more fundamental term.[22] It is true that Freud does not use Derrida's methods of deconstruction. He is more committed to his views than Derrida is committed to his own. Freud aims to deconstruct only a limited number of dichotomies whereas Derrida aims to deconstruct many. Freud treats his investigations seriously whereas Derrida treats his somewhat playfully. Finally, unlike Derrida, Freud does not think that there are any paradoxical relations between an old dichotomy and a new disfavored term. Notwithstanding these differences, however, the similarities between Freud's analyses and Derrida's decon-

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[22] *See* JONATHAN CULLER, ON DECONSTRUCTION: THEORY AND CRITICISM AFTER STRUCTURALISM 159 (1982).

struction are significant enough to show that this early deconstruction is not as iconoclastic and anarchistic as it might first seem.

III

But Derrida uses other, very different strategies of deconstruction as well. One such strategy is the use of wordplay. Thus, for example, in *La Vérité en peinture*, he connects the German word for "I" (*Ich*) with the Hebrew word for "man" (in English transliteration: Ish) since they sound the same.[23] Similarly, in *Glas*, Derrida connects the initials of the French words *"savoir absolu"* (*sa*) with the beginning of the name of the Roman god *Sa*turn and with the French word for "it" (*ça*).[24] Note that Derrida does not claim, as Heidegger might have, that one of these words evolved from the other or that they have the same root. He merely relies on the fact that the words or parts of words sound almost the same.[25]

Another strategy Derrida uses is based not only on wordplay, but on associations in general. Thus, for example, in his *Glas*, he associates a throne with a volcano, a toilet seat, and a truncated pyramid.[26] Likewise, in his essay "La Différance," Derrida associates the silence of the *a* in the word *"différance"* (according to him it is an unexpressed *a*) with Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, a pyramid, the silence of tombs (the *a* is silent and the pyramid is a tomb), the "economy of death," and more.[27]

A third strategy, which partly overlaps the previous ones, is to use humor, irony, or simply nonsense. Derrida himself says in *Spurs* that "the text will remain indefinitely open, cryptic, and parodying."[28] Indeed, at least some of the wordplays and associations Derrida uses impart the feeling that he is playfully parodying or even ridiculing his readers. The same feeling arises when Derrida answers John Searle's objections by making puns on some of Searle's sentences and meticulously quoting others out of context.[29]

Derrida even uses a new way of writing.[30] His new writings no

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[23] JACQUES DERRIDA, LA VÉRITÉ EN PEINTURE 189 (1978).

[24] JACQUES DERRIDA, GLAS 239-63 (1974).

[25] Of course, although the two terms *sound* the same, they are *written* differently. It is interesting that Derrida is ready here to favor sound over writing, since such a move would usually be condemned by him as phonocentric.

[26] DERRIDA, GLAS, *supra* note 24, at 46-47.

[27] DERRIDA, MARGES, *supra* note 2, at 4.

[28] JACQUES DERRIDA, SPURS: NIETZSCHE'S STYLES (EPERONS: LE STYLES DE NIETZSCHE) 137 (Barbara Harlow trans., bilingual ed., 1979) [hereinafter DERRIDA, SPURS].

[29] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, reprinted in 2 GLYPH: JOHNS HOPKINS TEXTUAL STUDIES 162 (1977) [hereinafter Derrida, *Limited Inc*].

[30] Jacques Derrida, *La Différance*, *in* DERRIDA, MARGES, *supra* note 2, at 1.

longer read like regular books. They no longer argue in a more or less organized way for a thesis, and it is frequently difficult and sometimes impossible to decide which parts represent the views of Derrida himself, and which represent the views of the authors Derrida writes about; which constitute the pre-deconstructed text and which constitute the deconstructed one. In some cases even the physical layout of the writings changes. Derrida's "Tympan" in *Marges* and his whole *Glas*, for example, are built in a new way. Each page of *Glas* consists of one column which discusses Hegel and another which discusses Genet. It is uncertain whether the two columns relate to one another or are completely unrelated.[31]

These strategies are different in essence from the ones discussed in the previous section. They are not on a par with arguments in which references and reasons are used in order to arrive at stable conclusions. No longer does the deconstructed text retain essential features of the pre-deconstructed one; they seem radically different. Without knowing the pun or association which relates them, it is sometimes difficult to see that they are related at all. This new kind of deconstruction cannot be said to "make sense" in the way the earlier deconstruction did, nor does it operate only in the framework of dichotomies. Hence, the "other" of the deconstructed term can be almost any term whatsoever. The new kind of deconstruction can no longer be said to be more or less understandable.

Thus, whereas the deconstruction discussed earlier combines openness *and* stability, this deconstruction seems to offer *only* openness. Whereas the earlier deconstruction can still be understood in terms of a Wittgensteinian language game, the later deconstruction cannot; there are no rules in it, or if there are rules, they change all the time. Hence, Derrida can say in his later writings of Nietzsche's exclamation, "I have forgotten my umbrella" that "a thousand possibilities [to understand it] will remain open."[32] Rather than resembling Freud's analyses, the new type of deconstruction seems close to Dadaism or to the writings of Raymond Queneau and Alfred Jarry. Unlike the deconstruction discussed earlier, this kind of deconstruction is essentially iconoclastic and anarchistic.[33]

IV

How can the differences between these two accounts of the nature of deconstruction be explained? The answer, in my view, is that

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[31] *See also* DERRIDA, LA DISSÉMINATION, *supra* note 15, at 355-57.

[32] Derrida, *Limited Inc*, *supra* note 29, at 201.

[33] *See* DERRIDA, SPURS, *supra* note 28, at 134-37.

Derrida in fact has two different deconstructions, and not one. The portrayal of deconstruction in sections I and II is based predominantly on Derrida's three 1967 books (*La Voix et le phénomène, De la Grammatologie* and *L'Ecriture et la différence*). The portrayal of deconstruction in section III is based predominantly on the way it appears in the works Derrida published from 1974 onwards: *Glas* (1974), *L'Age de Hegel* and "Limited Inc" (1977), *La Vérité en peinture* (1978), *La Carte postale* (1980), etc. The books of 1972-73 (*La Dissémination, Marges de la philosophie,* and *Positions* in 1972, *L'Archéologie du frivole* in 1973) seem to be in between. *Positions* is a series of interviews done with Derrida from 1967 to 1972 and reads like an ordinary book. *La Dissémination* and *Marges,* collections of lectures and essays written during this period, vary from ordinary reading to his new style. The essays "La Différance" and "Les Fins de l'homme" in *Marges,* for example, seem closer to the 1967 works, whereas "Tympan" is clearly closer to those written in and after 1974. *L'Archéologie du frivole* seems to be more on the "1974 and after" side.

If this indeed is the case, then between the years 1967 and 1974 Derrida's deconstruction underwent a number of changes. A distinction should be made between an "early deconstruction" and a "later deconstruction," and between an "early Derrida" and a "later Derrida," just as is done for Heidegger or Marx. True, these distinctions are not clear-cut. Wordplays already appear in *De la Grammatologie,* and Derrida already recommends the use of humor and playfulness in *L'Ecriture et la différence.*[34] Moreover, some instances of "early" strategies (even some of those shown in section II above) are found in "later" writings. Nevertheless, early strategies are much more predominant in the 1967 books, as later strategies are in the books that appeared from 1972 onwards. The distinction between early and later deconstruction, then, is based on the different emphasis placed on certain strategies. Although the difference between them is not clear-cut, it still exists.

Acknowledging the distinction between the early and later deconstructions can also solve a disagreement in Derrida scholarship. Some scholars, such as Geoffrey Hartman[35] and Wayne Booth,[36] take deconstruction to be an "everything goes," iconoclastic and anarchis-

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[34] DERRIDA, L'ECRITURE ET LA DIFFÉRENCE, *supra* note 1, at 427-28 (1967).

[35] GEOFFREY H. HARTMAN, SAVING THE TEXT: LITERATURE/DERRIDA/ PHILOSOPHY 33 (1981).

[36] WAYNE C. BOOTH, CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING: THE POWERS AND LIMITS OF PLURALISM 216, 262 (1979).

tic activity. Others, such as Jonathan Culler[37] and Christopher Norris,[38] see deconstruction along more conservative lines. Both parties bring strong evidence for their views. Hence, trying to solve the disagreement by claiming that one view is completely wrong will not do.

Solving the confusion or disagreement by claiming—as I do here—that contrary characteristics belong not to one deconstruction but to two, will probably seem to many Derrida scholars logocentric and dichotomic. Nevertheless, it seems that only such a distinction can do justice to the contradictory characteristics of deconstruction observed above, and to the evidence both parties bring. The distinction enables opposing characteristics not to contradict one another in one deconstruction, but to coexist beside one another in two. For the price of having to accept two deconstructions, one buys consistency and freedom from contradictions in each of them. Hence, I think that the supposition that in different periods Derrida understood and used deconstruction in different ways has to be accepted.

V

But why did Derrida change his understanding of deconstruction? And what is the relationship between his two types of deconstruction?

In his early writings Derrida deconstructs many dichotomies, but not all of them. For example, he deconstructs the dichotomies of presence/absence and speaking/writing, but although they are no less central to logocentrism, he does not deconstruct those of essential/accidental, central/marginal, and typical/atypical. Derrida does not deconstruct these latter dichotomies when he discusses other authors. For example, although he deconstructs the dichotomy of speaking/writing in the works of Rousseau and de Saussure, he does not deconstruct the dichotomies of essential/accidental, central/marginal, or typical/atypical in them. In other words, Derrida does not emphasize the atypical, marginal, and accidental over the typical, central, and essential in these texts. Thus, the deconstructed texts do not seem, at this stage, radically different from the pre-deconstructed ones, and the relationship between them is understandable.

Furthermore, Derrida refrains from deconstructing the latter dichotomies when he deconstructs his own deconstruction. Although he does deconstruct the dichotomy of speaking/writing in his own writings by trying to write in a nonphonocentric way, he does not

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[37] CULLER, *supra* note 22, at 132.
[38] CHRISTOPHER NORRIS, DERRIDA 179-83 (1987).

deconstruct in them the dichotomies of essential/accidental, central/marginal, or typical/atypical. In other words, he does not emphasize the atypical, marginal, and accidental to his deconstruction over the typical, central, and essential. Thus, Derrida's early deconstruction does have some typical, central, and essential characteristics. Hence, it is possible to "make sense" of it. If only different accidental, marginal, or atypical aspects of the deconstruction were used each time deconstruction was employed, it would have made no sense.

Thus, in Derrida's early deconstruction, both the deconstructed texts and the deconstructive process itself remain somewhat logocentric. Both the deconstructed texts and the deconstruction itself can still be characterized by some essential, central, and typical features rather than by only accidental, marginal, and atypical ones (which, of course, in order not to become essential, central, and typical, would have to keep changing all the time).

In Derrida's later writings, on the other hand, the dichotomies of essential/accidental, central/marginal, and typical/atypical are deconstructed as well. This is true not only of the texts that Derrida deconstructs, but also of his own deconstruction itself. In other words, even in his own deconstruction Derrida emphasizes the accidental, marginal, and atypical over the essential, central, and typical.

To achieve this end Derrida uses humor, irony, puns, and associations. Humor and irony enable one to say things without committing oneself to them. Thus, being ironical and humorous, Derrida can criticize logocentrism without at the same time committing himself to a certain view or thesis or admitting that he means what he says—in short, without being logocentric himself. Further, since Derrida does not use puns and associations in his deconstructions differently than he would in non-deconstructive contexts, he makes it difficult to distinguish deconstruction from non-deconstruction. Moreover, he uses the puns and associations in a sporadic and disordered way, making it difficult to see them as part of a method.

The later deconstruction, then, is a more complete and total deconstruction than the early one, and the early deconstruction can be seen as a partial and undeveloped form of the later.

VI

It is interesting to note that some of the things Derrida says of deconstruction in his early writings fit the actual deconstruction he uses only in the later ones. For example, in *De la Grammatologie*, which appeared in 1967, he says that deconstruction "menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with

itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis. Cutting breath short, sterilizing or immobilizing spiritual creation in the repetition of the letter is . . . the principle of death and of difference in the becoming of being."[39] But this seems more true of Derrida's later deconstruction than of that in *De la Grammatologie*. Likewise, Derrida is already conscious of the need to present a non-logocentric deconstruction, or to deconstruct deconstruction itself, already in his 1968 essay "Les Fins de l'homme." He wonders what the proper means toward such a deconstruction would be and suggests, for example, that "it is perhaps a change of style that we need"[40] and, more specifically, that perhaps "several languages must be spoken and several texts produced at the same time."[41] But these suggestions are taken up only in his later writings, such as *Glas*.

If Derrida already had an outline of a completely non-logocentric deconstruction in his early writings, why is the actual deconstruction he uses at that period still partly logocentric? Why did the realization of this model have to wait a number of years? Although Derrida already had the model of complete deconstruction in his early writings, he was not yet sure of his whole project and wanted to develop and reflect on it gradually. Furthermore, at that time, he still needed to present, both to others and to himself, a more or less stable picture of what deconstruction is, and deconstructing his own deconstruction would not have permitted such a presentation. Moreover, at that stage of experimentation, he wanted his deconstruction to be convincing and to make sense as much as possible, both to others and to himself, which a deconstructed deconstruction would not have allowed. Thus, in his early period Derrida presented a total deconstruction only as an ideal, without yet trying to carry it out.

But the more Derrida deconstructed, the more he apparently came to feel the gap between the actual deconstruction he was using and the model of deconstruction he had in mind. Thus, he slowly changed the nature of his deconstruction. He began to emphasize more strategies, such as association, punning, joking, which were used in his early writings only in a limited way, and began writing his texts differently. Thus his deconstruction changed and stopped being logocentric.

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39 DERRIDA, OF GRAMMATOLOGY, *supra* note 17, at 25; *see also* DERRIDA, GRAMMATOLOGIE, *supra* note 1 at 40-41.

40 Jacques Derrida, *The Ends of Man, in* 30 PHILOSOPHY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH 31, 56-57 (Jacques Derrida et al. trans., 1969) [hereinafter Derrida, *The Ends of Man*]; *see also* Jacques Derrida, *Les Fins de l'homme, in* DERRIDA, MARGES, *supra* note 2, at 163.

41 Derrida, *The Ends of Man, supra* note 40, at 56.

All in all, Derrida's basic model, according to which everything, including the deconstruction itself, should be deconstructed, is common both to his early and his later writings. This basic model remained the same. Only the actual deconstruction he used changed; consciously or unconsciously, Derrida came to see that although his early deconstruction had been necessary in order to introduce it, it did not fit his concept of what deconstruction should be. Thus, to fit his model, he shifted from his early non-totalistic deconstruction to his later, totalistic one.

But if the shift is only in the actual deconstruction Derrida uses, and not in his model of deconstruction, is it really a paradigm shift of the type familiar to us from the early and later Wittgenstein or the early and later Marx? I think that the answer is affirmative. In his early writings, where deconstruction is incomplete and somewhat logocentric, Derrida can still be seen as part of the logocentric tradition. True, he criticizes logocentrism; but he still largely uses the same logocentric tools and ways of thought that he criticizes. In other words, in Derrida's early writings he criticizes logocentrism from within the logocentric tradition, as if admitting that although there are problems with it, it is unavoidable and there is no alternative to it.

It is only in Derrida's later writings, when he uses a complete, non-logocentric deconstruction, that he goes beyond a criticism of logocentrism to giving us an actual alternative. It is only in the later writings that he really shows us not only that there are problems in the old ways of philosophizing, but also that there are new ways of doing so. The actual use of a full and radical deconstruction in the later writings marks a paradigm shift since it shows that logocentrism is avoidable. Only then does deconstruction become a method on its own, an alternative, a suggestion of a new way of going about reading, writing and thinking. The use of a radical and complete deconstruction in the later writings, then, can be seen as a beginning of a new era in deconstruction. Hence, the change from the early to the later Derrida should be seen as a paradigm shift, as dramatic as the change from the early to the later Wittgenstein or from the early to the later Marx.