Difference, Boundaries and Violence:

A Philosophical Exploration Informed by Critical Complexity Theory and Deconstruction

by

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a philosophical exposition of violence informed by two theoretical positions which confront complexity as a phenomenon. These positions are complexity theory and deconstruction. Both develop systems-based understandings of complex phenomena in which relations of difference are constitutive of the meaning of those phenomena. There has been no focused investigation of the implications of complexity for the conceptualisation of violence thus far. In response to this theoretical gap, this thesis begins by distinguishing complexity theory as a general, trans-disciplinary field of study from *critical* complexity theory. The latter is used to develop a critique and criticism of epistemological foundationalism, emphasising the limits to knowledge and the normative and ethical dimension of knowledge and understanding. The epistemological break implied by this critique reiterates the epistemological shift permeating the work of, among others, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jacques Derrida. In this context, critical complexity theory begins to articulate the idea of violence on two levels: first, as an empirical, ethical problem in the system; and, secondly, as asymmetry and antagonism. Violence in this second sense is implicated in the dynamic relations of difference through which structure and meaning are generated in complex organisation. The sensitivity to difference and violence shared by critical complexity theory and deconstruction allows for the parallel reading of these philosophical perspectives; and for the supplementation and opening of critical complexity theory by deconstruction within the architecture of this thesis. This supplementation seeks to preserve the singularity of each perspective, while exploring the potential of their points of affinity and tension in the production of a coherent philosophical analysis of violence. Deconstruction offers a more developed understanding of violence and a wealth of related motifs: *différance*, framing, law, singularity, aesthetics and others. These motifs necessitate the inclusion of other philosophical voices, notably, that of Nietzsche, Arendt, Kant, Levinas, and Benjamin. In conversation with these authors, this thesis links violence to meaning, to its possibility, to its production and to the process by which meaning comes to change. Given these links, violence is conceptualised in relation to the notion of difference on three distinct levels. The first is the difference between elements in a complex system of meaning; the second is the notion of difference between systems or texts around which boundaries or frames can be drawn; and the third is the notion of difference between meaning and the absence of meaning. This discussion examines the relationship between this violence implicated in the constitution of meaning and the more colloquial understanding of violence as atrocity, as rape, murder and other socially, politically and ethically problematic expressions thereof. It is to empirical violence, following Derrida and Levinas, that we are called to respond and to intervene in the suffering of the other. The ethical and political necessity of response anchors this discussion of violence. And, it is towards the possibility of an adequate response – the possibility of an ethics sensitive to its own violence and a politics that is directed at the eradication of empirical violence – which this discussion navigates.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis is ’n filosofiese uiteensetting van geweld wat deur twee denkwyses ingelig word wat kompleksiteit as fenomeen konfronteer. Hierdie denkwyses is kompleksiteitsteorie en dekonstruksie. Altwee ontwikkel sisteemgebaseerde verduidelikings van komplekse fenomene waar verhoudings van verskille die betekenis van hierdie fenomene beslaan. Daar is tot dusver nog geen gefokusde ondersoek na die implikasies van kompleksiteit vir die konsepsualisering van geweld nie. As antwoord op hierdie teoretiese leemte, begin hierdie tesis deur kompleksiteitsteorie as ’n algemene, trans-dissiplinêre studierigting van *kritiese* kompleksiteitsteorie te onderskei. Laasgenoemde word gebruik om kritiese denke van epistemologiese grondslae te ontwikkel, en beklemtoon die perke op kennis en die normatiewe en etiese aspek van kennis en verstaan. Die epistemologiese verwydering wat deur hierdie kritiek geïmpliseer word, herhaal die epistemologiese verskuiwing wat die werk van onder andere Friedrich Nietzsche en Jacques Derrida, deurdring. In hierdie konteks begin kritiese kompleksiteitsteorie om die konsep van geweld op twee vlakke te verwoord: eerstens as ’n empiriese, etiese probleem in die stelsel en tweedens as asimmetrie en antagonisme. Geweld in die tweede opsig word in die dinamiese verhoudings van verskil geïmpliseer, waar struktuur en betekenis in komplekse organisasie gegenereer word. Die sensitiwiteit vir verskil en geweld wat deur kritiese kompleksiteitsteorie en dekonstruksie gedeel word neem parallelle lesings van hierdie filosofiese perspektiewe in ag; sowel as die aanvulling en oopmaak van kritiese kompleksiteitsteorie deur dekonstruksie binne die struktuur van hierdie tesis. Hierdie aanvulling wil die enkelvoudigheid van elke perspektief bewaar, terwyl dit die potensiaal van hul punte van verwantskap en spanning in die produksie van ’n koherente filosofiese analise van geweld verken. Dekonstruksie bied ’n meer ontwikkelde verstaan van geweld en ’n rykdom van verwante motiewe: *différance*, beraming, wet, enkelvoudigheid, estetika en ander. Hierdie motiewe noodsaak die insluiting van ander filosofiese stemme, soos Nietzsche, Arendt, Kant, Levinas en Benjamin. Hierdie tesis tree in gesprek met hierdie skrywers en skakel geweld aan betekenis, aan die moontlikheid, aan die produksie en aan die proses waardeur betekenis na verandering lei. Gegewe hierdie skakels, word geweld in verhouding tot die begrip van verskil op drie spesifieke vlakke gekonsepsualiseer. Die eerste is die verskil tussen elemente in ’n komplekse stelstel van betekenis; die tweede is die begrip van verskil tussen stelsels of tekste waar grense of rame om getrek kan word; en die derde is die begrip van verskil tussen betekenis en die afwesigheid van betekenis. Hierdie bespreking stel ondersoek in na die verhouding tussen hierdie geweld wat in die samestelling van betekenis geïmpliseer word en die meer alledaagse verstaan van geweld as wreedardigheid, as verkragting, moord en ander maatskaplike, politiese en etiese problematiese uitdrukkings daarvan. Ons word geroep om op empiriese geweld, in navolging van Derrida en Levinas, te reageer en in te gryp om die lyding van ander te keer. Die etiese en politiese noodsaaklikheid van reaksie dien as grondslag vir hierdie bespreking van geweld. Uiteindelik beweeg hierdie bespreking nader aan die moontlikheid van ’n voldoende reaksie – die moontlikheid van ’n etiek wat sensitief vir sy eie geweld is en ’n politiek wat op die uitwis van empiriese geweld gerig is.

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INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL COMPLEXITY THEORY, DECONSTRUCTION AND VIOLENCE

I. VIOLENCE AND THE COMPLEX SYSTEM

Where to begin a philosophical discussion of violence seems an impossible decision in light of the sheer vastness, pervasiveness and diversity of atrocity in the history of humanity. Violence is not confined to deliberate acts of overt cruelty – rape, murder, torture, genocide – but can be present even in the most intimate and caring engagements: in the reproachful eye of a mother; in the smothering expectation of a family; in the structuring of a well-ordered society; and in the promulgation of categories that make sense of our world – of race, class, gender and others. To begin a litany of violence is an impossible task. One would need to offer explanations of each of the unthinkable list of human atrocity between persons, between groups and in human engagement with animals and the natural world, while simultaneously engaging every possible theoretical tool in the pursuit of the perfect lens through which to view this terrible terrain. The impossibility of this task must be acknowledged before this project can begin. Given the overwhelming territory through which an exposition of violence must navigate, Beatrice Hanssen (2000: 9) argues that an attempt to begin to articulate the meaning of violence must confine itself to a certain perspective for which the context and application must be made explicit, its limitations must be made transparent. It should not present itself as a final and consummate explanation. In terms of this particular project, violence is examined as a general philosophical, ethical and political problem, for human beings in a social system, where individuals, socials systems and the environments in which they organise themselves are considered as complex, dynamic and interrelated systems of meaning. In this investigation, the relationship between meaning and violence is a significant theme to which permeates the entire discussion.

The model of complex systems used in this thesis draws on the respective works of Edgar Morin (1983a; 1983b; 1992; 2005; 2007) and Paul Cilliers (1998a; 2000a; 2000c; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2006)[1]This model is a means of understanding the world and of interrogating the act of understanding itself. This project follows the theoretical trail via Morin (1992: 99) and Cilliers (1998a: 37-44), through to Ferdinand de Saussure's (1983) systems-based understanding of meaning, to Jacques Derrida's (1997) poststructuralist engagement with Saussure's difference-oriented thinking. Two texts frame the engagement between complexity theory and deconstruction. The first is Derrida's (2001: 351-370) *Signature, Event, Context in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* in which systems-based structure, particularly dynamic and 'complex' structure, is addressed. The

[1] The texts listed in this reference represent Paul Cilliers' complexity-centred texts that inform the general characterisation of critical complexity theory in chapter 1. Other of Cilliers' – own and co-authored – texts are used; however, this initial selection covers central concepts and ideas. See the reference list for full details.

second text, *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1997), is Derrida's most explicit engagement with systems thinking, the general structures of meaning, and with Saussure. These two texts reach out in the direction of Saussure and structuralist thinking, on one reading, and also relate to the wider corpus of deconstruction as a body of texts. They function, therefore, as a philosophical bridge between two distinct theoretical topographies.

Deconstruction is used to enrich the understanding of the complex system, particularly with reference to human social systems. Derrida's (1998: 9) and Elizabeth Grosz's (1998)[2] assertions of the pervasive concern with and for violence throughout Derrida's texts, provide a further motivation for including deconstruction in this discussion. It is argued in chapter 1 that critical complexity theory begins a conversation on violence without developing it into a full and explicit engagement. However, because of the relationship between critical complexity theory and deconstruction, the latter can be used to incite this development. If critical complexity theory is to be applied to social systems, then this development is imperative.

This work is a philosophical exploration of violence and complexity. The central line of argumentation in this project can be formulated in two ways. The first is this: empirical violence – violence that causes harm or suffering – is a problem in the world that requires a response; it is a problem for which theoretical insights from critical complexity theory and other complexity-informed philosophies offer an interesting and ethically and politically significant frame through which to understand it. This formulation captures the central thrust of this philosophical exposition. However, at the same time as being focused on the phenomenon of violence, this project is equally directed at exploring complexity theory and framing complexity itself as a problem to be confronted. That is, to interrogate the notion of complexity as a problem in the context of philosophical/theoretical projects – such as this one – that aim to clarify concepts such as violence with an eye to putting them into operation, of applying them in order to understand social reality. A second formulation of the central concern of this philosophical project would thus be: the acknowledgement of complexity, as it is confronted in critical complexity theory and deconstruction, has consequences for the way we understand the world; its acknowledgement thus also affects the way we understand violence in the world, which must be rethought in this new light.

The possibility that the central thesis has two distinct formulations can be explained with reference to complexity itself. In order to deal with violence *and/of/in* the complex system, as a 'part' of the system, one must approach the relationship between violence and the complex system as one would the relationship between the internal organisation of the system and the emergent system as a whole. This latter relationship is one of mutual

[2] Grosz (1998) develops this argument throughout her article, *The Time of Violence; Deconstruction and Value*, and, as such, the merit of her assertion is investigated and affirmed with reference to several of Derrida's texts in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

constitution (Morin 1992: 103, 110-111; 2005: 10). Relations at a 'lower' level of organisation generate general 'higher' level emergent structures; and the emergent whole acts back onto the internal relations through which it is constituted. The exposition of violence and the complex system thus requires that the general understanding of the system developed here is used to inform the discussion of violence in the system and vice versa. Our understanding of violence also informs our understanding of the system.

In order to set the stage for this process, this introduction offers an initial clarification of complexity and complex systems. It positions critical complexity theory in a relationship with deconstruction and introduces the philosophical perspectives that are used to supplement and complement these forms of complexity thinking. An initial sketch of the understanding of violence developed in this project is given in anticipation of the forthcoming five chapters. And, finally, the overall structure of this project is addressed and an indication of the conclusions toward which the argument develops is given, in order to orient the discussion that follows.

II. COMPLEXITY AND THE COMPLEX SYSTEM

A starting point in terms of the definition[3] of complexity is that it is a property of phenomena that cannot be simplified in order to produce a perfect description of those phenomena (Cilliers 2005b: 608). Complexity is "woven together" (Morin 2005: 6). It emerges where the relationships between components in an organisation, between these components and the organisation as a whole, and between a phenomenon and its environment cannot be understood simply by analysing either the parts or the whole in isolation. Complexity is not stored in one part of an organisation of elements. It emerges in the process of self-organisation of these elements and involves the productive interplay of order and disorder (Morin 1992: 150). Complex phenomena or complex systems cannot be given consummate descriptions and resist all modes of understanding that simplify by means of analysis (reduction of the meaning of the system to its parts) and generalisation (reduction of internal differences to allow for the appearance of identity between unlike objects) (9-10).

Having announced the impossibility of reducing complexity in order to understand complex phenomena, a fold must be inserted. Complex phenomena cannot be known in their complexity. However, simplification is necessary for understanding to take place. However, given the resistance of complex phenomena to simplification, a paradox arises. Complex phenomena cannot be reduced if they are to be understood in their complexity; complex phenomena cannot be known in their complexity and must be simplified in order to enable understanding (Cilliers 2005b: 137-138). Models that enable the understanding of complex phenomena reduce the complexity of the phenomena being observed. Therefore, although models of complex systems can be useful and produce important insights, they are inherently limited in their ability to deliver perfect knowledge.

[3] The term 'definition' is used strategically here. It is intended to refer to the meaning of complexity; however, the rigidity and finality of a definition is problematic within critical complexity theory for reasons that are discussed in chapter 1.

Models of complex systems must be distinguished from complex things in the world. Models are attempts to understand complex phenomena in a way that is sensitive to the paradoxical character of this understanding. The shift from an atomistic mode of analysis towards a systems-based understanding is fundamental to complexity-informed thinking. This shift grasps complexity as *complexus*, as interrelation between components within the whole (Morin 2005: 6). Both Cilliers (1998a: 38-44) and Morin (1992: 99), in developing their particular models of complex systems, look to Saussure's (1983: 67) system of meaning as a starting point. What is significant about Saussure's (65-67) model of language in this context is that it makes a crucial shift from attributing the meaning of signs to a self-enclosed, natural essence in the sign itself, to thinking of meaning as the result of an arbitrary system of relationships of difference between signs. Using Saussure's (1983) system, complexity theory emphasises and values difference and diversity in complex organisation.

The model of the complex system that is employed here is informed, primarily, by Cilliers' (1998a: 3-5) general characterisation of the system that draws on Saussure, other forms of systems thinking, and Derrida's poststructuralist reading of Saussure. This characterisation, explored in chapter 1 and chapter 3, frames this entire project. It is developed and supplemented throughout the discussion and exposition of violence in the system. However, the discussion is constructed on this frame.

Morin (1992: 150), after a detailed exposition of and investment in the idea of the system as the most appropriate means of understanding complex phenomena, inserts an important qualification with respect to the status of the system. He (150) argues that the system has the same epistemological status as any other model. That is to say that it cannot be metaphysically grounded. As a result, the complex system is always still provisional and subject to change and development, and, if necessary and when appropriate, it should be dropped. The appropriateness of the complex system as a model depends on the particular phenomenon under investigation, the context in which it is understood, and the motivation for this understanding (Cilliers 2000c: 32). For example, in certain situations a novel could teach us more about a country than a high-level model of the systemic relations between citizens and inhabitants. It is the position of this philosophical investigation that Nietzsche (1909; 2000; 2006) and other 'grammatologists',[4] Levinas (1979; 1986; 1989), Kafka (1948) and Zizek (2007; 2008) and many others, treat complex phenomena with sensitivity to their complexity without making explicit use of systems-based models. The complex system is merely one aid in the meaningful confrontation with complex phenomena. The insights it manages to deliver – such as the fundamental nature of difference in the system or the deep significance of relations between elements in an organisation – remain useful and important. The system is a useful epistemological tool in the context of this project and, as such, will be employed and developed throughout chapters 1 to 5.

[4] Chapter 2 clarifies the meaning of grammatological thinking. It is the philosophical attempt to think about structure as a dynamic organisation of elements without a centre from which that organisation is ordered (see Derrida 2001: 351-370 and Spivak 1997: ix–lxxxvii).

There is tension between a general theory of complexity that seeks to be relevant and applicable across many fields of intellectual endeavour, and the sensitivity to singular complex systems. This tension cannot be resolved. The development of a general model of complex systems will always be challenged by the recognition of complexity as challenge to generalisation as a form of reduction. Descriptions on a general level cannot provide a full and rich understanding of a particular system without developing that description in a specific application. And, conversely, descriptions on a local level may have a limited capacity to be generalised at a global level. Using only a general, high level model of the complex systems and applying it directly to in order to understand specific complex phenomena such as a particular linguistic or political or economic system, cannot tell us everything about that particular system. Every application of the complex system requires its reinvention in this sense. The characterisation of the system is, therefore, developed with the specific aim of providing an understanding of violence.

III. Critical Complexity Theory: Thinking Structure without an Origin

Complexity theory is developed in many ways in different disciplines toward different ends. This thesis identifies a specific kind of complexity theory with which other philosophical perspectives can engage productively. *Critical* complexity theory is a variant of complexity theory that encompasses the respective work of both Cilliers and Morin. It is distinguished from other reductive forms of complexity theory, complexity science and chaos theory. The distinction between critical complexity theory and other engagements with complexity is informed by a distinction between general complexity and restricted complexity, respectively, made by Morin (2005). Theories that work with restricted complexity maintain that high level complexity can be explained by simple, general, underlying principles (9, 10). General complexity, in contrast, is an understanding of complexity as an emergent property of organisation that cannot be reduced to simple principles. This understanding of complexity confronts the paradox of reduction opened by complexity. In this confrontation, the epistemological foundations of thinking are questioned and rethought.

As an initial characterisation, one could say that critical complexity theory is a variant of complexity thinking that tries to account for the epistemological consequences of the acknowledgement of complexity in the process of modelling complex phenomena. It introduces an element of radical – fundamental in the sense that it speaks to the foundations of knowledge – uncertainty into every act of understanding. If knowledge cannot be ultimately grounded, and, therefore, cannot be known with absolute certainty, then there must necessarily always be an element of normativity involved in choosing to affirm particular forms of knowledge over others. Only perfect knowledge is given. Contingent, contextual knowledge must selected or chosen. The element of choice, of normativity in knowledge, leads critical complexity theory to embrace the ethics of knowledge. Critical complexity theory espouses an inescapable responsibility for how one knows the world.

The understanding of critical complexity theory is further developed by contextualising its epistemological gesture within a general philosophical movement away from the grounding of knowledge in metaphysical origins/foundations/principles. Critical complexity theory must be drawn into an engagement with its precursors who began to think of the organisation of thought and of the world – the object of thought – as a dynamic self-organising system without a first mover, maker, proper origin or intelligent centre (Derrida 2001: 351; Morin 2005). *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (Derrida 2001: 351) emphasises two major theoretical shifts that, together, bring about an epistemological cleavage. The first is the shift from the analysis of objects to the understanding of systems. The second shift abandons the endeavour to stabilise and fix the relationships in system. This double shift opens a space in which the encounter between critical complexity theory and deconstruction can unfold.

IV. READING DECONSTRUCTION AS COMPLEXITY THINKING

The structure of the exposition of deconstruction as a form of complexity thinking carried out in chapter 2 repeats the structure of the discussion of critical complexity thinking in chapter 1. Although the language, references and nuances are different, this structure is used to draw attention to four significant points of affinity between these distinct theoretical endeavours. The first is that both critical complexity thinking and deconstruction stand in contradistinction with theories or ways of thinking – whether systems-based or not – that are anchored within a modernist thought paradigm, or what Derrida recognises as the metaphysics of presence (Spivak 1997: lviii). The second point of congruence is that both deconstruction and critical complexity theory attempt to provide a framework in which complex phenomena can be understood without destroying or ignoring the implications of complexity as discussed above.

The affinity between deconstruction and complexity theory is proposed by Cilliers in *Complexity and Postmodernism* (1998a: 80-86). His (1998a: 3-5) model of complex systems in terms of ten general characteristics is developed in conversation with Derrida's *différance* – difference that unfolds in time and space. In attempting to develop their respective understandings of complex phenomena, both critical complexity theory and deconstruction sketch general conditions of the emergence of meaning. For the former, this explication is crystallised in Morin's characterisation of complexity[5] and Cilliers' (1998a: 3-5) ten characteristics of complex systems. For Derrida, these general conditions of understanding are characterised by a chain of supplemental concepts to which Rudolph Gasché (1994: 4-7) refers as the "infrastructures" of sense. The chain of infrastructures is always open to further supplementation. Included in it are: *différance*, trace, space, supplement, parergon and graft (Derrida 1981b: 40; Spivak 1997: lxx). Each of the aforementioned concepts is discussed in chapter 2 and used to enrich and complement the model of the complex system in chapter 3, in anticipation of a

[5] See Dobuzinskis' article, *Where is Morin's Road to Complexity Going?*(2004: 436-438), for a concise description of Morin's characterisation of complexity. It is discussed and expanded in chapter 1.

focused exposition of violence in this system. These general structural features of meaning in the complex system are offered in the absence of an origin and not as a replacement for the origin. Their status, like that of the system in critical complexity theory, is not that of a metaphysical certainty (Derrida 1992a: 70, 71).

The third affinity between deconstruction and critical complexity theory is the centrality of the notion of difference in the system and the significance of relations between elements in the emergence of the system as a whole. To say that difference is fundamental appears to contradict the assertion that complexity thinking – critical complexity theory and deconstruction – moves beyond origins and foundations. However, it should be borne in mind that the foundation offered by complexity thinking is one of dynamic difference. Because it is dynamic, it cannot really ground anything (Morin 1992: 143). If the base is complex, it cannot authorise or justify any simplification (147). That being said, the complexity of the base frustrates the attempts to provide a final and consummate description of a complex phenomenon while enabling the emergence of rigorous, provisional and contextual understanding. The structure that can be read in the complex system and in the description of meaning in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1997) has an inside – internal difference – and a boundary – differences that distinguish one system from another – and an outside – difference that is not incorporated within the system. The repetition of this structure is the fourth significant affinity between these two iterations of complexity thinking, and informs the architecture of their meeting in this project.

Beyond the worth of Derrida's (1997) infrastructural tools in the development of the structure of complex organisation, deconstruction is strategically valuable because it navigates far beyond this structural modelling and initiates discussions of philosophical texts and motifs and political problems that are not explored in critical complexity theory. Deconstruction's sensitivity to complexity does not always involve the adherence to a poststructural/infrastructural systems-based model. Every engagement with a complex phenomenon necessitates a concomitant sensitivity to its singularity and to its unique context and to the appropriateness of a particular style, level of description and content. Deconstruction is used to supplement the discussion of complexity with the intention that the affinities demonstrated between it and critical complexity theory will allow the latter to be opened by the encounter. While the model of complex systems developed in chapter 1 forms the general structure of the this project, deconstruction completes this structure by adding the vocabulary and content necessary for the development of model of complexity that is appropriate to the discussion of violence.

V. Violence Recognised as a Philosophical Problem

There is an awareness of violence as a problem within critical complexity theory. This problem is examined with particular attention given to its relation to the processes by which the world comes to be meaningful to us. Morin (1992: 3; 2007: 4) laments the "mutilation" of understanding and of concepts that carve away at the phenomena that they are intended to elucidate in the process of this elucidation. The light of knowledge, it appears, blinds us to its cruelty. He (1992: 3) goes on to argue that understanding the world in a way that mutilates and

misrepresents it without acknowledging the inherent error of this understanding leads to more overtly mutilating actions that are grounded in these misunderstandings. Cilliers (1998a: 107) suggests something similar when he argues that modest thinking or theories – ones inherently sensitive to their own limitations and to their violence – are trampled by boldly self-assured theories. Violence is conceptualised as a problem because it leads to misunderstanding and empirical harm and suffering in the world.

There is another distinct understanding of violence that emerges in complexity thinking. Morin (1992: 116-120) describes it as an antagonistic dynamic organisation that structures relations in the complex system. This conceptualisation of violence as antagonism is not a conception of violence that is bad, evil or wrong in the sense that violence is understood colloquially. It is, rather, a violence to be juxtaposed to the peaceful, natural, static order that is ordained by nature, god, absolute truth or some manner of fixed foundation. Complex organisation emerges out of polemical differentiation in the system (Derrida 1982: 8). Cilliers (1998a: 95, 120, 124) develops an analogous concept named 'asymmetry'. These corresponding understandings of violence require philosophical exposition and an explication of their ethical and political implications. Derrida's (1998: 9) pervasive concern with violence in his texts is more overtly developed but requires clarity and cohesion. Both critical complexity theory and deconstruction have breadth for expansion in this direction. It is in response to these theoretical lacunae, this potential for development, that violence is addressed here as a principal concern in the complex system in need of its own conceptual investigation.[6]

VI. Three Levels of Violence in the Complex System

The structure of complex violence that is elaborated in the course of this analysis is a three-tiered organisation that corresponds to each of the regions of complex organisation in the general structure of the system: the inside, the boundary, and the outside of the system. This discussion engages with each site of violence as a 'level'. It is a useful word, but the definitive separation between regions of organisation implied by 'level' is problematic because of its disagreement with the importance of interrelation in complex organisation. There is no more appropriate term than 'level' and so it is used under erasure, as it were. More considered attention is directed at this quandary when it is presented. The three levels of violence develop from Derrida's (1997: 112) deconstruction of the opposition between speech and violence and its corollary, the association between writing and violence, to construct a frame on which to build the analysis of violence. The first two levels of violence are associated with the possibility of meaning and the understanding thereof. These forms of violence, like Morin's

[6] In *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt (1970: 8) expresses a concern that analyses of violence often address it as a marginal phenomenon in relation to politics or war, and in so doing, fail to develop a clear understanding thereof. She (8) insists that it is a problem worthy of its own treatment. This project attempts, given Arendt's important precedent, to focus on violence rather than politics, war, the law or any other concern, though these topics must inevitably be addressed.

(1992: 3; 2007: 4) mutilation, are implicated in the way we know and interact with people and objects in the world.

The first of these 'levels' or modes of violence is the violence of nomination, which permeates the internal relations of the complex system. The first level of violence destroys the unity and purity of an object by drawing it into a general system of meaning (Derrida 1997: 112). It compromises the uniqueness or singularity of an object or subject. It engenders dynamic and '*différantial*' play, antagonism and asymmetrical relations between elements in this system (Cilliers 1998a: 95; 120; 124; Derrida 1982: 8; Morin 1992: 119). In generating this violent destruction of unity and self-identity, a second reparatory violence is required to restore the unity of an identity, to stabilise and to fix relations and to make them understandable (Derrida 1997: 112). This second violence is the violence of the boundary or the frame. Its most overt manifestation is in the law that orders society. It imposes a certain order onto the field of play. This order is both productive and enabling and it is constraining (Cilliers 2005b: 611). It can also be harmful where the order imposed in a system is oppressive or exploitative.

When this harm emerges, we are no longer dealing with the violence only of meaning, but with violence as an empirical occurrence that produces suffering in the world. The third level of violence, empirical violence, is the most important of the three levels of violence. It includes the harm that is produced in the production of meaning and also other atrocities such as war, rape and murder (Derrida 1997: 112). The meaning of empirical violence must be robust enough to hold as diverse a range of cruelty as sexist slurs and genocide, to be generally understandable and able to articulate the singularity of an event. The conceptualisation of empirical violence, indeed, of all three levels of violence and the relation of each of these modes of violence to the other two, is a considerable task, but it is one that demands doing.

VII. The Structure

a. The Inside, the Boundary and the Outside

The structure of this thesis is shaped by the structure of the complex system and of complex violence in the system. It begins, in chapters 1 and 2, with a general discussion of the complex system, from critical complexity theory and deconstruction, respectively. A model of the complex system, in which internal relations, the boundary and the outside of the complex system are discussed, emerges in this general contextualisation and characterisation of complexity. This structure is carried through on a larger scale in the subsequent three chapters. The inside, the boundary and the outside are used to focus the discussion of violence at that particular level.

Chapter 3 begins the exposition of violence in the conceptual clearing opened by the two forgoing chapters. Although this project does focus on the exposition of violence in the complex system, the closure of this analysis is interrupted and interrogated by Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* (1970). Arendt is chosen as Derrida's interlocutor in the discussion of complex violence because, unlike Derrida (1997: 112), she carries out an analysis of violence which is clear and direct. She (1963: 9) also, unlike Derrida (1997: 112), opposes violence to language and in so doing allows language to function as a tool with which to intervene where empirical violence is proliferated. This chapter is a discussion of violence as a feature of *différance*, of the arche-violence, and of the supplementary notions of asymmetry and antagonism that emerge from Cilliers' (1998a: 95, 120, 124) and Morin's (1992: 99) respective characterisations of the complex system. These notions are related to Nietzsche's (1909: 213) will to power and are argued to be the necessary theoretical outcome of a break away from philosophical theories that aim to stabilise and to fix the system with reference to a stable and natural origin for emergent order.

Chapter 4 moves on to the violence associated with the boundary and all bounding activities in the complex system. It is associated with all forms of structure and of structured meaning that require that nonlinear, dynamic relations of *différance* be stopped in their tracks. While the discussion in chapter 3 explores internal relations of difference in the system – internal to the components of the system and internal to the system itself, depending on the scale of observation – chapter 4 deals with difference on a 'higher' level. The boundary is explored in its manifestations as the difference between systems, as the frame and as the hymen (Derrida 1979b; 1981a: 212; 1992a; 213, 216). It is also explored in a more concrete manifestation, as the law (Derrida 1985a; 1992a: 181-252). An important argument that is established in chapter 4 concerns the relationship between violence, order and nonviolence. While law and order are often associated with peace, justice and nonviolence; it is argued that the violence inherent in the establishment of any order – and, accordingly, also any peace – undermines the justness of that order. A pure state of nonviolence, in other words, cannot be brought about by means of the law.

Chapter 5 navigates beyond the boundary of the complex system, to its outside. Nonviolence, because it cannot be addressed at the level of constant, open, dynamic organisation of arche-violence or at the level of closure of the boundary, leads the discussion here. The first two levels of violence, because they are implicated in the constitution of meaning, are absent only where there is no meaning or not yet meaning. The third level of violence is not wholly without meaning; but its meaning, the meaning of singular empirical events, is not immediate. It must be mediated by the first and second levels of violence in order to enter into the system of meaning. In this sense, empirical violence is both inside and outside the system. Its position inside/outside is analogous to all forms of singularity for which meaning is never given a priori. Singularities become meaningful in the system, but they are never consumed by the system. An excess of difference always remains outside. The connected themes of exteriority and singularity are given extensive attention, turning often, as Derrida (2001: 97-192) does, to the philosophical contribution of Emmanuel Levinas (1979). This argument has considerable

ethical implications. These are worked out with reference to a discussion of aesthetic engagement as a possible way of harnessing and eluding the first two levels of violence. The full discussion of ethics and politics without which this project would certainly be incomplete is reserved for the final conclusion.

b. SUPPLEMENTS: DERRIDA; NIETZSCHE; ARENDT; KANT; LEVINAS

Supplementation is the completion of one thing by another (Derrida 1997: 144, 145). This completion implies the primacy of the original object, the thing being completed, and its inadequacy, its deferral to the supplement. Supplementation is not only completion but also is also the supplanting of one thing by another. Critical complexity theory is supplemented in all these senses throughout the exposition of violence. Reference is made to theoretical perspectives beyond the primary authors – Derrida, Cilliers and Morin – throughout this project. Neither deconstruction nor critical complexity theory exist in a vacuum; nor does either body of theory present a clean break with philosophical ideas that precede it. The reference to other perspectives and authors is the unavoidable acknowledgement of the repetition of, and affinity with, ideas and themes in the broader field of philosophy. If complexity thinking is to be relevant to the general and trans-disciplinary discussion of human social phenomena then it must be developed on this general philosophical plane with reference to the canon of philosophical texts. The relationship between deconstruction and critical complexity theory has already been sketched as a one that is mutually enriching and in which deconstruction offers a vocabulary through which violence can be addressed as a philosophical problem in the complex system. However, this is not where the strategic employment of deconstruction is exhausted.

Because deconstruction carries traces of so many philosophical voices in its fabric, it opens the way for an engagement with Nietzsche (1909; 2000, 2006), especially in order to contextualise and develop the first level of violence. The discussion of the first level of violence makes room for a strong oppositional voice provided by Arendt (1970). The exploration of Arendt's, Nietzsche's and Derrida's writing allows for the inclusion of Kant's (1898; 1939) writing on ethics and the law as a source of critique and reflection on the second level of violence. In the final chapter, the exposition of empirical violence is largely informed by Levinas' (1979) writing on exteriority. Saussure (1983), Claude Levi-Strauss (1961: 292-293) and Walter Benjamin (1978:277-300) each require recurrent consideration. These references are certainly not intended as perfunctory nods in the general direction of the canon. Rather, each one focuses on a limited aspect of work attributed to its respective author in order to establish a genuine relationship with or challenge to critical complexity theory or complexity thinking, more broadly.

VIII. THE EXPOSITION OF VIOLENCE AND THE POLITICS OF RESPONSE

The end to which this project progresses is the exploration of the ethical and political consequences of theorising and applying the three modes of violence distributed across their respective three levels of complex organisation

in order to understand our socio-political world. A discussion of violence is certainly the discussion of more than merely an interesting philosophical dilemma; and it requires more than just conceptual clarification or creative interpretation. Empirical violence is, as it is argued in chapter 5, a *problem*, and as a serious problem in the world it demands a serious and real response. The ethical and political need to respond to empirical violence informs this entire project. We are responsible for our response to this problem, or, for that matter, for our failure to do so (Derrida 1993b: 377-380). The response to violence is an ethical response of the self to the other who suffers and whose singularity I or we seek to address. It is ethical, also, because it involves a choice. I choose how to respond and in so doing impose an interpretive violence – of the first and second levels of complex organisation –onto the other for which I must answer. However, the inevitability of interpretive violence is no excuse for inaction.

A further point deserves mention, which serves here only as an initial alert to a theme that is slowly developed in the exploration of the first, second and third levels of violence in order to be explicitly explored in the final conclusion. The response – or non-response – to violence in the complex system is a political performance. It is political because all forms of empirical violence only become meaningful in a general complex system of meaning, and because empirical violence generates meaning that participates in and adds to that general system. There is no act in the complex system that is meaningful and at the same time closed off from that system. There is no perfectly singular, self-contained, perfectly personal act of violence. It is always informed by and informs the social. It always involves relations of asymmetry structured in an ultimately arbitrary, wider social system. The general argument about violence is used, in the conclusion, to propose that critical complexity opened by deconstructions, can be used to underpin a radical, lean political strategic framework that is sensitive to its own violence and to violence in the world. Before this can happen, the space for a meeting between critical complexity and deconstruction needs to be cleared and violence itself must be addressed. It is to this undertaking that the discussion is directed at this juncture.

CHAPTER 1

READING CRITICAL COMPLEXITY THINKING AS PHILOSOPHY

> *It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word 'structure' itself are as old as the episteme – that is to say, as old as western science and western philosophy – and that their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the episteme plunges to gather them together once more, making them part of itself in a metaphysical displacement. Nevertheless, up until the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure – or rather the structurality of structure – although it has always been involved, has always been neutralised or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a centre or referring it to a point, fixed origin. The function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organise the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganised structure – but above all to make sure that the organising principle of the structure would limit what we might call the freeplay*[7] *of the structure (Derrida 2001: 351).*

> *One cannot conclude that because Derrida identifies the difficulties or aporias in structuralist projects – Saussure's, Lévi-Strauss's, Austin's, Foucault's – his own writings escape systematic and theoretical pursuits (Culler 1983: 221).*

I. INTRODUCTION

To frame a chapter on complexity thus, with Derrida's (2001) text and without first introducing or demonstrating an observable connection between these two distinct theoretical projects, is not designed to collapse this distinction. It may beg the question to commence an argument for critical complexity thinking – the overt and primary purpose of this chapter – with a pronouncement from Derrida. He was not writing about a theory of complex systems in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (2001). But, in another context, on a different page, with these same words, he could have been. The text announces a significant reflexive gesture already executed tentatively within structuralism and complexity science and more zealously in poststructuralism and critical complexity thinking.[8] It proclaims the event of the disintegration of the "law of central presence" (353). To wit, the idea that structure within a system – social system; linguistic system; biological system – could be produced, guaranteed and fixed by a transcendental principle has come under

[7] This term, 'freeplay', will be used throughout this project as it is used in this quote in order to characterise the complex organisation of a structure without a proper origin.

[8] Derrida (2001: 351-370) announces, in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, the tremendous rupture and interruption to thinking that is the event of the decentring of the centre. Traditionally, structure could not be thought of without a transcendental centre structuring the elements in a system. This centre explained the structure without itself being explicable in terms of the resources of the system itself, either the elements or their relations. It could be a creative god; an absolute law; an essence; absolute truth; a transcendental subject. As transcendental absolutes, these centres function as metaphysical foundations that fix the structure and make it present to us. The presence of the centre guarantees the integrity of the structure. But this guarantee reveals the centre as a paradox: it is part of the system because the system cannot organise without it; and it is also eccentric because it escapes its own structuring logic (352).

pressure. In certain spaces, thinkers are thinking systems without this centre (353). A particular type of complexity theory that can be understood as critical participates in this once unthinkable thought. The approach taken is critical because it criticises the assumptions that guarantee or ground knowledge and the conditions under which these assumptions are tenable. And, more profoundly, it is critical complexity because it directs this critical reflexion at its own epistemological strategies.[9] It is therefore implicated in the epistemological event, this rupture in western thinking that Derrida explores (351-370).

Having made an epistemological clearing in which complexity and deconstruction might meet, it must be said that neither the internal nor external homogenisation of either discourse is suggested or desired. The distributed origins of complexity will not be plaited into a single unified root. Literature bringing poststructuralism and complexity together is conspicuous in its absence. There has not been any tremendous cross-fertilisation of intellectual referencing (Dobuzinskis 2004: 440). However, from different points we have the emergence of "[an] alternative concept of knowledge beginning and ending with *difference*" (Luhmann 2003: 767). Deconstruction and complexity have at least this in common, and a great deal more to be explored in further engagements between the two fields of theoretical enterprise.

Before Derrida is swept to the periphery, his position at the head of this argument warrants further explication. One reading of the frame might suggest that as serious, canonised philosophy, Derrida's (2001) text is offered by way of an apologia for complexity thinking. The quote from *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* is made to say, 'this is also a philosophical enterprise (even if it emerges from scientific discourse)!' Culler's (1983: 221) interpretation of Derrida as involved in writing *systematically* strengthens the claim. The suggestion of a deep resonance between complexity and deconstruction legitimates the place of complexity and systems thinking in a text with pretension to calling itself philosophical. A challenge analogous to that of postcolonial or feminist philosophical enquiries is met but perhaps not ill met. The 'and' in 'Philosophy and Complexity', or in 'Philosophy and Postcolonialism' or indeed in 'Philosophy and Feminism' threatens to undermine the purity of philosophical contemplation. It flings philosophy from its ivory tower and places it in a relation of unresolved tension with insights from other intellectual spheres. Philosophy in its capacity to be generalised and homogenised is not identical with complexity thinking insofar as it can endure a like internal sameness. But I argue that there is a philosophical complexity or critical complexity that is quite different to non-philosophical complexity. Also, that this seemingly trivial grammatical opposition is paramount. And, further, that philosophy can be opened and enriched by an encounter with particular insights from complexity thinking and complexity thinkers.

[9] The distinction between critical complexity theory and what is characterised as restrictive complexity by Morin (2005: 9) is absolutely paramount in this analysis. The thinking that Morin (2005: 10) describes as *general* complexity is in step with the complexity thinking espoused by Cilliers (1998a) and Cilliers and Richardson (2006: 8), in stark contradistinction with restrictive complexity. What is common to these two positions is an inherent critical awareness. The adjective, 'critical', certainly warrants further explication. This is given in section III.

The deconstructive frame can be explained from a second direction. In the encounter between critical complexity thinking, drawn mainly from the writings of Paul Cilliers and Edgar Morin, and deconstruction, it is better to give the reader as much time and space as possible to mull over areas of congruence. Perhaps this reinvigorates the indictment that the frame collapses the clear and obvious distinction between complexity and deconstruction too quickly. Those who have theorised the link between deconstruction and complexity as the theoretical concern with difference, towards which Luhmann (1993) gestures, have been chastised for belabouring this point in order to divert attention from glaring divergences. Dillon (2000) proposes, rather without pause, that complex difference and deconstructive or poststructuralist difference are irreconcilably and absolutely different.[10] While, once again, the tension between deconstruction and complexity is not intentionally resolved, it is pertinent to guard against the overstatement of sameness for the sake of cohesion. That said, points of divergence are not logically prior to, or more interesting than, points of convergence.

Beyond these two justifications, or beside them, this chapter suggests that a persistent theme common to these distinctive theories is this: both run up against the limits of thought and knowledge set free from the centre. That is, both consider thoroughly structural structure. For now, however, deconstruction is confined to the margin. Its intrusion in the body of this complex discussion arises out of an already explicit theoretical hybridity in the development of Cilliers' (1998a) general theory. However, the chief concern is with critical complexity, which must first be isolated from a broad and diverse body of literature that approaches the complex.

To give meaning to the concept of complexity or a complex system is already to position oneself within the study of complexity, in which its poly-contextual proliferation produces several incommensurable meanings. Cilliers (1998a: iix) begins by distinguishing it from merely complicated systems.[11] The latter can be given a full description in terms of all its discreet elements, which will produce a full and complete understanding of the system in question. A complex system, on the other hand, cannot be given a complete description. Complex

[10] Dillon (2000: 4, 5) makes the argument that the radical relationality of complex systems, read as the relationality that is constitutive of a system, is confined to relations within the system. This is juxtaposed with poststructural and deconstructive radical relationality, which is always in a relationship with non-relationality. It is not clear what non-relationality is or why it is non-relational if it is non-relational in relation to the system. It is poetically stipulated as the "utterly intractable" or that which fundamentally cannot be assimilated into the system. Dillon's argument seems to ossify or even deify this non-difference to the extent that it becomes a metaphysical or transcendental exteriority. The possibility of relation with non-relationality thus seems dubious. He positions complexity in opposition to poststructuralist "[alterity], différance, undecidability, responsibility [and justice]", (22). It is characterised as instrumental in its obsession with order. In other words, the complex system consumes all. It is a totalising system. This argument is summarily rejected. The relation between complex systems and the outside is given a more nuanced treatment further on in this chapter and in chapter 5.

[11] The distinction between complicated and complex cannot be made in absolute terms because it cannot be separated from the act of observation. In other words, it is the result of an observation which always implicates an observing subject. The distinction is therefore not objective. It could be the observer's position and limited knowledge that causes the observer to believe that something is complex (Cilliers 2000b: 42). Analogously, something that appears only complicated can emerge in time as a complex phenomenon. Morin (1992: 386) also uses this distinction, but adds the following. While the reduction to simple rules is useful, Morin maintains that reality is never identical to simple descriptions. The distinction complicated/complex is a useful distinction that results from the epistemological framework employed.

systems are systems that are constituted through the relations between their elements. These relations are non-linear and thus not reducible to any algorithm or simple description (3). Organisation in complex systems is not ordained from any centre, but emerges as a result of the non-linear interactions within the system itself. As such, the system, in its organising, is not ordered. Both order and disorder are implicated in complex organisation (Morin 2005: 6). Because of the character of complex systems, they are not reversible. They cannot move backwards and forwards in time in a straight line, by linearly extrapolating from present organisation. At a most basic level, complexity deriving from the Latin *complexus* means 'woven together' (6).

It is acknowledged that the foregoing characterisation of complexity is not at all definitive and lacks depth and formal structure. However, this first sketch is embellished and enriched in each successive section of this chapter. Theories of complexity are of differentiated origins that are distributed across disciplines and across the social and physical or natural sciences. The study of complexity is itself a complex, heterogeneous discourse, with different emphases, objects, methods and assumptions. Following Levy (1991), Morin (2005) and Cilliers and Richardson (2001), this heterogeneous discourse can be untangled into two distinct types of complexity thinking, with distinct theoretical emphases and consequences.

Levy (1991: 87-99) distinguishes between systems science and systems rationality. The distinction is not an opposition between science as such on the one hand, and systems thinking on the other. Critical systems thinking is not anti-scientific (90). Unlike a science of systems that seeks to put the notion of a system to work without revisiting underlying epistemology, ontology and ethics, systems rationality is a critical encounter with the notion of a system. Levy (87-99) situates Morin's broad philosophical project within a wider paradigmatic shift, which encompasses a turn towards complexity and the elucidation of the system as a critical tool. Within this shift the system becomes a vehicle for the critique of the history of western metaphysics in its various permutations: positivism; transcendentalism; and the methodology of disjunctive analysis. The critical character of systems thinking also connotes self-criticism. Critical systems rationality is reflexive. Because of its reflexivity, it is perpetually concerned with its own limitations and the limitations of scientific and philosophical concepts, which it opens to philosophical scrutiny and revaluation. Among these are the opposition between subject and object, and the opposition between order and disorder.

Levy (98) adds another element to the tag, 'critical'; to epistemological reflexivity, he adds a striving for "sociological emancipation". Although Levy does not elaborate on this point, perhaps one can posit that critical complexity has an inherently ethical concern with the social. Or more generally, critical complexity theory seeks to retain, construct, or reconstruct a position from which to make normative judgements about the way human beings know and act. This mode of thinking the system in terms of complex organisation, breaks dramatically with a more instrumentalist application of the concept 'system' to phenomena in the natural and social world. In sum, the systems thinking of Edgar Morin can be classified as critical complexity insofar as it seeks to expound a

critical epistemological framework for the study of complex phenomena (87). It is an epistemology that is self-reflexive, self-critical and invigorates the notion of system with a critical sensibility that is conscious of its normative dimension and ethical content.[12]

Morin (2005) himself makes a distinction between restricted complexity and general complexity theory. The vein of complexity referred to as 'restricted' remains within the modernist scientific paradigm that is treated below (9, 10). In terms of a restricted understanding of complexity, the system, which is constituted in a large number of non-linear interactions with feedback loops, produces disorder that must be factored into any calculation. The acknowledgement of disorder renders the system fully or almost fully understandable using standard analytic, reductionist, generalising strategies. Fundamentally, complex organisation is still thought to operate according to general laws (10). Within this understanding, complexity is aligned with disorder and chaos and as a result, it is opposed to order and knowledge. Complexity is a threat to order and thus to understanding; but it is a threat that is still thought to be containable. This type of complexity thinking and its analytic methodology are expressly distanced from the position developed by Cilliers (1998a: ix). General complexity does not theorise complexity with the hope or desire to solve it. It also does not espouse a notion of complexity in which complexity is contained within specific disordered pockets within a generally well ordered organisation. It is sensitive to the indissoluble paradox of complex organisation in which order and disorder are mutually implicated (Morin 2005: 11).

Restrictive or reductive complexity, in which category Cilliers (2001: 136) places chaos theory, is reductive because it posits that emergent complexity rests on a stable bed of simple underlying principles that can be found. It reduces complexity to simplicity. Complexity is a hindrance. This type of complexity that abstracts complex systems into numerical formal systems only acknowledges complexity in order to rid the system of it (Cilliers & Richardson 2006: 6). In contrast with this school of thinking, a metaphorical understanding of complexity emerges from the human sciences, such as organisation science. It is a well-argued point that social phenomena are not best understood using the methodology of natural sciences. This amounts to scientism and violence, as recognised by Morin (1992: 3).[13] However, the language, concepts and implications of a theory of complexity can be used as a frame for knowledge of these human or social phenomena without reducing these

[12] This type of critical engagement with complexity on a philosophical level occupies a marginal space in complexity thinking (Levy 1991: 88). Morin (2005: 27) makes a similar observation employing, once more, the distinction between general or generalised complexity and restricted complexity. "Unfortunately, restricted complexity rejects generalised complexity, which seems to the former as pure chattering, pure philosophy" (27).

[13] Morin (1992: 3) argues that knowledge is constituted in the interrelation between science, ideology and politics. The normative content and force of ideology and politics is hidden by bringing this content under the ambit of objective science in a way that masks normativity. By way of illustration, social convention such as that which privileges heterosexual relationships over homosexual relationships can be 'justified' with recourse to a *scientific* discourse that disregards power relations by calling itself objective.

disciplines to pseudo-sciences (Cilliers & Richardson 2006: 7). This application of metaphors does risk a loss of rigor. The loss of rigor is not a necessary outcome of a softer or qualitative approach.

At a distance from these two schools, a third area of complexity theory is focused on the philosophical consequences of constructing and applying a general theory of complexity. This type of complexity, like Morin's (2005: 10) general complexity, develops an epistemological framework sensitive to its own limits. This understanding of complexity theory can only produce contextualised, contingent, provisional knowledge that strives to understand complex phenomena in their complexity (Cilliers & Richardson 2006: 8). Hopes of prediction and control, entertained by the new devotees of complexity in the human sciences, find no foundation here. The non-linear relations between components of complex systems resist reduction in ways that frustrate all models, and thus all attempts at understanding. However, without being reductionist, there is space to strive to be rigorous and clear (11). The space for theorising, judging and acting is not closed by a critical attitude. No model is privileged over another a priori; but some models may prove more appropriate to some complex systems than others, as is argued below. Complexity thinking, in re-evaluating the status of all models, forces us to rethink the status of scientific models (12). The epistemological shift, encompassing the acknowledgement of context, contingency and the provisional nature of understanding, forces complexity thinking into an ontologically uncertain position. What could it mean to be ontologically uncertain? It is surely not to suggest that we live in a world purely of our imagination. Instead, it is to suggest that our access to the ontic, to beings, is always mediated by knowledge itself.

This chapter proceeds by contrasting complexity thinking with the non-reflexive modern epistemology it disputes. The terms 'general complexity' and 'critical complexity' are used interchangeably. A general theory of complexity is delineated through an encounter with the works of Edgar Morin and Paul Cilliers. In order to follow the logic of complex thinking, it is necessary to develop as clear an understanding as possible of what is being discussed when the term is used. For this characterisation, which is neither definitive nor complete for significant theoretical reasons, Cilliers' sketch of complex systems in terms of ten general characteristics is pivotal. Each of these attributes finds an echo in earlier and later writings of Morin's.[14]Neither philosophy nor complexity thinking is a closed theoretical system and each is treated in accordance with this insight.

The epistemological and ethical consequences of complexity are given extensive attention by considering complex organisation first in terms of general structural characteristics and then with more detailed reflection on

[14] This project engages with the first volume of *La Méthode*, *The Nature of Nature* (1991). Five of the six volumes have not been translated into English, therefore extensive reference is made to *On Complexity* (2007) published three years after the sixth and final, *L'Éthique Complexe* (2004). Conference proceedings and articles in which Morin explores ideas introduced in *La Méthode* supplement this exploration. The poverty of English translations is perhaps indicative of the marginality Levy (1991) emphasises.

internal and external organisation. The intricate relations between knowledge, complex structure and the inescapable normative dimension implied by complexity thinking will begin to gesture towards the notion of violence in the system. It should also be stated that the works of Paul Cilliers and Edgar Morin are not intended to be presented as one and the same philosophical project. I understand insights from both thinkers to occupy a particular critical space. Specific differences and nuances are not denied. However, for the purposes of this text, the focus often shifts from Cilliers to Morin in order to lift out important tenants of critical complexity thinking. In order to situate this parallel reading, attention is turned to what critical complexity thinking is not.

II. PARADIGMATIC SHIFTS: THE MUTILATION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Complexity has different meanings for different theorists in different contexts with different agendas (Cilliers, Richardson & Lissack 2001: 11). As such, a preliminary clarification of the meaning of complexity in this context is necessary. Tensions inherent to the notion of complexity resist definition if definition is understood as a complete description in terms of a finite set of characteristics that remain the same over time and can be known absolutely (Cilliers1998a: 2). This tension is a result of the understanding of complexity, which permeates this project and underpins the meaning as it is used here. Complexity is the condition in which a system is constituted through relations on three different levels. It is constituted through the relations between its composite elements; between the system as a whole and the composite elements; and between the system and its environment (3, 4).[15] The relations that constitute the system are dynamic. The complex system organises through these dynamic interactions (Morin 2005: 11). Not the whole, nor the parts, nor the environment wholly determine this organisation. The interactions that constitute the system do not unfold linearly. Several interactions play out simultaneously and feed back into the system in unpredictable ways. The number, richness and non-linearity of interactions cannot be added up to produce a set of simple production rules or laws. Another way of saying this is to assert that the complex system is incompressible (Cilliers1998a: 4, 10). This insight has significant consequences: if the system cannot be perfectly expressed in terms simpler than itself, then it follows that no simple definition can ever adequately describe the system (Cilliers 2000a: 9).

The complex system as an open system is open to its environment and open in the sense that it is developing in time. The openness of the system is fundamental. Morin's (2005: 6) definition of complexity as *complexus* must be recalled. Incompressibility certainly poses a challenge to knowledge strategies, but so does the interrelation of the system with and within other systems: "In a complex system, everything is connected with everything else"

[15] The working definition offered here is elaborated under the discussion of a general theory of complexity and draws on the ten characteristics of complex systems developed by Cilliers (1998a: 3, 4). It may seem that these assertions are unsubstantiated. However, the purpose of these initial remarks is to provide a provisional clarity as to the meaning of complexity in anticipation of the exploitation of the concept prior to a more substantial exposition in section iii.

(Cilliers, Richardson & Lissack 2001: 6).[16] Any description imposes closure because it cannot take all future possibilities of the system into account, and it cannot fully determine the environment in its complexity and separate it in a clear and final fashion from the system itself (Cilliers 2000a: 9). The dynamic structure of complex systems presents itself, in the first place, as a challenge to our modes of knowing:

> Complexity asserts itself first of all as the impossibility to simplify; it arises where complex unity produces its emergences, where distinctions and clarities in identities and causalities are lost, where disorder and uncertainty disturb phenomena, where the subject/observer surprises his own face in the object of his observation, where antimonies make the course of the reasoning go astray... (Morin 1992: 386)

The description of complex systems is always in conversation with this uncertainty, incompressibility, and with the normativity implied by the act of definition or description. This normativity is a direct consequence of the exclusion necessitated by the act of description. The evident tension between the concept of complexity and the attempt to elaborate on this concept and to understand it is at the core of the paradigmatic shift explicated below.

Perhaps the place to start, since it is proposed that there has been and continues to be an epistemological cleft carved out in the history of thinking, is the somewhat trite distinction: modern/postmodern. Since it has played such an important and perhaps inflated role in contemporary philosophical debate, with complexity having been aligned with both sides in various contexts, it demands attention. The distinction is employed here with a nuanced consideration of very specific philosophical attitudes, premises and methodologies. The claim is not that modern thought has been temporally superseded by the kind of thinking now called postmodern. Rather, these two terms announce two different thinking paradigms. Cilliers (1998a: 113) refers explicitly to the distinction; and while the words themselves are absent from Morin's texts, he certainly disavows a certain epistemological paradigm. This paradigm requires explication, because complexity thinking remains in conversation with it. Within this more careful attempt at definition, it must yet be acknowledged that those who position themselves or are positioned by others in opposition to the modern epistemological paradigm are often not in conversation or conflict with the same beast. Rather, as far as the works of Cilliers and Morin are considered, the paradigm that complexity thinking ruptures is perpetuated through the proliferation of a certain constellation of ideas that hang together. In order to follow a responsible strategy, both characterisations of what is called modern thought

[16] In order to model a complex system as accurately as possible, one would need to include "life, the universe and everything" in the model (Cilliers, Richardson & Lissack 2001: 8). This is because, when we speak of complex systems, the boundary of the system can always be extended to take more relations into account. In other words, the largest model of any complex system would always extend to include everything that is. This is not always the best or even the most appropriate way of bounding a system. As the number of relations taken into account increases, the specificity of the description is traded off. However, this potential of the boundary to shift draws attention to the boundary as a function of description. This is elaborated once attention turns to the structure of complex systems.

are given here alongside one another. This is, therefore, less an endeavour to classify and define postmodernism as such, than an attempt to sketch modernism in order to open the space for critical complexity to show up.

Cilliers (1998a) takes Lyotard's turn away from the grand metanarratives of modernist theory seriously. The attempt to secure legitimacy for a certain position or science by appealing to a seemingly guaranteed external reference such as "the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational working subject, or the creation of wealth" (Lyotard quoted in Cilliers 1998a: 113) is recanted. These metanarratives are unifying narratives that seek to reduce all forms of knowledge to a single whole, erasing differences even as they – the use of the plural here is not unintentional – masquerade as neutral objectivity. This masquerade has socio-political credence and consequence (Cilliers 2005a: 256). Legitimating discourses grounding knowledge function as if they are closed to one another, while analogous knowledge strategies are employed to produce similarly absolute, closed and ultimately relativistic truths. An example of this relativism is the rejection of scientific knowledge within religion. From another side, one can also argue that a rich description of the human contemplation of the concept of god cannot be given on the level of physics. The point is a cautious one. Complexity theory does not deny science in favour of more colourful narratives; but no science or other privileged discourse escapes its rigorous epistemological critique.[17]

The notion of *différance* as a dynamic temporal and spatial differentiation is inescapable in the fabric of the complexity argument in which Cilliers attempts to undo central presence in the system. The drive of modernist endeavours was the desire to predict and control the system. Thus a struggle against disorder and chaos with serious consequences ensues. A widely employed tactic is the instrumentalisation of time, which is considered as consisting of discreet and uniform units unfolding linearly (Cilliers 2006: 107). Although this view is very useful in some aspects, it marginalises experiences of time that are out of line. It neutralises the force of time. By this it is meant that the present is exonerated so as to contain the meaning of the past and so that the present may be legitimately extrapolated in order to predict and control the future. A linear, uninterrupted time is one in which the future is present and in which it never changes so much that the identity of the system is disturbed (Cilliers 2006: 108; Popolo 2003: 90, 91). Obviously, this understanding of identity is premised on the maintenance of sameness. Lyotard's and Derrida's insights, followed and developed in *Complexity and Postmodernism* (Cilliers 1998a) and other articles authored by Cilliers thus allow for the conception of modern or structural[18] thinking

[17] Lyotard (1984: xxiii) writes that:

> Science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself to stating useful regularities and seeks the truth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game.

It is thus the search for absolute indisputable truth that Lyotard describes as quintessentially modern.

[18] Cilliers (1998a) frames the structural project of, among others, Ferdinand de Saussure as a modernist enterprise because it ultimately relies on a systems model that is spatially and temporally closed.

before the 'post-'. This type of thinking is unifying; totalising; anchored in an externally guaranteed truth; and either oblivious to or actively opposed to complexity insofar as it undermines the search for absolute knowledge.

Approaching modernism from another angle, Rasch (2000: 73) suggests that it is that epistemological project in which humanity or western thought is preoccupied with self-description and a deepening suspicion of panoramic totalising descriptions, secured as "God, Reason, or Truth". Modernism as positivism signals a radical turn away from transcendentalism toward pure immanence or objectivism with its own methodology and fear of the outside and the unknowable. The outside, or what may be called transcendental, need not be God. In this context, it is taken to mean that which cannot be known by positivist methodology. In other words, if it cannot be known absolutely, it becomes mere conjecture. Perspectives that call themselves or are called postmodern express the opposite fear. This is not fear of the inside as such; but of an inside without an outside. It is a suspicion of knowledge of the world that professes to be purged of all speculation. The problem of the inside/outside distinction is central to the critical complexity problematic and it is specifically addressed in the conception of complex boundaries (Juarrero 2002; Cilliers 2001; 2005b; Morin 1992: 95-99). Rasch's contribution, because it alerts us to this problematic in which modernism rejects what it cannot know absolutely, forms part of the constellation of modernist ideas sketched here.[19] The question of the place of the outside in relation to the system and what it can and cannot do is of great importance.

Edgar Morin suggests in *Of Complexity* (2007: 2) that the way we organise knowledge, the rules that are in place determining what we may know and how we may know it, is an organisation that is fixed and unable to reflect on its own limitations, or to grasp the "complexity of reality". There are two implications to be noted from this idea, which frames the project undertaken in the aforementioned text. First, he postulates that reality as a whole is inherently complex; and, secondly, that this organisational framework or epistemology imposes certain

[19] At this point it is fitting to acknowledge the widely recognised systems thinking of Niklas Luhmann and to marginalise his work. The relationship between Luhmann and postmodern thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault and Lacan has been explored at length; see Rasch & Wolfe (2000). Luhmann (1993) himself has investigated the relationship between deconstruction and systems theory as he conceives it in "Deconstruction as Second-order Observing". However, the decision to marginalise Luhmann is not merely a matter of expedience. Pickel (2007: 395) emphasises the need for fresh perspectives within complexity theory, particularly in the humanities, and an engagement with philosophy, returning to questions of ontology and epistemology in order to move past what he argues is Luhmann's hegemony. Although Luhmann is not associated here with reductive complexity in the tradition of the Santa Fe Institute, his theory of social systems is characterised by an emphasis on operational closure as absolute necessity for the autopoiesis of the system (Luhmann 1993; Cornel 1992; Teubner 2000; Rasch 2000). Stated differently, Luhmann's autopoietic social systems have fixed boundaries. Furthermore, the constructed conversation between Luhmann and Derrida is one in which a polemical confrontation forces both theorists into their respective corners. Derrida is caricatured as having an excessive concern with the interruptive outside; and Luhmann as having an equal and opposite concern with a self-ordering inside. Such stark opposition between deconstruction and complexity is not one of the ambitions of this discussion. While Luhmann's entire oeuvre cannot be confined to this opposition; it is clear that this mode of complexity thinking is at odds with the open critical complexity theorised by both Cilliers (1998a) and Morin (1992; 2007). The interruption of the boundary of the system brings it into a relationship with the unmarked space that cannot be coded as part of the system, and whose observation threatens the system's self-contained autopoietic processes (Derrida 1992; Bjerge 2006: 64). The relevance of this insight will become clear in chapter 2.

strategies upon complex reality that "[mutilate]" it by carving into atomistic objects (3).[20]Morin (2-7) draws attention to the often implicit agreements at a supra-logical level that enable the successful construction and deployment of logic.

Beyond the violent strategies that are employed in the process of drawing distinctions that reduce complexity, there is another layer of violence[21] at play in this framework. This framework is blind to the error in epistemological organisation, its reduction of complexity, and this blindness arises due to a lack of a reflexive critical dimension in this type of knowing. As a consequence, ideas are built, layer upon layer of unquestioned assumptions about the ontology and epistemology and indeed the ethics at work in knowledge. It is this problematic that leads Morin (2007: 2) to write: "The most serious threat that humanity faces [is] the blind and uncontrollable advances of knowledge (thermonuclear weapons, manipulations of all sorts, ecological imbalances etc.)". What Cilliers (1998a: 112-115) cautiously refers to as modernist thinking finds a transposition in Morin's work as a paradigm of simplification. Again, what is absent from this paradigm, and forceful in its absence, is modesty about the status of knowledge and all models of reality (Cilliers 2005a: 256).

Morin (1992: 3) is quite adamant about the importance of auto-criticism because mutilating thought is not confined to theory. It has effects in the world and leads to mutilating action. Morin (quoted in Levy 1991: 89) pronounces:

> We feel a profound dissatisfaction when we face observations that are not in movement and which do not observe themselves, thinking that does not confront its own contradictions and masks the contradictions of reality, philosophy that reduces everything to key words (master concepts) which does not put itself into question, and particular speech (acts) which isolate the virtual world.[22]

It is clear then that the space for self-criticism or the space that an epistemological framework or organisation has in which to interrogate its own methodology and assumptions is an indispensible part of the project to develop a general theory and methodology for approaching and understanding complex phenomena.

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[20] In *The Nature of Nature*, Morin (1992: 3) makes the bold statement that, "the concepts which we use to conceive of our society – all society – are mutilated and mutilating".

[21] Morin (1992: 3; 2007: 4) uses the term 'mutilation' to describe the imposition of force without any ultimate justification. I have used this term interchangeably with the term 'violence'. This is, admittedly, rather an impoverished definition. However, the instances of violence and mutilation offered in this chapter will tentatively begin to give flesh to this concept, which is central to this philosophical project as a whole. Although the primary task here is to give an exposition of critical complexity theory, the unavoidable reference to violence in the discussion of epistemology points to the necessity of conceptual clarification in this regard. It also points to the need for an exposition of the ethical implications of the interrelation of violence and epistemology.

[22] This passage is quoted and translated from *Science avec Conscience* (Morin: 1982: 89), which has not been translated into English in its entirety.

The paradigm of simplification that produces mutilating knowledge is one that Morin (2005: 5) associates with a certain constellation of theoretical gestures that he characterises as having a triangular structure or strategy. Each of these strategies has been touched on and continues to inform the epistemological position taken by complexity thinking. The first movement is that of determinism. It is assumed that it is, at least in principle, possible to uncover natural universal laws in reality that allow us to know reality in itself, past and present, and also to predict what will happen in the future. The second movement is that of reduction. This is the idea that complex phenomena can be explained in terms of their simple composite elements; and, conversely, simple and fundamental composite elements can be deduced by observing a complex whole. Reductions happen between several levels of understanding, each collapsing into the other in a strictly given hierarchy. These reductions explain reality as if it were ossified. The third movement is that of disjunction. This is the compartmentalisation of knowledge into what we have come to know as 'disciplines'. The problem does not lie in the fact that there exist several specialised ways of examining complex phenomena. Rather, it is that these various explanations have become closed off from one another, with only internal modes of critique and no interdisciplinary interaction.

Like Cilliers, Morin (1983a; 1983b) does not want to put an end to scientific endeavour and also acknowledges the wonderful contributions of science to society and knowledge. However, critique is directed at the status of this knowledge and its assumptions. Morin (2005: 6) suggests that the underlying ontology is one with a dualistic conception of reality: one layer of complex appearances and another of simple underlying laws and composite elements. He extends the argument to say that historically, the reality of simplicity has been afforded more value. The paradigm of simplification, through its uncritical assumption of determinism, reduction and disjunction, has pervaded most of human knowledge. It has led to an atomistic understanding of beings as objects and a similarly atomistic methodology for the acquisition and development of knowledge in analysis. In order for this perspective to neutralise itself, it has become objective. Beings as objects are isolated from the environment and from the knowing subject. Both are eliminated from objective reality with standards of control and concordance. The object, in order to be laid bare to knowing, had to become inert, fixed in time and unorganised (Morin 1992: 374). Or, more precisely, things are organised by universal laws and principles that are at once implicated in the very constitution of the object and separate from its contingent imperfection.

The principle of disjunction works by exclusion and isolation. An oft cited example of this reduction is the atomistic understanding of the human subject in which all other disciplinary discourses and descriptions except one are excluded in the constitution of a valid body of knowledge. Such exclusion and isolation is evident in the conception of individuals and individuality, which begins by isolating individuals from social structures and society as a whole. This process of isolation and exclusion is not the only manifestation of reductionism. On the contrary, the social is understood by zooming out to a level at which the individual is but a type, a functional cog (Levy 1991: 91). There are contrary theoretical positions within modern thought. Here enters the notion of the

system. Within the paradigm of simplification, there has been a reaction to the principle of disjunction and a turn towards conjunction. Conjunctive theories find simplicity and unity at the level of the macro explanation, at the level of the total whole. The term 'system' has been cast as a substitute for more obviously reductive terms within an epistemological framework left unchanged. Morin recognises value in this diametric shift. Among important systems thinkers, he acknowledges Hegel, Marx and Weber (93).

The newly recognised whole usurped the place of constitutive parts as the keeper of describable truth. Holism in opposition to atomism stays within the same binary opposition of whole/parts in which one or the other term is scorned. Holism or totalisation[23] succumbs to the same reductionism as the analytic method. Both gestures erase difference and relationality and privilege a single description of reality. Morin's thinking is anti-totalitarian insofar as it rejects the idea of the perfect whole. The whole is a ruse because it presents itself as the ultimate truth and as the entire story when in fact the relationality between whole and parts is itself complex and fraught with paradoxes and logical contradiction.

The system is only totalising when it subsumes all meaning in a single coherent description as the actual truth more real than other interactions that happen on a lower localised level. This system understood as the whole – without granting theoretical significance to parts – is a simplified one-dimensional appearance. It is a construction. It is possible to argue this because the specification of the whole imposes a denial of its internal organisation and difference; its external organisation or relation with the environment; and the organisation between the observer and the system, now objectified and reified. It is a construction insofar as the reality of the whole is not simply given. It is always possible to offer a different description of the system as a macro-, micro- and meso-system and these descriptions cannot erase each other (Levy 1991: 93). In Morin's terms, even the whole is always partial. This circularity in which the whole and parts implicate each other is the frustration of the analytic method and the substance of Morin's "unitas-mutiplex" or complex unity (93-94). It is also this circular movement of mutual implication and constitution that informs Morin's method. In all respects, it strives to navigate beyond either/or dichotomies such as inside/outside, open/closed difference/unity (Morin 2007: 8). Neither diversity nor unity is logically prior. As it might have been anticipated, complexity thinking thinks

[23] Derrida (1991) expresses a similar attitude towards the romantic whole. He provides two accounts for the impossibility of totality. The first is perfectly in line with reductionism, simplification and of classical thought. The second concerns a system thought without a centre:

> Totalisation can be judged impossible in the classical style: one then refers to the empirical endeavour of either a subject or a finite richness which it can never master. There is too much, more than one can say. But non-totalisation can also be determined in another way: no longer from the standpoint of a concept of finitude as relegation to the empirical, but from the standpoint of the concept of play (365).

complex identity. The elements of a complex system do not lose their identity in the whole; nor do they retain an autonomous essential identity.[24] Reduction is not possible in either direction (Levy 1991: 93-94).

Having launched this attack on the idea of the whole, the concept is plainly not to be discarded. It is reframed within complexity as organisation and remains vital in developing any understanding of complex phenomena. This particular organisation is not observable at the level of composite parts alone. It is also not determination of the parts. The system is not identical with the whole or the parts but includes both. It therefore takes leave of the object of modern enquiry. The object as a complex system is a counterforce to the tripartite strategy of simplification. Further, this object as a system is always in relation to a subject that is always also a complex system. Morin's (1983b: 3) point is that there can be no objectivity without a subject; and, equally, no subject without an object. The subject is implicated in the constitution of knowledge, and therefore undermines objectivity as it has been propagated.

The implication of the subject or observer in the constitution of knowledge also links with the concept of self-critique. This critique is not merely introspection, but rather critique of the concept of the self-subject as part of the critique of epistemology (Morin 1983b). The problem with theory is not that it produces descriptions of the world, but that it is dogmatic. The problem with reason is not that it has developed logics and methodologies, but that it focuses attention on the rationalisation of these logics and methods to the detriment of critical checks. According to Morin (2007: 6), reality is contained and controlled within a system of ever more tightly stacked ideas. These ideas are hierarchically ordered by master concepts such as positivism, materialism and structuralism. These concepts – or perhaps we can insert 'metanarratives' here – give authority to descriptions. As an alternative, complexity offers a methodology that is cyclical, recursive, reflexive and dynamic (Levy 1991: 92). It flies against reductionism, claims to neutrality and linear causality.

It serves the argument at this point to return to the original and apparently simple definition of complexity offered thus far: that complexity is relationality. What appears simple is in fact not. Complexity thinking is the attempt to think what simplifying epistemology cannot. This is the paradoxical interrelation of unity and diversity. The singular and autonomous whole and its internal and external modes of organisation, resists the simplification that can only think of unity in terms of sameness and isolation (Morin 2007: 4).

Critical complexity makes a decisive break from the modernist epistemology and modern systems thinking so far reviewed. Despite the rejection of structuralism[25] as a modern foundation within complexity thinking, it is

[24] Consequently, Morin (1992: 146) argues against the simplicity that follows from essentialism:

> It is, henceforth, impossible to lock up the richness of system in simple and closed notions. The new type of intelligibility must be able to associate antagonistic notions and integrate ambiguity to understand the real complexity of objects and their relation with the thought which conceives them.

interesting to note that Morin (1992: 99) refers to Ferdinand de Saussure's definition of the linguistic system as a model for complex systems in general. A system, Morin quotes, is "an organized totality composed of [solitary] elements which can be defined only by their relation to each other in function of their place in the totality" (Saussure quoted in Morin 1992: 99). According to this structuralist system of language, the units of language, linguistic signs, derive meaning only within a network of relations which form that system as such (Saussure 1983: 65).[26] There is nothing essential about this meaning; it is contingent and arbitrary. It is the result of the dynamic interplay of differences between signs (67, 68). Furthermore, it is dynamic and operates in time. Morin thus models complex systems with priority given to the notion of difference and relationality and importantly also time and change. Cilliers (1998a: 37-41) also refers to Saussure as a point of departure in the attempt to model complex systems, the linguistic system being an excellent example of complexity. However, the discussion is not limited to Saussure for long. Rather, with Derrida as guide, Saussure is read far beyond himself by following his logic to its radical implications. This is further explicated once attention is turned to the development of a general theory of critical complexity.

The epistemological framework of complexity thinking brings another important opposition into question. This is the dichotomy of order and disorder which meet in the realm of complex organisation. Maintaining the modern metaphysical opposition between order and disorder has been intimately linked with prediction and control in the system (Morin 1983a: 24). This has had serious consequences for the manner in which determinism and freedom could be understood. That is, in a similarly adversarial polemic. This opposition, in its relation to choice and agency, has had yet further influence in the conceptualisation of subjectivity and ethics. At this stage is serves to make some preliminary remarks about the relationship between ontology, epistemology and ethics in a complex world. First, there is no way of finally disentangling these three areas of philosophy and life that would once and for all organise them into neat branches. Each feeds into the other, at once constraining and enabling development. Secondly, whereas critical complexity theory makes its voyage from the harbour of

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[25] Gayatri C. Spivak (1997: lv) defines structuralism thus:

> [It is] an attempt to isolate the general structures of human activity. Thus the structuralism I speak of is largely the study of literature, linguistics, history, socio-economics, psychology. A structure is a unit composed of a few elements that are invariably found in the same relationship within "activity" being described. The unit cannot be broken down into its single elements, for the unity of the structure is defined not so much by the substantive nature of the elements as by their relationship.

[26] Language can be analysed as a set of words referring to or naming ideas or concepts. This is an essentialist view, which presupposes extra-linguistic, autonomous, universal concepts that exist prior to the words used to name these concepts. The meaning of a word is found and anchored in these concepts. However, within structuralism concepts are linguistic and not pre-given: they only arise in language (Culler 1976: 22). According to Saussure (1983: 65), attempting to think of language as nomenclature exposes the linguistic character of concepts, as well as the true underlying structure of language, which is comprised out of a set of units referred to as signs. This sign is a double entity emerging from the interplay of complex relations within the system (Saussure 1983: 66).

epistemology, attempting to rethink this organisation, its implications are certainly not contained there (Morin 2005: 9). The place of this type of complexity thinking within social sciences stands in stark contradistinction with the most popular uptake of hard complexity theory in social science, that seeks validation and credibility at the altar of natural science (Cilliers, Heylighen & Gershenson 2007: 2).

It is often argued that the world is becoming ever more complex. This is as the network of interactions spreads across the globe as a heterogeneously and densely connected "system of systems" (1). Santa Fe style complexity, chaos theory or complexity science recognises complexity without confronting the epistemological-ontological-ethical quagmire opened by this recognition (Morin 2005: 10). This restricted complexity focuses on a synchronic view of the system. This is view that that aims to take all non-linear interrelations at an isolated moment in time into account in order to allow relations to be finally specified and resolved (Saussure 1983: 89). Systems are always open, with both a history and a future, but models impose temporal and spatial closure. An important aspect of this closure comes from the fact that models do not unfold in time in the same way that systems do.[27]

The task now at hand, in light of the epistemological-ontological-ethical critique necessitated by the acknowledgement of complex systems, is to try to think through a model of complex systems. It must be attempted to arrange these insights into some manner of coherent strategy. This is in the first place so that a critical conversation is at all possible. There can be no reflexive critical engagement with a position so vague that it does not allow for any understanding at all, let alone criticism. Secondly, complexity thinking is not closed to the world and its problems. It is a response to perceived problems, and very particularly also the violence implied in epistemological strategies. It thus endeavours to sketch a general model of complex systems that, while remaining cautious and self-critical, can be used to critique its own and other philosophical strategies.

Although it helps to understand that complex systems are complex, this does not help us to say much about particular complex systems (Cilliers, van Uden & Richardson 2001: 56, 57). A red flag is herewith raised: the reduction so far opposed to complexity is fraught with dangers; but it is also unavoidable. This point was integrated in the initial exposition of the concept of complexity, with reference to the system's incompressibility. The attempt to understand and model any particular complex system imposes closure on that system that – unlike its model – remains open. This is because models always make exclusions that can be motivated but not justified in an absolute sense. It is also because the dynamic non-linear interactions cannot be fixed in time. Even a lean and general description of the system imposes an artificial closure on complex organisation. Complexity

[27] For an account of the decisive role of time as signifying an epistemic revolution and the complex epistemological departure from modernism, see Damian Popolo's (2003) 'French Philosophy, Complexity and Scientific epistemology: Moving beyond the modern episteme'.

theory leads us back to a postmodern truism: there is no meaning without exclusion; no priority without a margin (65). Given that, from a complexity perspective, the world in itself is not immediately accessible to us, we cannot always derive theory from praxis. With complexity, we need achieve a measure of theoretical clarification first so that we might embark on a profitable, mutually constitutive engagement with the world.

III. TOWARDS A GENERAL THEORY OF CRITICAL COMPLEXITY

This discussion has offered several aspects and consequences of a general theory of complexity, in opposition to modernist epistemological strategies and restricted complexity, which make it a *critical* theory. It would be difficult to find a philosophical perspective that called itself *uncritical.* Therefore, before the general theory of complexity is more extensively developed, its status as critical should be elucidated by drawing all these distributed offerings together. Perhaps most evidently, critical complexity is 'critical of' modernist epistemological strategies (Cilliers 1998a: 107; 2000c: 27-28; 2002: 80-81; Morin 1983a: 23; 2005: 1, 10, 12; 2008: 1-24). This criticism extends to the error of unreflective reductions and simplifications, and the absolute status of knowledge that arises within this paradigm. Critical complexity also interrogates and repositions certain foundations/centres/grounds that justify knowledge within this paradigm. Here, oppositions that have grounded claims to certain truth are included. Dichotomies such as epistemology/ontology and subject/object come under pressure. Critical complexity opens the space for the interruption of the status of knowledge (Cilliers 2002: 80-83; Morin 1992: 386). Auto-criticism is also inherent to critical complexity because its critical strategies are reflexive (Morin 1992: 3). This auto-criticism is directed at theory and the observer constructing, developing and applying the theory. The observing self-subject is no more an absolute foundation for knowledge than the observed object of positivism.

The positive or substantive content of a critical theory of complexity or a theory of critical complexity always defers to Morin's (1992: 386) insight that complexity manifests in the first place as the impossibility of simplification that arises from the dynamic structure of complex systems. More radically, perhaps, it can be said that it arises from the dynamic structure of the largest complex system – everything that is (Cilliers, Richardson & Lissack 2001: 8).[28] The notion of a system as a model that can be used to elucidate local and global structures calls attention to the embedded nature of all systems. This flows from the conceptualisation of an open system followed by Cilliers (1998a: 37-41) and Morin (1992: 99) that considers relations rather than isolated units. The system itself can be a critical tool, a means of arriving at value judgements. It is thus positioned as a tool for understanding and criticising, for example, social relations.

[28] I refer to the argument made earlier, that ultimately all complex systems are embedded in an undefined universal system. See footnote 16.

The emphasis on the direct or indirect relation of everything to everything always implies a critique of the system's boundary (Cilliers 2002: 81). As it has been emphasised, rather than a naturally or transcendentally given site; the boundary is a frame constituted in the choice of observation. The dynamic and open structure of complex systems undermines the boundary as a clear determinate border line. However, all attempts at knowledge necessitate a boundary or frame. The frame cannot be found; it is chosen. This element of choice is the normative content at work in every attempt to understand. Complexity theory exposes this normativity – the critical moment – in order to open knowledge and actions to the possibility of being corrected. This possibility is never exhausted. Critical complexity theory is critical because it calls for the perpetual opening and reopening of the possibility that knowledge may be otherwise. It insists upon the acknowledgement of the normative moment implicated in all knowledge. Here another aspect of 'criticalness' can be marked. Critical complexity theory, because it opens what less modest theories, perspectives and politics closes up, is concerned with change. A system poised at a critical point in its history is one which is open to novelty, good or bad. When we speak of a person or an economy or a country at a critical moment, there is always something of an acknowledgement that we do not know what will happen next. This sense of criticality is retained in critical complexity.

The analysis of complexity has an inescapable circularity. In approaching complex phenomena, we already assume that we know, albeit partially, what it is we are approaching. This assumption is open to revision, but the understanding of complexity that informs an analysis nevertheless frames the theory that is developed. However, the engagement between complexity thinking and the complex is dialogical. The to and fro motion does not come to rest. The point of departure, it is clear, is that we are not dealing with objects as they are understood in the modernist account. Rather, we are dealing with dynamic systems (Morin 1992: 143). Morin's texts suggest that the confrontation with recurring themes in the attempt to acquire certain knowledge of the world is what leads us to a multifaceted understanding of complexity (Dobuzinskis 2004: 438). These themes can be understood as leading towards a general characterisation of complexity:

a. Disorder and randomness cannot be reduced to order or made completely predictable.
b. Certain phenomena such as living systems and social systems are highly complicated and plainly exceed descriptions that attempt to simplify behaviour in order to understand it.
c. Order and disorder are both important aspects of organisation and this often falls beyond logical explanation.
d. The appearance of singular phenomena in scientific endeavours demonstrates the limits of universal abstraction that denies singularity in order to construct categories.
e. The nature of self-organisation in systems in which the relations between parts are not ordained from outside or above is an increasingly useful and interesting field of enquiry across several academic disciplines.

f. The observation of certain phenomena undermines the clear distinction between object and observer or object and environment.
g. The unavoidable appearance of the observer or subject as a mediator in the observation of the object undermines the purity of observation as an absolute foundation of knowledge.
h. Conventional methods of understanding fail to explain or characterise many phenomena.

These eight themes serve as points of access into complexity thinking in which each aforementioned theme is not an obstacle to knowledge, but can be understood as integral to knowledge (436-438).

Navigating beyond this initial confrontation with complexity as a common feature of objects of knowledge, Cilliers (1998a: 3, 4) provides a model of complex systems in terms of ten general characteristics. This is not exactly a definition because it maintains a level of generality that must be supplemented in the description of a specific complex system, but it does go a long way to clarifying the notion of complexity:[29]

1. Complex systems are made up of a large number of elements, but are not reducible to these elements. The system is a result of the relations between these elements.
2. Interaction between these elements is dynamic and changes with time.
3. This interaction is rich. In other words, elements are not connected in pairs or pockets.
4. Interactions are non-linear, which means that elements are exposed to change along different and dispersed paths of influence and causality.
5. Elements are generally influenced by other elements that are closer rather than further away. This does not mean that interactions cannot have wide-ranging impacts on the system.
6. There are loops in the system, which means that interactions feed back into the system.
7. Complex systems are open systems.
8. Complex systems do not operate near equilibrium. In fact, equilibrium or stagnation for complex systems is equivalent to death.
9. Memory is a precondition for the existence of a system. The system always has a history.
10. No one element can control the whole system or fully determine the behaviour of any other element in the system. Every element is both active and passive: acting and constrained by action.

These characteristics are critical to the further development of the complexity argument. As such, they are deserving of some further discussion. It is easy to argue that complexity is a result of finite human understanding simply not being able to calculate all the interactions that are multiple and recursive. If this were the case, then it would be possible to imagine that complexity remains solvable even if this is only a theoretical possibility.

[29] "These characteristics are not offered as a *definition* of complexity, but rather as a general, low-level, qualitative *description*" (Cilliers 2000c: 24, author's emphasis)

However, having a large number of interactions/relations/differences is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of complexity. These interactions do not unfold as frames in a cinematic reel. They are continuous and dynamic. To describe the system at a given moment in time is to abstract from this continuity and richness. Furthermore, while it may appear clear which elements are related to which in the system, any attempt to specify these relations ignores the extent to which all elements are embedded in the system as a whole and, as such, are connected to every other element in the system. This is why local interactions that appear to involve just a few relations can have wide ranging effects.

To describe these interactions as non-linear is to say that they are not additive. A dense network of interaction cannot be replaced by a small set of simple interactions that can be determined by observing the system. Non-linearity also results in the condition in which small effects can have large causes and vice versa. Non-linearity frustrates the process of determining cause and effect, the observation of which requires construction. Effects cannot be contained and feed back into the structure of the system, also reverberating through its node of origin. The system, so long as it is alive, so to speak, remains in motion. It does not reach equilibrium. Stagnation means the system is no longer organising (Cilliers 1998a: 4). This does not mean that there is no structural integrity in complex systems. Complexity is not chaos. There is structure and often high levels of stability. However, it is never quite the same from one moment to the next.

The notion of stability raises a few questions. One may ask how the structure of complex systems is determined, how relations are formed or why they are maintained. Or formulated differently: where is the centre of a complex system? The system is not determined from inside, above or outside. There is not one node or isolated relation that can determine the course of development a system follows. Interactions are local and ignorant of the system in its entirety. What may be observed as the overall structure is an emergent property of the interactions in the system (5, 89). The term 'self-organisation' refers to the fact that the system is not externally structured. It does not imply a deterministic subjectivity that arises out of organization and then retroactively does all the work of organisation. The work of organisation is distributed across the system (91).[30] The observation that there is no centre of control does not mean that anything can happen in a complex system. In a lean sense, absolute novelty is possible in the system; but these possibilities are constrained by organisation at the level of the whole and at the level of local interactions between parts. The system remains open to new manifest organisation because of the dispersed organisation of its relations. It thus always contains unrealised alternatives to itself. This potential opens a gulf that threatens to unpin the presence of identity and set it afloat upon a sea of contingency and uncertainty.

Structural constraint should not merely be thought of negatively. It is also enabling. It enables the system to be what it is. To use complexity language: the system emerges as a system as a result of the interactions between

[30] "Self-organisation is an emergent property of the system as a whole (or of large enough subsystems)" (Cilliers 1998a: 91).

nodes in the system constituted through differences. There is not more to the system than relations; and the way in which these relations unfold in time constitutes the system as system.[31] The system is not constituted by an essence; it is constituted by what happens in the system. It is the result of its history, although the word 'result' is used reluctantly. It connotes a finality which is in contradiction with the perpetual dynamism of the system. A more sensitive formulation could be to say that it is the process of its history. Memory is constitutive of the system (4). History never ceases to matter.

The idea that the system has a memory and that it unfolds in time is not one to which so-named restricted complexity theorists or systems theorists would be averse. Nonetheless, the theoretical force of this insight is neutralised by its marginalisation in the process of modelling systems. The synchronic view is privileged over the diachronic (Saussure 1983: 89). Better to freeze the system so that we may pick it apart. Katherine Hayles (20001: 37 -162) therefore opposes systems thinking as the heir of cybernetic ideas to narratives. The narrative shows what synchronic systems thinking can only add as a footnote to the analysis: the system may be otherwise. And if the system may be otherwise, then the closure of the system is also contingent. The inclusion of temporality as a fundamental characteristic of complex systems is thus an acknowledgement of contingency. On the level of human political and social systems, this becomes an important guard against the petrifaction of the system and its boundary.

Humberto Maturana's analysis of self-organising living systems put forward an intimate and mutually dependent relation between the system's autopoiesis, its self-production, and its operational closure (Rasch 2000: 74). In other words, autopoietic systems are closed to their environments, which cannot affect their operations or organisation in any direct way. There can only be a relation of loose coupling with anything outside the system. The outside can influence the system in terms of perturbations or unspecific disturbances. There is no causal relation between system and environment (Rasch 2000: 75; Hayles 2000: 141). This idea of operational closure has been taken up in systems thinking and it stands juxtaposed with critical complexity.[32] The life of the system is dependent on its ability to interact with its environment (Cilliers1998a: 91).

Complex systems need to be open. Openness can be conceptualised in terms of flows through the system that allow the system to be sustained as a system (Morin 1992: 196). Resources like fuel and information are taken into the system and used to produce outputs. For Morin (208), the openness of open systems is not a pure or

[31] Morin uses several contradictory and complementary statements to summarise the relationship between the system as a whole and its parts. The whole is always less than the sum of its parts; and it is simultaneously also more than the sum of its parts; and both the whole and the parts are only ever partial (Levi 1991: 91).

[32] This discussion necessitates another reference to Niklas Luhmann. The first reference excluded – in footnote 19 – Luhmann (1993) from the critical project explored here. The relation between operational closure and autopoiesis in Luhmann's differentiated social systems is discussed and criticised by Rasch (2000) and Hayles (2000). The distance between types if systems thinking that emphasise closure and ones that emphasise openness should be more apparent in light of this discussion of the dynamics and structure of complex systems.

exclusive openness. Openness and closure, while not collapsible, are also not foreign to one another. The open system needs both openness and closure to function. The system has a boundary and is therefore enclosed; and that boundary is problematic and permeable, which means that closure is never complete (Cilliers 2001; 2002c; Juarrero 2002). Complex systems are robust because they are able to negotiate complex and dynamic environments. This can only be possible if information about the environment outside the system is represented in some way inside the system (Cilliers 1998a: 10). The open system allows for some form of communication between the system and its environment.

Cilliers' (3, 4) sketch of complex systems maintains a level of generality necessary for the development of the notion of complexity as such. These characteristics are not meant to stand in for a substantive description of any particular system (5). In this sense, a general theory of complexity is not a doctrinaire metanarrative. It is itself a dynamic description that is developed in the attempt to approach specific complex phenomena with sensitivity. Examples of these complex systems are the brain and language, both of which are systems of meaning (Cilliers 1998a: 37-47; Cilliers & Gouws 2001). Each of these systems maintains its distinctness and differences within this general scheme. There is another important facet at work in the attempt to understand complex phenomena as complex systems – this is the orientation or position of the observer in relation to the system.

The system is always selected from its environment. What is included and excluded is not always obvious or given (Cilliers 1998a: 7). The openness and closure of the system is always to some extent the result of the position and frame of the description thereof (Morin 1992: 197; Cilliers 1998a: 7). For example if I choose to describe the legal system, I must decide how to include people in the system and how to frame the enquiry. Do I expand it to the level of society? Do I exclude aspects and relations of the elements that place them in other systems such as the political system or the economic system? The elements of complex systems can be poly-contextual and therefore have more than one meaning in more than one system. These meanings do not disappear when they are described within a specific frame. The possibility of contagion from other systems is thus intrinsic to at least some complex systems and certainly those involving human beings.[33]

The list of ten characteristics is very useful in approaching complexity. However, Cilliers (1998a: 70, 81)argues, having made this theoretical clearing, our understanding of complex systems can be further enriched by interrogating existing models or modes of description. Rule-based or formal descriptions have been used to describe complex systems in the past. However, this process is undermined by the incompressibility of non-linearity in the system; and also by the dynamic organisation that cannot be captured in terms of fixed non-

[33] This idea calls up Morin's (2005: 5) expressed disavowal of disjunctive analysis, which denies precisely this openness to other descriptions. Morin (5) explain that "[the] principle of disjunction…consists in isolating and separating cognitive difficulties from one another, leading to the separation between disciplines, which have become hermetic from one another".

dynamic rules (Cilliers 2000b). The system's excesses and irregularities cannot be contained in a discreet list of rules. If a rule-based model were to be used to understand a complex system, the complexity of the system would need to be modelled before the model could be used to say anything more substantive about the system. In general terms, one could argue that a rule-based understanding is appropriate to simple or complicated things (Cilliers 2000b: 42; Morin 1992: 386). Cilliers (1998a: 28) argues that connectionist models have sensitivity to complexity by virtue of their structure, which incarnates the characteristics of complex systems. Moreover, as all complex systems must store information to cope with the environment, the way the system stores this information and organises in response is a crucial component of the modelling process. This is more obvious in systems usually associated with meaning, such as natural language systems, but it is not confined to these systems.

This process differs markedly from rule-based descriptions in which there are one-to-one representations between atomistic rules and external referents; and connectionist models in which relations of difference allow the system to distribute meaning across these relations (19). Connectionism in general will not be discussed at any length here. However, a few brief remarks are necessary. Connectionist models are made up of a number of elements, which by themselves contain no meaning. They are defined by their relation to one another, which develops in time. Through a process of learning, or responding to inputs from the environment, the network becomes structured by organising itself. The system organises because it has a memory. It remembers some things and forgets others. Meaning arises as the various nodes become weighted in this process (37). In other words, they acquire relational meaning that is distributed over the entire system (45).[34] At bottom, however, these meanings are nothing substantial, nothing positive and cannot be outside the system. Cilliers (37-41) reads Saussure's linguistic system of meaning as a connectionist model. Without representation in the conventional sense, meaning is not stored somewhere is the system. It is also not stored somewhere outside the system in a world of forms or in a god that is final arbiter. Rather, in Saussure's (1983) system, meaning is the result of interactions. Meaning is not given from outside; nor is it disseminated from the centre (Cilliers & Gouws 2001: 8).

For Saussure (1983: 67), the meaning of the sign 'woman' derives its meaning from arbitrary relations of difference on three levels. The first relation is between the two inseparable but nonetheless distinguishable aspects of the linguistic sign, the signifier and the signified. The former is a sound image; the latter, its concept. Secondly, the signifier 'sex' is identifiable because it can be differentiated from other sound images like 'man', 'woman', 'womb' and 'dovecote'. Thirdly, the signified or concept is identifiable as that particular concept also

[34] Freud's model of the brain is an example of a connectionist model that anticipates contemporary development of neural networks. See Cilliers & Gouws 2001.

simply because that concept differs from other concepts. The meaning of ‘sex’ is formed in the opposition of various possible meanings. We come to the meaning of ‘sex’ because ‘sex’ does *not* mean ‘love’, ‘kiss’ or ‘gender’. To say that the sign is arbitrary is not precisely to say that it is random. Its meaning is the result of a certain structure, but that structure could have been otherwise. Sex is a good example of a sign whose publically contested meaning has changed dramatically throughout history. In effect, the entire system shifts when individual meanings shift because all the signs are implicated in the system of differences.

On one reading, Saussure (1983) appears to think of language as an open system. This arbitrary nature of the sign and the contingency of the self-organising system are, however, fixed on three accounts. First, he (99) privileges synchronic analysis over diachronic. Secondly, meaning is still somehow anchored in the dualistic character of the sign.[35] And thirdly, he privileges speaking over writing because speaking disambiguates what writing confuses because of its distance from the speaker’s mind in which the signified is called up (Saussure 1983: 31; Cilliers 1998a: 38; Derrida 1997: 35). Saussure’s (1983: 98) system is protected from the forces of time and change because for Saussure the system is a synchronic phenomenon that cannot be observed over time. Relations in the system can only be observed as fixed stable connections. The identity and integrity of the system is threatened by temporality. Derrida (2001: 355) reads this system with an eye to unhinging it from its metaphysical foundation: “If one erases the radical difference between signifier and signified, it is the word signifier itself which ought to be abandoned as a metaphysical concept”. To wit, the opposition between syntax and semantics must be deconstructed in order to produce an alternative conceptualisation of representation.

Structuralism remains within a modernist paradigm in which structure can only be thought in terms of strong subject/object opposition. It is an opposition defined by a scrutinising subject laying bare the underlying foundational logic of a particular system (Spivak 1997: lvii). It other words, the system of structuralism is not complex. It must remain fixed so that its meaning can be established objectively. This is not a flat denial of meaning or systemic stability. Derrida's general model of language, as a radical reading of Saussure's system of

[35] Saussure (1983: 67-68) plainly states that there are, at bottom, only differences in the linguistic system. At the level of the signified or the signifier, meaning arises out of the interaction of purely negative entities. The arbitrary nature of the sign and its mutability is a function of these negative values (116). The sign as a unity is the correlation of two forms in this differential system (118). The sign as a unity is relational; however, it is not purely negative. In this analysis, the correlation between an idea and a specific sound image is positive. Saussure (119) writes:

> The moment we compare one sign with another as positive combinations, the term *difference* should be dropped. It is no longer appropriate. It is a term which is suitable only for comparisons between sound patterns (e.g. *pére vs. mére)*, or between ideas (e.g. ‘father’ vs. ‘mother’). Two signs, each compromising a signification and a signal, are not different from each other, but only distinct (author’s emphasis).

It is the relation, the linguistic unit, which is the positive content of language. It must be emphasised that the positive content of signs is formal and not substantial (120). This unit remains meaningless outside of mutual relations of opposition within that particular system whence it emerges.

differences, is used by Cilliers (1998a: 37) to open the connectionist model of complex systems.[36] Derrida's reading of Saussure demonstrates sensitivity to the complexity of language as a system (55).[37]

In order to grasp the spatial, temporal and open character of the system of meaning, Derrida develops the notions of *différance* and trace (Cilliers 1998a: 80). Meaning arises in the differential, delayed, deferring reference within the system of signs (Culler 1983: 97). *Différance* is the process of differentiation of signs in space expressed in the relation x is not y is not z is not q. To find the meaning of x, we need to trace its meaning through all these relations which do not unfold linearly. In other words, x defers to y, z and q (and all other signs in the system) for its meaning while it is actively differentiating itself and being differentiated. Similarly, y, z, and q all defer to x when their meaning is traced. In this processing of tracing meaning, complete present meaning is unendingly displaced and deferred in time and space. What are present in the system are only traces of differences that are perpetually in motion.

The sign 'mother' is not composed of a sound-image and its concept present to itself. When one tries to get at the meaning, one is not met with a preformed concept, but rather with a meaning that requires its own clarification and framing. One is met with more words/signs, the meaning of which refers to yet more words/signs and so on. In this process of perpetual reference, meaning is never finished and present but it is abundant and even overabundant (Cilliers 1998a: 80). There is always more meaning yet. Our descriptions of the system may be fixed but the system itself is in transformation (44). Because we are immersed in language, our experiences are also structured by the logic of the trace (83). This is not an argument for language as a self-contained or totalising system, or as a system that acts in one direction on other systems. Meaning arises within a system of signs, but that system is not closed to the human, the social, the material, the physical, the biological, the cosmos...language speaks to the world and the world talks back. To reiterate an earlier point, it is now clearer that a system constituted in the logic of trace and *différance* is one for which rules are an inadequate description (22). If rules are made to do all the work in a theory, then one inevitably needs to pull some metaphysical sleight of hand by fixing semantics a priori.

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[36] Cilliers (1998a: 37) draws these resonant systems together:

> Since it is based on a system of relationships, the post-structural inquiry into the nature of language helps us to theorise about the dynamics of the interactions in complex systems. In other words, the dynamics that generates meaning in language can be used to describe the dynamics of complex systems in general.

[37] Derrida (1997: 3-93), in *Writing Before the Letter*, Part I of *Of Grammatology*, deconstructs Saussure's system of signs. The form and consequences of this deconstruction will be treated more thoroughly in chapter 2.

IV. STRUCTURE, THE BOUNDARY AND THE OUTSIDE

a. COMPLEX ORGANISATION IS DYNAMIC AND HETEROGENEOUS

The connectionist model opened by *différance* is the starting point for this discussion of complex organisation. This process of opening is multifaceted. Whenever complex structure is discussed, three distinct and interrelated constituents must be considered. These are the inside, the system's border and system's outside. The system's outside can be viewed from two perspectives that deliver qualitatively different descriptions. From one perspective, if it is possible to zoom out beyond the boundary of the system, the outside can be seen as the environment of the system. The environment is itself also always a complex system (Cilliers 2005a: 258). In terms of the system itself, or a perspective inside the system, the outside can be described as that which is not or not yet represented within the system. The inside, boundary and outside are constituted in the play of differences in the system and outside it. Complex organisation emerges at these three sites. This organisation produces both order and disorder; stability and change; hierarchies and movement. The temptation exists to interpret the complex system of differences as a visual metaphor in which many small evenly spaced nodes are encircled by a perforated line demarcating what is in and what is out. Even though this is a useful first conception, the temptation to stay with this picture should be resisted. Although the separation of the inside, outside and boundary is very helpful, it is merely a matter of convenience. Their genesis is simultaneous and mutually constitutive.

The internal structure of complex systems has already been described under the discussion of a general theory of complexity. There is a dynamic and rich interaction of elements which move and are moved in a decentred process of interaction that replicates Derrida's differing and deferring logic of *différance*. Because the system is not fixed, the movement of *différance* always involves every element in the system. For this movement to come to an end has been identified with death. And as a corollary, for the system to live or to survive it must never cease to organise in response to external information and internal organisation. Meaning in the system is thus constantly shifting.

The complex system *is* not. It is always *becoming*. This process in time requires that the system includes space. For elements in a complex system to be able to organise dynamically, they cannot be tightly stacked. There must be a degree of freedom. That is to say, relations need space to be able to change. Spacing is not an element in the system. It is precisely that which the system cannot bring under the control of its organisation or erase. If it could, the system would be able to bring itself into order or to equilibrium. However, even as the system organises itself; it simultaneously disorganises itself. Some spaces are closed and others open or widen. Space and time are not external parameters of the complex system. Both are intimately involved in organisation of the system and the emergence of structure.

Organisation in complex systems includes both the opening and closing of space. Perhaps Morin's (1992: 72) insight might help to elaborate on this point. The complex system, while it is organising, cannot be dead. However, it is always perpetually dying and living. Certain elements may even disappear, except as traces stored in the system's memory. They may or may not be replaced by others. The internal integrity of a complex system does not depend on the maintenance of the same or an extension of the present. It is generative, degenerative and regenerative. Its structure, while it may not produce dramatic novelty in the form of an entirely new configuration, always necessarily includes an element of novelty. In other words, there is not only difference at the level of the parts of a complex system. The system as a system also always already differs from itself.[38] This difference can be almost unperceived or it can be a dramatic break at which the system's organisation takes off on a radically different path of development.

If one follows the visual metaphor in which a complex system has differences that play out on only one plane, it appears that the structure of a complex system is flat. It seems that an egalitarian argument is germinating in this decentred process. But alas, all elements are not equal. If one thinks of a complex system with an absolute centre, it is easy to imagine that a clear hierarchy would emerge from this centre, down. It might be conceded that these hierarchies contain pockets of organisation at different levels but also that these lower level hierarchies are confined by the limitations imposed by the overall top-down organisation of the whole. Complex systems are not comprised of homogenous elements and they do have hierarchy (Cilliers 1998a: 95). These hierarchies are contingent. They are not deterministic. They shift with the general structure of the system and are always vulnerable to radical re-organisation. Hierarchy emerges with structure. They are not confined to specific levels, nor do they fit into each other like a stack of traffic cones. They are heterogeneous, emergent "at every scale" and always emerge within a specific context. If the context changes hierarchies, are able to transform (Cilliers 2001: 144). This type of contingent and heterogeneous constellation of hierarchies has been characterised as a "heterarchy" (Cilliers, Heylighen & Gershenson 2007:10).

The fact that there are hierarchies in complex systems implies that there are relations of power and that deference between elements in the systems is not quite so free and reflexive as first proposed. However, to say that relations between elements and between clusters of elements are necessarily asymmetrical is not to say that

[38] Saussure (1983: 71-78) already tries to theorise both the variability and invariability of the system in terms of its becoming in time. He argues that, "It is because the linguistic sign is arbitrary that it knows no other law than tradition and because it is founded upon tradition that it can be arbitrary" (74). For tradition, it is perhaps more in keeping with complexity language to insert, 'convention'. He goes on to argue, "The passage of time, which ensures the continuity of a language, also has another effect, which appears to work in the opposite direction. It allows linguistic signs to be changed with some rapidity (74)".

Cilliers (1998a: 97) uses complexity language to make the same point. Under certain conditions:

> ...movement from one stable state to another will require very strong perturbations. For this reason the system will respond sluggishly to changes in the environment. However, with the system poised at the point of criticality...will also be able to change its state with the least amount of effort (97).

relations of domination and marginalisation are good. Structure is necessary and necessarily produces asymmetry.[39] This asymmetry can tend toward domination and it is as likely to tend towards reification in the auto-organisation of the system as it is towards disintegration. The theoretical point has three prongs: all forms of organisation contain asymmetry; all asymmetry is dangerous; the dynamics of the system can reinforce or undermine asymmetrical structures.

It must be re-emphasised that the organisation that reinforces or undermines ordering in the system is not bottom-up. That is to say, it is not merely the revolt of the parts against the tyranny of the whole. The parts and the whole are mutually constitutive. They are also mutually implicated in the disordering of this constitution. The system or whole that emerges out of relations of difference acquires a form of agency that can be characterised as downward causation. Sometimes this agency is quite easily locatable as in the case of consciousness emerging out of the interactions of neurons in the human brain. In other complex systems, such as the economic system, this higher level, emergent whole is not as easy to see. This is to the extent that the system is reduced to its parts– human actors– in order to argue that the system as such has no effect on what actions may or may not be taken at lower levels. In other words, structural causation only flows upwards.

The danger of overemphasising downward causality or attributing a form of agency to it is that it obscures organisation and agency at the level of the parts. The opposite danger is that erasure of agency at the level of the system results in the system itself losing its capacity to bear responsibility for the constraint of the freedom of the parts at all. It appears, then, only as an immutable monolith that hangs above autonomous, unconstrained and wholly undetermined elements. However, following the complex structure thus far explored, the emergent whole is not merely the sum of its parts. While it is nothing mystical, it remains non-identical with internal or lower-level interactions. Agency, which must not be confused with a sort of anthropomorphic selfhood, persists at both levels which are distinct but inseparable. At the hand of a paradigmatic example, such as the legal system that constrains human beings through its infrastructure and texts created in the relations and interactions between human beings, downward causation is difficult to theorise away.

b. THE BOUNDARY

The description of a system, and especially a system open to its environment, implies that this system is somehow distinguishable from an environment and from other systems. Even an open system is closed and must be bounded in some way. Thus far, this discussion has assumed that complex systems can be identified or

[39]Cilliers (1998a: 95) explains:

> If the initial state of the system is fully homogenous, the evolving structure could be symmetrical too. This will inhibit the development of complex structure. Symmetry-breaking is usually achieved spontaneously by means of missing or incorrect connections (or other happenings of chance), as well as by the non-linearity of the system and the resulting sensitivity to small fluctuations.

recognised even if the process is never complete. This identification could involve thinking of the system as having a clear visual boundary; however, it has already been stated that complex systems cannot always be seen and their conception may exceed the constraints of ocular metaphors. Notions like operational closure, elaborating on insights from Maturana, reinforce this picture of a boundary as a clear line around the periphery of the system, perhaps perforated to allow for certain flows in and out of the system (Rasch 2000: 74). These flows do not problematise the boundary as such. However, a more sensitive approach to complexity sees the boundary not as a clear line between inside and outside, but rather as the distinction that enables the inside to be constituted as inside (Cilliers 2001: 141). The boundary may be in many places and at many levels at once. What is inside that system is thus always at the boundary because it is always being constituted and reconstituted in its difference from the outside.

This insight, this way of thinking the boundary, leads to a concern with both marginality and the context. The boundary does more work and is made to do more work when things are not clear, when hybridity and impurity challenge the boundary to make its mark. Marginal cases cannot be pushed out of sight if we want to understand complex systems (141). Marginality is thus displaced in its relation to the centre. The points that have been made so far regarding the openness, contingency, recognisable structure and thus identity of complex systems rest on a particular conceptualisation of the boundary of such systems. The boundary as an inside/outside distinction can be elaborated further.

In complex systems, it is imperative that the boundary is distinguished from a limit, which is rigid and fixed (Juarrero 2002: 100). Boundaries can be traversed, shifted and viewed from both sides. However, we only ever see one side of a limit (Cilliers 2002: 82). The limit is related to Morin's (2007:2) epistemological blind spots. They are a function of the way we know a system. A distinct way of thinking of the boundary is that the boundary is the emergent property of the complex internal relations of components of the system (Juarrero 2002: 101). The emergent boundaries do not eventually settle and neatly define the system (Cilliers 2001: 141). Indeed, to reiterate an earlier point, as complex systems shift and develop in time with ever enriched histories, their boundaries becomes even more dispersed and problematic over time (Morin 2005: 15). Just when a boundary had been identified, the system could reproduce itself with increasing incidences of deviation from present configurations of relations in the system. The boundary is plainly not a spatial designation. Juarrero (2002: 100) designates it rather aptly, as an "active site". Its activity is inside/outside differentiation.

The structure and boundary are both emergent structures that cannot be considered outside organisation. This description has left the observing subject aside to focus on the object, the complex system being observed. However, as it has already been argued, the subject is implicated in the constitution of every object as an object of observation. The world is not naked and carved up for subjects to merely label. The subject, even in a rigorous and provisional observation, is always situated and always brings a certain perspective and frame that necessarily

shift the boundary and reverberate through the structure of a complex system. This is also so for the system's outside.

c. Outside the Complex System

The system's outside can be understood as its context or environment. The environment becomes meaningful to the system through its internal differentiation between information and noise and the interpretation thereof. In terms of the system, its environment is constantly changing as its internal resources allow for new interpretations. However, the environment is also shifted once again in the organisational shifting of boundaries. It also follows from the implication of an observing subject in the constitution of the boundary and impact on internal structure, that this subject and the frame it imposes in its observation will be implicated in the 'selection' of the system's environment. Both the subject and the system operate by selection, which is a result of structure, which is a result of memory (Cilliers 2006: 109). The system's ability to anticipate a range of possible futures is linked to how rich this memory is. Selection produces the system as the system that it is: its identity emerges as the collection of its histories. The notion of selection is also significant because it is a function of the limitation of the system. It is because it cannot process its entire environment entirely, the system must make choices.

A final note on the outside of the system must be made. For purpose, it is useful to refer to an example. If a complex system – in this case a cultural community – observes itself or a member of this community observes it, the outside is not merely a meaningful environment. There is also something which, in a dynamic system, escapes the production of meaning in the system. There is always noise. This noise may lie beyond the boundary of the system, but it is equally also present inside the system. Complex interaction produces and is produced by ordered and disordered relations (Morin 1992: 35, 41, 48).[40] From the perspective of the observer, all attempts to understand a system as meaningful always produce their own forms of non-understanding (Morin 2007: 2). What is excluded is constituted in the act of understanding and participates in the constitution of that understanding through which it was produced. For this argument the notion of spacing must be invoked again.

In the movement of differentiation, the open spaces that arise out of the process of organisation are unmarked by the ordering of the system. Something always escapes. The unmarked space cannot be made meaningful. Or

[40] Morin (1992: 41) argues that complex organization cannot be reduced to regions of order that appear to conform to our methods of understanding, nor can regions of disorder be disregarded as merely exceptional and excluded from our conceptual scheme on this basis. The mutual implication of order and disorder is the complexity that we must try to understand knowing that our understanding will never be perfect:

> Order, disorder, organising potentiality must be thought of together, both in their well-known antagonistic character and in their unknown complementary character. These terms shuttle from one to the other and form a sort of moving loop.

rather, if it is, another will open. The system consists of meaning and non-meaning. The dynamics of the system ensures this. This is the *outside* inside the system. What is unmarked does not stay the same. For this to be the case, the system itself would have to stay the same. The process of marking and unmarking also applies in the system's selection and interpretation of the environment. It might prove a hazardous formulation, but what is unmarked beyond the boundary could be called the *outside* outside. And the marked environment could be an extension of the *inside* outside. However, as a final note to the note on the outside, it must be stressed that the inside itself has already been disrupted by the movement of complexity. The absolute purity of the interior is interrupted by the exterior and vice versa.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that complexity thinking exposes the violence of theory on two levels. The first is the violence of confining complex dynamic phenomena to petrified, reductionist, conceptual schemes. The second and related violence at play is the theoretical chauvinism associated with claims to truth within distinct discourses. Critical, reflexive positions are pushed to the margins of theory in favour of the ostensive certainty offered by essentialism and even structuralism and other reified perspectives or indeed master concepts. These violent discourses are ignorant of the error in their observation. As such, they remain alienated from the very possibility that the violence of observation might be corrected. In the endeavour to create knowledge, the openness, the cracks, the spaces are filled in, bringing the system slowly towards stagnation. It may appear from the juxtaposition of modernist and complexity paradigms emphasising the mutilation or violence of modern thought that the argument made here exonerates complexity thinking of all violence, epistemological and otherwise. This is certainly not the case. Critical complexity is sensitive to the violence that is implicated in the meaningful interpretation of the world from any philosophical perspective. It is sensitive to the limits that constitute knowledge as knowledge. The epistemological frame that a subject and collective subjects bring to phenomena, allowing them to appear to us, imposes certain limitations on how we can know and what we may know (Cilliers 2002: 78).

Epistemology and ontology are not easily disentangled, let alone opposed to one another, if one departs from a complex understanding of self and world. This deliberate opposition is drawn only in order to disambiguate what we are doing when we are using the language of complexity (79). As a metaphysical distinction, it cannot be maintained. This is because as knowing subjects, constituted in our knowledge and linguistic networks, we are in the world and of the world while maintaining our position as distinct knowing subjects. We do not arbitrate over the world as free floating islands of intelligence over a sea of either dead or chaotic matter. The complexity of complex organisation cannot be captured once and for all in any description, least of all this one. However, the attempt to say something meaningful about the world is not disavowed just because it is fraught with difficulty. This means that everything that is said must be said with caution, in a way that allows for shifts in

understanding. Everything that is said is said by someone. The constitution of knowledge is no innocent matter and responsibility for it cannot be transferred onto the system, the world, or a transcendental principle.

Drawing to the end of this initial consideration of complexity thinking, a pertinent question that has quietly pervaded this analysis can be brought to the surface. What could it be to think structure without thinking its "structurality" (Derrida 2001: 351)? And conversely, what is the claim made here, that complexity thinks the 'structurality' of structure? To the former: a certain strategies that can be collectively considered as modernist, that are acknowledged here to have their own internal differences, employ a type of thinking one can term essentialist. This type of thinking is characterised by the ideas that objects are deterministic; reducible to parts or to the whole; and that those disjunctive methodologies that isolate and close objects from one another are appropriate knowledge uncovering strategies. This is essentialist because the real meaning and absolute true identity of objects is located in self-contained essences found either in the composite parts or on the level of the totalising whole. Patterns of thinking that begin to leave behind this essentialist and atomistic modes of understanding are perceptible in structuralist and complexity concerned endeavours. These strategies generally approach the object in terms of its internal relations and relationship with its environment. They are therefore inherently resistant to the epistemological paradigm that can be read into modernist projects. The desire to control the interplay of order and disorder in organisation was fuelled by an underpinning need for simplification as a foundation for knowledge. Thus a shift from essence to structure was executed by Saussure and his intellectual heirs and restricted complexity thinkers.

However, this structure is neutralised. It is fixed; contained by the analysis. The structure remained reducible in its essence. The laws of complexity and the dual-sided signifier/signified allowed for the closure of structure. Self-organising systems implied some manner of a self that is doing the organising. But from these tentative forays into the world of complex organisation, a different approach took its leave. Cilliers (1998a: 107) cautions against the deification of the system:

> Although strains of thought that value the importance of relationships – and look for patterns rather than essences – can be found throughout the intellectual history of the West, they have usually been trampled over by more macho theories claiming to have found the Truth: Platonic idealism, rationalism, Marxism, positivism. In our analysis of complex systems (like the brain and language) we must avoid the trap of trying to find master keys.

In other words, what is said here about complex structure reveals the paradox of complexity. The acknowledgement of complexity leads us to a position of modesty and caution because we know that in whatever we say about complex systems, we have always already said too much and too little. This is because whatever is said makes certain unavoidable omissions, known and unknown. Furthermore, what is said is undermined by the unfolding of the system in time. Thus a description is always incomplete and can be

expanded; and at the same time, it is too expansive because what is said cannot be guaranteed in any final way. Once the structure is set free from the centres we have used to fix it, its structurality exceeds our modes of knowing. Whatever we say is provisional and contextual. It is a selection that is mutually enabled and constrained by the subject, object and environment.

The structurality of structure, to return to the latter question directing this answer, is the dynamic spatial and temporal organisation which emerges as a result of relations in the system. It emerges. Structure emerges. Perhaps, for some, this statement is not enough. Indeed, for complexity thinkers, including the critical complexity thinkers of whom I identify Paul Cilliers and Edgar Morin, it is not enough. Complexity does not issue an imperative to cease knowing or acting in the world. This chapter has devoted considerable attention to the exploration and development of Cilliers' (1998a: 3, 4) lean description of complex systems in terms of ten general characteristics. In this process, provisionally, certain spaces have been closed. In other words, their meaning has been reinforced and developed. But others will certainly have been opened. To cut right to the chase, the dynamics of complex systems and the limitations and boundaries at play in the constitution of knowledge imply a certain ethics (Cilliers 2002: 83).

This ethics is implied because the argument from complexity and for uncertainty leads back to the moment of the decision. Complexity always implies normativity in the act of knowing. Complex systems, because they cannot be known in their complexity, must be framed or bounded in a way that necessarily limits our understanding. These limits, beyond which we are blind, cannot be predicted. This frame is not deduced or found, but rather constructed and chosen (Cilliers 2004: 22). The place accorded to the decision is what distances understanding in terms of critical complexity from knowing within a paradigm of simplification. Ethics is understood here as turning on choice. Complex systems are ethical because they are not more than the choices that are made at every level of the system. These choices do not determine the system in a linear fashion but they are at work in the system's structure (Cilliers 2000c: 29).

The structurality or complex organisation of structure undermines certain foundational oppositions. These include subject/object, knowledge/reality, order/disorder, inside/outside, and normative/fact. These oppositions do help us to know things, but they thwart the desire to understand complex systems. Knowledge and understanding imply a certain closure. This is not an argument against knowing. If it were, its form would certainly be rather a challenge to explain away. No one escapes thinking. We mark, we close, and we fix systems in the process of living rich and meaningful lives. But here another movement, a certain play, flows in exactly the opposite direction. It distorts and smudges markings. It opens, allowing the inside to escape and the outside to intrude. It resists our fixing and dissolves the centres we erect and protect from the structure itself. Is this complexity thinking? It is emphatically not. Complexity thinking does not escape the impulse to theorise and to impose closure on systems. It is, perhaps better to say that complexity thinking acknowledges the contrapuntal

movement of both thrusts in thought. This acknowledgement carries complexity to the other side of the epistemological break.

This chapter began by placing the complexity thinking of Cilliers and Morin alongside one another in a space opened by a radical epistemological paradigm shift and by modernism itself. It was also suggested that the present endeavour is not to collapse these two distinct voices into one for the sake of cohesion. However, a degree of confluence is unavoidable in the construction of the argument for critical complexity. From here, the main point of departure for the conceptualisation of violence in the system is Cilliers' (1998a: 3-4) model of complexity in terms of connectionist thinking. This choice is made because of the centrality of meaning in this model. It is also made because it is expressly engaged with poststructuralism as another philosophical perspective that is concerned with complexity and complex phenomena.

CHAPTER 2

DECONSTRUCTION AND THE SYSTEM: READING DECONSTRUCTION AS AN ITERATION OF CRITICAL COMPLEX SYSTEMS THINKING

> *Turned towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin, this structuralist thematic of broken immediacy is therefore the saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play whose other side would be the Nietzschean affirmation, that is the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation. This affirmation then determines the noncenter otherwise than as loss of the center. And it plays without security. For there is a sure play: that which is limited to the substitution of given and existing, present, pieces. In absolute chance, affirmation also surrenders itself to genetic in determination, to the seminal adventure of the trace. There are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile (Derrida 2001: 369).*

> *The old universe was reified (Morin 1992: 58).*

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter, like the previous one, is prefaced with an excerpt from *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (Derrida 2001). Both critical complexity theory and deconstruction are framed by the resounding epistemological rupture that turns on and away from the centre.[41] It has previously been suggested that Derrida's writing provides a wealth of theoretical tools that can be used to think the structures of thinking, and of language and of phenomena as systems and as systems without centres. This is possible only if the system is thought as a collection of relations of differences (Saussure 1983: 67). An additional requirement is that the system is not itself an attempt to reinstate order and restore the centre, to capitalise itself and protect itself from the differential logic and epistemological uncertainty it espouses (Cilliers 1998a: 107).[42] The recognition of deconstruction as operating within the acknowledgement of "parergonality" as the logic of the process of

[41] Both Morin (2007: 4; 1992: 386) and Cilliers (1998a: 2-4, 107) argue that the acknowledgement of complexity is an acknowledgement of the error in modernist reductionist, epistemological strategies. All attempts to know complexity are frustrated by the structure and dynamics of complex systems, but some models are better at negotiating this structure than others.

[42] Morin (1992: 150) is aware of the limitations of the system as a model like all models, that enables understanding and also limits it:

> Therefore, we must clearly understand that my aim, though integrally systemic, is opposed to the majority of systemist positions which, believing they have overcome the paradigm of simplification by refusing to reduce the system to its components, succumb to the paradigm by reducing all things and all beings to the notion of system.

framing that enables understanding only by exclusion and marginalisation, and the irrepressible spacing between knowledge and the unmediated world in itself echoes this sensitivity (Derrida 1979b: 30; Cornell 1992: 1,2; Culler 1983: 196). If all attempts to understand the world are insufficient in this profound way, and the conceptual tools Derrida develops expose this insufficiency, they must also be subjected to their own logic in order not to surreptitiously fill in the void and produce a new denial of uncertainty (Gasché 1994: 4). Derrida's systemic understanding of understanding, knowledge and sense explored here must also defer to this logic. Deconstruction has the paradoxical task of affirming uncertainty and nonetheless producing its own critiques, descriptions and arguments.

Derrida's engagement with language, writing, philosophy and metaphysics takes the form of a critique in a very specific sense. It is not mere criticism of texts and systems, although it does also include this element. It is an examination of the presuppositions and grounds evidenced by a position, text or system as the possibility that such a system might persist (Johnson in Derrida 1981a: xv). It is also an examination of the limits of these grounds and the conditions under which the system or text is impossible (Gasché 1994: 4, 7). As a critique, deconstruction:

> ...reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being the way they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct, usually blind to itself (Johnson in Derrida 1981a: xv).

Derrida himself (1988a: 1-6) confronts the difficulties of specifying the meaning of 'deconstruction' in *Letter to a Japanese Friend*. Deconstruction is not a word of pure invention.[43] It has a history (Spivak 1997: lxxxiii). The matter of defining its exact meaning is complicated by the repetition of the word within different academic, political and cultural contexts:

> [It] is already clear that even in French, things change from one context to another. More so in the German, English and especially American contexts, where the *same* word is already attached to very different connotations, inflections, and emotional or affective values (Derrida 1988a:1, author's emphasis).

[43] The fact that 'deconstruction' is not merely a name for a pre-existing concept is not without its own significance. Derrida is not naming a pre-formed essence that he has uncovered. The sign and its meaning have a synchronous systemic origin (Derrida 1997: 45). Thus he (Derrida 1988a: 1) uses a word for which there are always already meanings, and these meaning cannot be erased but are enriched by the sign's use.

The word has more meanings, more historical contexts and more virtual, possible, and yet to become possible contexts than Derrida can contain in a definition.[44] Its reserves and excesses must be pruned and shaped to his intention; but his intention cannot protect 'deconstruction' from change and novelty. The meaning of deconstruction must always be reconstructed.

The task of definition within deconstruction is problematic. For reasons that become apparent in the exposition of Derrida's system of writing, the notion of definition must be replaced with the notion of interpretation (Derrida 2001: 369). Definitions limit meanings and freeze them in time. This way of understanding stays within the closure of metaphysics against which deconstruction steers (Caputo 1997: 33). There are several 'deconstructions', all of which are directed at opening, broadening what is included, in re-examining and revaluing what has been marginalised and what is remarkable only by its absence (Culler 1983: 85). Deconstruction is concerned with the "complexification" of the text, which unpacks the apparently simple in order to show its multiple, irreducible, internal and external relations within a general structure of signification (Caputo 1997: 35). Hence, a strategy of presenting deconstruction simply is in tension with the complexity of deconstruction; although equally, no grounds for gratuitous complication follow from this complexity.

Derrida's writings are close reading of texts that span across philosophical approaches and different philosophical problems that are diverse, singular and specific. Nonetheless, between these texts and within them something called deconstruction, which can be systematically explored and developed and can be worked into a system, does emerge (Culler 1983: 221). Derrida (1981b: 68; 1988a; 1987b: 183, 184; 1994: 27, 28, 59; 1997: 83) refers to deconstruction, explains deconstructions, and reuses and develops a range of theoretical resources as if there is resonance and unity that pervades his singular and dispersed enterprises. The choice of text and the choice of author is always also the choice of a more general philosophical problem. It is always singular and particular on the one hand; and it is general and paradigmatic on the other.

The name that underwrites a text is the name of a philosophical problem that is worked out, and that plays itself out in the text (Derrida 1997: 99, 162).[45] This pattern of tension between specificity and generality is one which permeates the field of deconstruction. Elaborating on this tension with reference to the example, Derrida (1994: 34) writes that "an example always carries beyond itself: it thereby opens up a testamentary dimension. The example is first of all for others, and beyond the self". The example is always marked with a trace of generality

[44] Of this polysemy Caputo (1997: 31) writes:

> The very meaning of deconstruction is to show that things – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and practices of whatever size and sort you need – do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy.

[45] Of Derrida himself, Spivak (1997: ix) writes that his name, like his protagonists' names, is, "a collections of texts" that we, in order to speak about deconstruction, must read.

that gestures at once outside the boundary of the example itself and back toward its own uniqueness. It is not partially general and partially specific. Neither generality nor specificity can tolerate partiality. This is typical of deconstruction: it is both at the same time. This logic is repeated in the treatment of the supplement (Derrida 1997: 155); the border (Derrida 1993a: 15); and the frame (Derrida 1979b).

Deconstruction is a critique of certainty, an attempt to negotiate complexity, and it is a style of reading and of writing texts and philosophical problems, developed by Derrida and carried on by many who would call their interpretations 'deconstructive' or busy themselves with the activity of 'deconstructing' (Culler 1983: 83, 85). Derrida reads and writes himself into several traditions and into tension with them. Part of the task here is to gather up these distributed roots, to marginalise some and privilege others, and to reduce the complexity of deconstruction in order to make a coherent argument for Derrida as a systems thinker. That said, the question of history and of inheritance is irrepressible within the logic of deconstruction, and so to use deconstruction without any reference to the canon is disingenuous (Derrida 1994: 16, 21). Deconstruction is heir to a tradition of the critique of metaphysics of which phenomenology is a part; it is the critical inheritor of the structuralist movement; and it follows after psychoanalysis (Spivak 1997: l, lviii; Culler 1983: 22; Cilliers 1998a: 42, 43). Deconstruction engages with members of the philosophical canon in a critical way. Deconstructive readings of Heidegger, Freud, Nietzsche, Levinas, Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Rousseau and Austin are marked with criticism and with appropriation.[46] The way deconstruction is presented is always also the choice of a philosophical context and the choice of a history.

Deconstruction is a critique of western metaphysics (Culler 1983: 92-95). What Derrida means by metaphysics is particular and more thoroughly explored below. Spivak (1997: l) names Freud, Heidegger and Nietzsche as the names of particular philosophical positions and strategies that 'deconstruct' the metaphysical strategy that Derrida describes as the metaphysics of presence, each respectively focusing on the subject, Being and ontology, and truth and morality. *Of Grammatology* and the system of writing it develops is part of a history of questioning the grounds that stabilise philosophical discourse.

Deconstruction as a critique of metaphysics is not, as it is often suggested (e.g. Rorty 1992), the devastation of logic, reason and truth. It is the rigorous exposition of these concepts and others taken to the limits of their intelligibility, at which point the frustration of thinking and of philosophy show up its limitations (Cornell 1992: 1; Norris 2007: 28; Derrida 1981b: 51). Cornell (1992) reframes deconstruction as the 'philosophy of the limit' in order to distance it from the postmodern strategies that fall into an epistemological and ethical relativism. The philosophy of the limit explores the limits to philosophical strategies and concepts and the certainty they

[46] Derrida's first work was a translation of Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* into French, which included an introduction critiquing the text to which it was appended (Spivak 1997: ix). Deconstruction also engages repeatedly with the philosophy of Plato, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Mallarme, (Culler 1983: 88). These names mentioned above form an integral part of the frame constructed for deconstruction in this chapter, emphasising its counter-metaphysical and systemic character.

produce. However, because language and concepts of deconstruction function in this liminal space, these concepts are necessarily marked by both sides of the system: with the inside, which allows the possibility of sense, understanding and philosophical conceptuality; and also with the unmarked beyond, the outside of the system, alterity which cannot be conceptualised (Derrida 1982: 5, 6; The Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 85). They function both as the conditions of the possibility of meaning in the system and the conditions of the impossibility of full meaning, of meaning as a stable plenitude (Gasché 1994: 4, 12). This is the difficult terrain that deconstruction navigates with the chain of substitutions that can always be supplemented: *différance*, trace, space, supplement, parergon, graft and writing (Derrida 1981b: 40; Spivak 1997: lxx). These terms, like the system, resist capitalisation and reification (Derrida 1997: 86).

An initial clarification on the road to answering the question, 'What is deconstruction?' is necessary. The text of which it is written here is not a book. It is not merely the document (Derrida 1997: 149). What is meant by the book or the document is a closed system of signification which contains an essential truth which must be found. Juxtaposed with this line of thinking, deconstruction can be called anti-essentialist. It is not a philosophical position that finds truth in predetermined, fixed, given essences and in a universe built on these essences that does not change and that is closed to novelty, a universe whose meaning is petrified (Caputo 1997: 42; Morin, 1992: 58).[47] The text is a system of signification that is open to other texts and to the linguistic system which both constrains and enables its signification. A deconstructive reading reads the text and not the book. The movement of deconstruction is at work in the structures that constrain and enable meaning in the text (Derrida 1988a: 1). Deconstruction moves counter to construction, against the structuring that takes place within a system of language or culture, but always from within the system itself. It is not foreign to structure (Gasché 1994: 5). On this note, it can be added that deconstruction is not merely an activity, way of reading, writing and a critique. It is also a dynamic, an organisation of the text, of the system itself (Derrida 1982: 3-27).

The logic of deconstruction is not confined to texts as an expanded notion of things written down. The text refers to all that has meaning and is therefore a manifestation of inscription (Derrida 1997: 9).[48] This idea of the text

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[47] Derrida (1981b: 59) positions deconstruction in contradistinction with any discourse that is premised on essentialist logic:

> What I call *text* is also that which 'practically' inscribes and overflows the limits of such discourse. *There* is such a general text everywhere that (that is everywhere) this discourse and its order (essence, sense, truth, meaning, consciousness, ideality etc.) are overflowed…(author's emphasis)

[48] Derrida (1997: 9) clarifies the notion of the text thus:

> For some time now, as a matter of fact, here and there, by a gesture and for motives that are profoundly necessary, whose degradation is easier to denounce than it is to disclose their origin, one says, 'language' for action, movement, thought, reflection, consciousness, unconsciousness, experience, affectivity, etc. Now we tend to say 'writing' for all that and more: to designate not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible; and also, beyond the dignifying face, the signified face itself. And thus we say 'writing' for all that and more: to designate not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible; and also, beyond the signifying face, the signified face

follows from Derrida's understanding of writing explicated here. This understanding is what allows for deconstruction to be extended to politics or social critique. What further allows for the application of deconstruction to problems is twofold. The critique of metaphysics as a pattern of thinking that pervades the history of the west and the history of western philosophy deconstructs the oppositional logic that underpins the system in which certain concepts dominate, exclude and abase others. Deconstruction can be framed as a strategy for the reversal of these violent oppositions (Derrida 1987b: 183; 1981b: 41). Deconstruction is thoroughly strategic (Derrida 1987b: 185; 1997: 83, 93; The Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 94). The choice of tools cannot be guaranteed with reference to any stable presence.

The descriptions of deconstruction as both postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy require clarification in relation with this project. Although the distinction between modern and postmodern thought was outlined in the previous chapter, it needs to be briefly reiterated here. Modernism encompasses philosophical strategies that produce absolute certainty without recourse to either an accessible immanent reality or object or to an accessible absolute and uncontainable subject, truth, god or reason (Cilliers 1998a: 102, 107). In other words, using deconstructive language, modernist strategies are those that rely on and propagate the metaphysics of presence where the accessibility of these foundations of certainty relies on their presence in some mode (Spivak 1997: xix).

Modern philosophical strategies cannot think structures without recourse to a centre as origin whose function is to fix the structure and to give it an absolute description without itself being subjected to the logic of structuring that it produces. In this way, the centre escapes the structure or system it produces: it is transcendental whether it concerns the subject or the object as the origin of certainty (Derrida 2001: 278, 396). In relation to this modernism, the certainty it underwrites and its relation to violence, deconstruction is postmodern (Cornell 1992: 11). However, in relation to a group of philosophical strategies that confronted with the uncertainty of the origin resort to epistemological and ethical relativism and who read uncertainty as a licence to equalise all things and claim that a lack of absolute knowledge obliterates knowledge as such, deconstruction is not postmodern (Cilliers 2005a: 257, 261; Norris 1994: 32). The insight that philosophical concepts have limitations does not mean that these concepts have no further use or no meaning. It does mean that their meaning must be negotiated and their limits acknowledged.

Derrida's system of writing is read here in light of its position within the more general attempt to think in terms of a system of relations rather than atomistic essential identities. Structuralism can be understood as the development of the relational paradigm – of which the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure is the paradigmatic case – as an historical moment, and as theory on which Derrida (1997; 2001: 137-154, 175-206)

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itself. An thus we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributed in space is alien to the order of the voice….political writing in view of the techniques that govern those domains today.

wrote extensively. It cannot, therefore, be discounted as a context in which deconstruction can be read. It is within an inexorable relation with structuralism, with attention to Saussure's and Levi-Strauss' writing in particular, that Derrida's (1997) system of writing becomes meaningful.[49] Derrida appropriates structuralist linguistics in order to open up its deconstructive logic. This reading attempts to think of structures without an origin/presence/centre as the challenge to the metaphysics and modernism that is at work in structuralism (Spivak 1997: lix). The 'post-' in poststructuralism signals navigation beyond certain structuralist gestures that impose closure onto the system and a continuation of those structuralist impulses that critiqued this closure (Culler 1983: 22, 25, Derrida 1997: 105).[50]

This chapter proceeds from here by way of an exposition of the abasement of writing within the history of western thought in order to show how Derrida's system of writing reverses this logic and displaces it. The discussion unfolds with reference to the metaphysics of presence and previous philosophical endeavours – notably Freud's, Nietzsche's and Heidegger's – at undoing this presence as a foundation of philosophy. Because of the spatial constraints of this chapter, imposed by an argument about violence that begins to emerge in this general theoretical exposition and in the previous chapter but that must still be made, the discussion of these counter-metaphysical philosophies will serve the purpose of elucidating deconstruction. This exposition then moves forward with a discussion of the internal dynamics of the system; the boundary constituted by the system; and alterity within the system and beyond its limit.

II. DERRIDA'S SYSTEM: WRITING AGAINST THE METAPHYSICS OF PRESENCE

Structuralism as a movement, and the appeal to Saussure's linguistic model, was premised on a shift in focus from the subject to the system or systems in which the subject was embedded (Culler 1983: 222). Derrida's critique of writing and language, especially with reference to Saussure's linguistic system as the paradigm for human sciences, is a deconstruction of the structuralist paradigm that opens the text to new interpretation (Derrida 1997: 28). It is also a deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence because the opposition of speech

[49] Derrida (1988a: 2) affirms the relationship between deconstruction and structuralism:

> At that time structuralism was dominant. Deconstruction seemed to be going in the same direction since the word signified a certain attention to structures (which themselves were neither simply ideas, nor forms, nor syntheses, nor systems). To deconstruct was also a structuralist gesture that assumed a certain need for the structuralist problematic. But it was also an anti-structuralist gesture, and its fortune rests in part on this ambiguity.

[50] Derrida has been read as a systems thinker from another angle. His work resonates with second order cybernetics taken up in systems thinking (Luhmann, 1993). Celine Lafontein (2007: 33) posits a relationship of influence between strides made in cybernetics with its operational shift to language as code, and structuralist projects. She pays particular attention to Levi-Strauss' work. Poststructuralist thinkers were, in her reading, influenced by the challenge from cybernetics to rethink the ontology of man and language. Although Derrida does not acknowledge any direct influence from cybernetics, Lafontein (40) reads his earlier works as a radicalisation of second-order cybernetics. This chapter does not pursue this link but rather, following Morin (1992) and Cilliers (1998a), reads Saussure as a systems thinker in his own right rather than as a pseudo-cyberneticist. Derrida's system is understood from this direction.

and writing – understood as representation of speech – which Derrida (1981a; 1988b; 1997) criticises and re-inscribes within a broader system, is grounded in the metaphysics of presence. The deconstruction of this opposition is significant. It demonstrates the differential logic and the subversion of oppositions that writing proliferates. Writing is the system which Derrida (1997: 9) develops as the complex origin of meaning without recourse to a transcendental origin. This repeats Saussure's (1983: 65, 66) break with an essentialist tradition that saw language as a process attributing names to preformed essences. Saussure (14, 15) describes language – the proper object of linguistic analysis – as a system of meaning that is the underlying deep structure which produces speech and writing (Culler 1983: 223). This object is not obviously available to the senses like most objects of scientific enquiry. It is the task of the linguist to uncover it (Saussure 1983: 8).[51]

Of this structure, two things must be noted. The first is that Saussure (15) attributes an objective reality to the structure. It can be specified because it actually exists. The second notable point is that the constitutive elements of the system – linguistic signs – are unities of sound-images (signifiers) and ideas (signifieds) that are psychological. The psychological character of signs is what allows the signifier to be thought without being said. This is why the signifier is not identical with the spoken word.

The linguistic sign as Saussure writes it carries two contrasting forms of logic. The first is the logic of relations of difference. The sign, even though Saussure (120) posits it as a positive unity, is only positive in its form and not in its content. It is the positive correlation between a sound image and a concept (60). Furthermore, this relation is unmotivated or purely conventional. Stated differently, because it is not an essence that links each side of the sign to the other, it is a unity that is still marked by difference despite Saussure's argument that it cannot be pried apart (61). This differential logic which operates at the level of the relation between particular signifiers and particular signifieds is what renders the sign arbitrary.[52] The arbitrary nature of the sign refers to the idea that there is no logical foundation for the association. The second form of logic that the sign perpetuates is the linearity of time, which allows privilege of speech over writing because the sign unfolds from consciousness to speech to the world external to consciousness with an ever widening alienation from its psychological origin (Derrida 1997: 11; Saussure 1983: 70).

[51] The assumption of the system as a given entity and an objective reality is one to which strucuturalism clung in order to guarantee the scientific status of linguistics (Spivak 1997: lv). Saussure (1983: 15) explains: "Linguistic structure is no less real than speech, and no less amenable to study. Linguistic signs, although essentially psychological, are not abstractions."

[52] This differential logic was discussed in the previous chapter, but it is useful to insert an explanation in this context. Constitutive of the arbitrary sign, the signifiers and signifieds are intrinsically arbitrary (Culler 1976: 23). Both the signifier and the signified are constituted negatively, within relations of difference. The sound-image 'dog' is 'dog' because it is different from all other sound images; and the concept 'dog', rather than corresponding to the sound image, arises out of relations of difference from all other concepts. Signifiers and signifieds are conventional "delimitations of [continuums]" of sound spectrums and of thought (29).

Writing is the representation of speech (Saussure 1983: 25). It is removed from the immediacy of speech which is produced by the presence of the sign to consciousness (Derrida 1997: 8). Writing is something which is both exterior to language and inferior to it (82). In fact, Saussure characterises writing as a source of corruption of speech, which he associates not only with the presence of the signifier to the signified and the presence of the unity of the sign to consciousness, but with purity and ultimately truth in its closer proximity with the structure of language. This presence is what guarantees the linearity of the sign (Saussure 1983: 70; Derrida 1997: 7). Writing is always contaminated by its distance or spacing. Saussure (1983: 31) warns that "[its] influence on the linguistic community may be strong enough to affect and modify the language itself". Written language causes "erroneous pronunciations" (31). This is a strange claim indeed for one also claiming that the pronunciation or sound-image is unmotivated and differential. It is a claim that seems to undermine the idea of a 'correct' or 'incorrect' pronunciation that nevertheless functions within the system. Despite the debasement of writing as a corrupter of language, Saussure (67, 68) also inadvertently renders language vulnerable to the logic of writing as corruption (Derrida 1997: 35).[53]

This phonocentrism, the opposition of speech and writing that renders writing exterior and inferior to speech, is linked to still more oppositions: inside/outside; same/different; pure/impure; good/ bad; origin(al)/ representation (Derrida 1981a: 4). Phonocentrism is justified by the proximity of speech to mind and the presence of the origin of meaning – in Saussure's case it is the signified – there. In this way, Saussure covers over the sign's primary characteristic, its arbitrariness, in order to stabilise the system of meaning with recourse to an origin: the transcendental signified (Derrida 1981b: 13, 65). It is transcendental because despite the complex web of relations of difference, it escapes this contingency.

The pattern of phonocentric privilege permeates the history of philosophy. It relies on the signifier as interior, immediate, and *present* to consciousness. Presence as a philosophical foundation is reproduced from Plato to the structuralists and is strongly correlated with the devaluation and "abasement" of writing (Derrida 1997: 102; Derrida 1981b: 53; Culler 1983: 93-96).[54] Presence as immediacy conditions its antithesis, which is empirical

[53] Saussure (1983: 61) contrasts the unbreakable bond between signifier and signified with the arbitrary link between the sign and the written mark. Derrida (1997: 35) makes the following observation of this gesture: "This natural bond of signified (concept or sense) to the phonic signifier would contain the natural relationship subordinating writing (visible image) to speech".

[54] Derrida's (1998: 72) critique of metaphysics is always marked by the differentiation of the diversity and particularity of his critiques:

> Certainly everything that has, say, interested me for a long time – on account of writing, the trace, the deconstruction of phallogocentrism and 'the' Western metaphysics (which I have never identified, regardless of whatever has been repeated about it ad nauseum, as a single homogenous thing watched over by its definite article in the singular; I have so often and so explicitly said the opposite!) – all of that could *not* not proceed from the strange reference to an "elsewhere" of which the place and the language were unknown and prohibited even to myself, as if I were trying to *translate* it into the only language and the only French Western culture that I have at my disposal, a culture into which I was thrown at birth (author's emphasis).

and therefore contingent. Presence is only guaranteed if it is absolutely stable and this is permitted by its transcendence (Derrida 1997: 8). The opposition of presence and non-presence is implicated in a system of fundamental metaphysical oppositions: world/self; ideal/non-ideal; universal/contingent; transcendental/empirical (Derrida 1982: 3; 1997: 8). This is best explained by retracing the straight line from truth – logos – to speech. What spares the signifier from contingency is the presence of the concept or truth to which it is naturally bonded in the mind (Derrida 1997: 35). Without the signified, the signifier would be radically unstable because, as Saussure (1983: 67, 68) argues, it is an arbitrary association of purely differential entities which are themselves arbitrarily constituted.

Writing is derivative because it is merely the representative image that has no intrinsic relation to the meaning present to consciousness (Derrida 1997: 33). Writing thus signifies absence on two levels. It is the absence of the meaning, of the signified which is not naturally attached to it; and it is the absence of consciousness, of the speaking subject and her intentions and of the understanding subject (Derrida 1988b: 5; Derrida 1997: 41). Derrida (1981a: 64-7; 1988b: 8) relates this gesture to his deconstruction of Plato's mimesis, the evil of writing in *Phaedrus*. Writing contaminates language by carrying out the "archetypical violence" of the outside and absence of presence bursting in upon the inside (Derrida 1997: 34). The immanent and fallen world of writing is in conflict with the logos, spirit and speech.[55]

The philosophical privilege of the voice is positioned within a system of hierarchical oppositions that is animated by a more fundamental hierarchy within philosophy that organises knowledge according to a linear movement from "thought, truth, reason, logic" down to "the Word" (Culler 1983: 92). Linearity is what guarantees transitivity from one level in the hierarchy to the next. But at each successive level, the purity of thought becomes increasingly vulnerable to contamination and it is this possibility that preserves the directionality of the line thus. The movement of metaphysics is always movement in this straight line towards its foundation.[56] This conceptual scheme divides representation and meaning into two mutually exclusive worlds (Derrida 1997: 85).

However, I refer again to the logic of the example to counter his claim here (Derrida 1994: 34). Perhaps it can be formulated thus: there is metaphysics *and* there are many metaphysics. Particular manifestations of a specific sort of thing produce the possibility of a general logic that allows that sort of thing to repeat itself as a general form.

[55]"The problem of soul and body is no doubt derived from the problem of writing from which it seems – conversely – to borrow its metaphors" (Derrida 1997: 35).

[56] Heidegger argues that the ~~Being~~ of beings has been thought in this way, as a presence (Heidegger 1962: 21, 23, Derrida 1982: 47; 1981a: 352). In other words, ~~Being~~ as a whole, the very possibility that any particular being might be or not be, has over time become a universal, self-evident ground that nonetheless defies definition. Heidegger, having questioned this self-evidence, restructures the meaning of ~~Being~~as an unanswerable question in Introductions I and II to *Being and Time* (1962). ~~Being~~ therefore ceases to function as foundation whose presence renders the world's meaning evident (Derrida 1997: 18). Rather, as a question without the content of an answer, it is placed it under erasure (illustrated by its being crossed out) because it has no proper, positive referent. Heidegger's (1962: 44) *Destruktion*, which is the de-structuring

Logocentrism – the foundational presence of the logos, which is a self-evident and absolute truth – is the foundation of phonocentrism.[57] Its most keen representation is idealism, in which the idea of a transcendent origin outside the system is posited; but its pattern of founding and fixing meaning overflows to other philosophical endeavours (Derrida 1981b: 51). If deconstruction opens the text, undoes the structuring; then logocentrism encloses the text, stabilises and closes the spaces. There are always both movements.[58] Indeed, as much as deconstruction is posited as a movement against construction or a movement that undermines construction, its subversion of structure can also be undermined. What Derrida (1981b: 51) seems to suggest when he argues that "everything can be reassembled under the rubric of logocentrism" has three elements. First, deconstruction is not an imposition of the text that has nothing to do with its real structure. Secondly, all deconstruction or opening is vulnerable to closure and thus deconstruction as a strategic action or as an intervention is still necessary where logocentrism is dominant. And thirdly, the tools used in strategic deconstructions must be used carefully and strategically, with the awareness that they might always be re-inscribed within the closure of metaphysics.

Derrida links logocentrism to western philosophy and western culture.[59] Logocentrism, it has been argued here, sustains hierarchical oppositions which reiterate the logic of presence. Self/other, western/non-western, and man/woman are all oppositions carefully analysed by Derrida. These oppositions supplement those identified earlier in this chapter. Logocentrism is the logic that underpins ethnocentrism and phallocentrism, the centrality and originality of the phallus and marginality and derivative nature of the vagina (Derrida 1997: 80, 114, 120; 2001: 213; Culler 1983: 165-166). The deconstruction of these oppositions by the movement of writing is elaborated below.

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engagement with the structure of ontology and epistemology as the historical concealment of the question of ~~Being~~, has a direct and explicit link to deconstruction (Spivak 1997: xlix; Derrida 1988a: 1). Spivak (1997: xv) argues that the difference between Heidegger and Derrida's destructuring is that Heidegger still positions ~~Being~~ as a master concept or an origin even if it remains a question. It retains a directionality of reference based on a strong distinction between the ontic – beings – and the ontological – ~~Being~~ – which animates the ontic and is its origin (Derrida 1997: 18).

[57] "Between the overture and the philosophical accomplishment of phonologism (or logocentrism), the motif of presence was decisively articulated. It underwent an internal modification whose most conspicuous index was the moment of certitude in the Cartesian ego. Before that, the identity of presence offered to the mastery of repetition was constituted under the 'objective' form of the ideality of the *eidos* or the substantiality of *ousia*. Thereafter, this objectivity takes the form of *representation*, of the *idea* as the modification of a self-present substance, conscious and certain of itself at the moment of its relationship to itself. Within its most general form, the mastery of presence acquires a sort of infinite assurance"(Derrida 1997: 97, author's emphasis).

[58] "Saussure's text, like any other, is not homogenous. Yes, I did analyze a 'logocentrist' and 'phonocentrist' layer of it…but I did so in order to show immediately that it was in contradiction to Saussure's scientific project" (Derrida 1981b: 52).

[59] "In an original and non-'relativist' sense, logocentrism is an ethnocentric metaphysics. It is related to the history of the West" (Derrida 1997: 79).

Logocentrism and phonocentrism cannot be sustained without the opposition of presence and absence (non-presence). Writing, on the contrary, being external to the system of language, is marked by absence. There are two moments in the deconstruction of the speech/writing opposition. First, the hierarchy is reversed, showing how writing and also absence is in fact the more general and more accurate description of language. Then, in a second moment, the re-imagined and expanded notion of writing displaces the oppositions between writing and speech, and absence and presence.

Retaining Saussure's sign as a double entity for the moment, 'writing' is seen as a signifier that signifies signification itself. This reference is made possible, not by a natural relationship, but on Saussure's own terms, by the "instituted trace" (Derrida 1997: 46). The identity of writing is derived by tracing its difference through the system. The signifier 'writing' is identifiable as writing only because it is arbitrarily differentiated from other signifiers like 'whitening' or 'eat'. In this sense, writing seems like any other signifier. However, the signification to which 'writing' refers is signification without any natural relationship with the psychological sign. The written sign renders meaning present because it is arbitrary. This arbitrariness which severs the written signifier from presence, however, is the most original characteristic of the sign in general (Saussure 1983: 67). Thus writing, which is disparaged for its absence of given meaning, is the paradigmatic case for language in general; and speech, if it could be a sustained by presence, would only be the exception.

The differential logic attributed to the arbitrary written sign does not only gesture towards the absence of the presence of meaning. It also illustrates the structural absence of the speaker and receiver of meaning (Derrida 1997: 41). The written mark has an obvious permanence that outlives its author and is thus always already severed from him or her (Derrida 1988b: 8, 9).[60] This is true even of the written name. As soon as I write my name it is inscribed with its already having outlived me (Derrida 1985: 7). The written text need never be read to still retain the possibility of signification. Derrida (1988b: 10) extends this structural absence to speech because the subject is no longer understood as self-presence. Even if the speaker and listener are in the same room, they and their intentions are not fully transparent to their selves or to the other. Speech cannot therefore be sustained by a plenitude emanating from subjectivity.

Absence can be explained in the elaboration of writing as the production of a recognisable and repeatable mark. In order for writing to work as writing, to be readable, it must be repeatable in different contexts (Derrida 1979a: 78; 1988b: 9, 63, 65). It must be inscribed in a code that allows the possibility of decoding and also recoding its meaning (Derrida 1988b: 9). In order to be part of this repeatable code, the written sign must be durable enough

[60] "To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general. And this absence is not a continuous modification of a presence, it is a rupture in presence, the 'death' or the possibility of the 'death' of the receiver inscribed in the structure of the mark…" (Derrida 1988b: 8).

to survive being wrenched from its proper context and determinate meaning. It must be able to be the same word preserving a distinctness and integrity of identity, and yet also be appropriate to its different contexts. This repeatability is not specific to writing. It is characteristic of all signifiers, including spoken signifiers (Derrida 1988b: 10; 1997: 91). Contrary to the idea that speech depends on presence as its core characteristic enabling meaning; it is instead the code, the ever-present possibility of the physical absence of both the speaker and the addressee as present interpreters, consciousness as the holder of essential meaning, and internal consistency guaranteeing meaning that enables spoken signs to function as language in the first place. Again, writing is not just shown to be more important than speech, it is shown to characterise the logic of the system of arche-writing in which speech and writing are constituted as language (Derrida 1997: 56). However, the general system of writing cannot maintain the opposition between the written sign and spoken sign. It displaces this opposition within a broader economy of signification.

The science of arche-writing is grammatology.[61] This cannot be sustained as a positive science like all others nourished by a present presence. Presence is determined by a plenitude of both 'here' and 'now'. In the absence of this plenitude within the system, the movement of signification must yet be explained. The arche-writing, the system of signification, is not structured by the linear opposition of differences in the system (86). Without positivity produced by presence, the linear differences give way to the non-linear movement of *différance*. This can be illustrated with an example. It might appear at first as if the meaning of the sign 'woman' is self-evident, perspicuous, and present in the reader's mind. However, when this meaning is unpacked it is found that it is not easy to specify exactly what it is. A starting point in terms of arriving at understanding might be 'not a man' but in fact this opposition does not tell us much. More can be added: 'not a girl'; 'not a mother'; 'not a cow'; 'not a boy'; 'not a vagina' et cetera. Each different signifier can itself be expanded in a similar movement. The addition of further differentiations beyond simple dichotomies does begin to enrich the meaning; but these additions also get no closer to an essential meaning – in fact they often say more about the context in which the sign signifies than the sign itself.

This explanation is a little hyperbolic. Of course, not all answers to the question of the meaning of a sign begin with a 'not'. Meanings can be formulated in positive terms, but this is a function of an economic condensation of differences which is produced by *différance* (Derrida 1981b: 40). The example is merely used to demonstrate that the movement of *différance* as dynamic reference distributed over the whole system, set in motion by the differential and arbitrary logic of Saussurian linguistics, does not erase presence. It is the appearance of presence

[61] If presence is what guarantees certainty and Derrida is trying to formulate a theory without the certainty assured by presence, it follows that the 'concepts' proposed to describe arche-writing and the arche-writing itself announce both the possibility of sense and meaning, and the impossibility of guaranteeing that meaning (Spivak 1997: xiv). Arche-writing is thus not a foundation but a condition of the possibility and impossibility of meaning (Gasché 1994: 4). Derrida (1997: 60) explains that "[like] all the notions [he is] using here it belongs to the history of metaphysics as we can only use it here under erasure".

instituted by an originary absence (Derrida 1997: 37). *Différance* is this obliteration of the transcendental origin instituted by arche-writing that, on Derrida's reading, is its arche-violence (37).

In order to get at the meaning of a sign, its differences must be traced. Differences that give the sign meaning are the traces[62] of other signs. Another example can be offered: an 'apple' is a 'fruit'. 'Apple' cannot be explained unless it is placed within a chain of substitutions: 'apple'; 'fruit'; 'nourishment'; 'food'. And yet, even though its meaning is constituted by the traces of other signs; these traces are the marks of the absence of these other signs. 'An apple is fruit' can as correctly be formulated as 'an apple is not fruit'. The meaning of 'apple' is thus sustained not only by the proximity or presence of other signs. It is also sustained only because of the space between signs. The movement of *différance* can only operate where there is space. The structure of the sign is the trace of the other which is not there and not that (Derrida 1997: 46, 61, 63, 65, 89, 90). The movement of traces is *différance*:

> It is not the question of a constituted difference here, but rather, before all determination of the content, of the *pure* movement which produces difference. *The (pure) trace is différance.* It does not depend on any sensible plenitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic (62, author's emphasis).

Spivak (1997: xvii) formulates it thus: "Derrida gives the name trace to the radically other within the structure of difference that is the sign". The same is always already marked with the trace of the others, or more precisely with traces of others. Writing as arche-writing, *différance*, as trace, and as space, undermines theories of writing as representation and the myth of the simple origin (Derrida 1997: 92; 2001: 284).

Différance is not a concept in the conventional sense. Rather, it must be understood as an attempt to explain the logic of a system in which no centre and no origin exists. Gasché (1994: 4) refers to *différance*, trace and the other substitutes for arche-writing as "infrastructures". Although Derrida (1992a: 70, 71) himself is cautious of this term because it connotes a permanence, "fundamental" role or ontological security to theses "general structures", he does acknowledge its pragmatic and strategic value, this with the caveat that the infrastructures still resist reification. This strategic term is chosen to demonstrate their place within the structure – not transcendent to it – and the indissoluble link of this discourse to structuralism (5). The infrastructures do not name anything. What they signify is the possibility of signification and its impossibility. The movement of the system no longer protected by a linear time delivering presence cannot be defined once and for all. Having said this, Derrida's (2001: 396) affirmative attitude does not prescribe silence in the face of uncertainty. *Différance* is both a spatial and temporal phenomenon (Derrida 1982: 7, 8). As a spatial phenomenon, it is the activity of a sign differentiating itself from others; the passive 'being differentiated' of a sign by others; and the structural 'deferring to' and 'being deferred to' of signs constituted by the trace. This is *différance* as spacing. *Différance* is

[62] 'Trace' is a notion that Derrida (1997: 70) explicitly relates to the work of Emmanuel Levinas. The philosophy of Levinas will also be relevant in the discussion of exteriority further on in this chapter and in chapter 5.

also temporal. In the movement of trace, meaning never comes to an end. It is always deferred in time by the movement of the trace. Further explication is carried out in section iii, under the discussion of the internal dynamics of the system.

This pattern of displacement of writing by arche-writing is replicated in the logic of the supplement. Writing has been seen as an extension of or supplement to language, which is itself merely an instrument in the service of communicating more perfect ideas (Derrida 1997: 82). This logic of supplementation allows writing a place inside language while preserving its exteriority. The exteriorising of writing facilitates the exteriorising of its contingency and the necessity of interpretation from the communication of ideas. Derrida deconstructs this gesture by reading Rousseau's disavowal of both writing and masturbation as supplements. Rousseau condemns writing as the disease that destroys presence in speech (142). The written sign is the substitution of an artificial representation in place of a natural intelligible sign. Writing is thus the threat of perversion and impurity (147). Speech on its own fails to secure presence in all situations and, despite its danger, writing must act as a supplement (144).

Instead of proving the clear inferiority of the supplement, its logic moves in two directions. This stems from its double meaning. The first meaning is one whole added to another in which both entities are self-contained and complete. The second meaning is something that supplants itself in place of that which it supplements (144, 145). It thus shows up a deficit and an inadequacy in the primary entity by virtue of its very necessity. As both an addition and a substitute, the supplement is other than what it supplements. If it were an extension of the same, its addition would make no difference. As it does change the field it supplements, it maintains a form of otherness. However, if it were totally other it would also cease to supplement because the idea of completion also implies coherence and agreement.

In Rousseau's text, *Emile*, masturbation is another name for the supplement. This is the dangerous logic of impurity at work (151). It, like writing, is dangerous because it breaks with nature. Derrida reverses the hierarchy of sexual intercourse and masturbation, which is seen as a supplement in the absence of natural sexual intercourse between the subject and the object of his desire. By demonstrating that both masturbation and sexual intercourse are thwarted attempts at possessing the object of desire despite the fact that intercourse is commonly mistaken for satisfying this desire, Derrida demonstrates the structural necessity of absence of the object as a general condition for all sex (Culler 1983: 104). The essential characteristic of masturbation that excluded it from sex is what in fact renders these two disparate things similar.

The supplement affirms the distinction between what is natural and institutional; but at the same time, by supplanting the natural and showing a lack there, it also undermines the originality of nature (Derrida 1997: 155). The play of supplementation replaces a determined lack with the play of absence and presence (157). The unoriginal usurps the place of the origin. This analysis demonstrates an important theme in deconstruction:

impurity, hybridity and contamination are the general case (Derrida 1981b: 40; 1998: 9). Furthermore, because the supplement always supplements a lack, it promises to deliver presence as a fullness and completion. However, the exteriority of the supplement and its supplanting rather than completing, defers this promise.

The interplay between presence and absence; purity and contamination; and same and other, in which absence, contamination and otherness cannot be reduced to a mere addition to the same, cannot be thought within metaphysics. Derrida (1997: 167) opposes the simplification of a system of metaphysics with the grammatological system that produces it and moves against it:

> The concept of the origin or nature is nothing but the myth of addition, of supplementarity annulled by being purely additive. It is the myth of the effacement of the trace, that is to say of an originary differance that is neither absence nor presence, neither negative nor positive. Originary differance is supplementarity as *structure*. Here structure means the irreducible complexity within which one can only shape or shift the play of presence or absence: that within which metaphysics can be produced but which metaphysics cannot think (author's emphasis).

This quote, not alone, but carried by the arguments presented here and elaborated further on support an interpretation of Derrida as a thinker concerned with the production of meaning as the confrontation with complexity or with a complex system (Cilliers 1998a: 22).[63]

Spivak (1997: l) identifies Heidegger,[64] Freud, and Nietzsche as 'proto-grammatologists'. In other words, each thinker employs a logic that interrupts the self-evidence of metaphysical grounds of certainty. Recalling the meaning of the text as the interrelation of all modes of signification, which extends to our entire life-world or everything that comes to be meaningful, it must be remembered that this theory of meaning is also a critique of theories of meaning.[65] Freud is not only aligned with deconstruction in the critique of the presence of consciousness to itself (xl). Reading Freud's *Project* in *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, Derrida (2001: 25) explores the model of the brain as a system that has tremendous affinity with the arche-writing he develops in *Of*

[63] Cilliers (1998a: 22) writes that, "poststructuralism is not merely a subversive form of discourse analysis, but a style of thinking that is sensitive to the complexity of the phenomena under consideration". This interpretation of Derrida as a systems thinker has been contested because of the absence of a cohesive modernist system in his writing (Walby 2007: 455). Derrida's system may not be modern but as an expansion, opening and supplementation of the Saussurian model it focuses on relations rather than atoms and remains systemic.

[64] See footnote 56.

[65]"The work of writing and the economy of *différance* will not be dominated by this classical conceptuality, this ontology, or this epistemology" (Derrida 1997: 143).

Grammatology (1997). This reading is enabled by an emphasis on the brain as a network of neurons that are part of a system because of the function of memory in the system (Cilliers & Gouws 2001).[66]

The system develops in time, changed by information from the outside that is represented within the system. This representation is enabled because when information enters the system as a trace it passes through some neurons and imprints itself on others. Memory is thus not symmetrically distributed, but is structured by different levels of resistance between neurons (Derrida 2001: 252). Because traces irrevocably alter the brain as a system, memory as the distribution of traces is both structured by and structuring of relations of difference in the system (251). Trace is not something that is given from the outside: traces are traces of information that arise inside the system triggered from outside (Cilliers & Gouws 2001: 243-244).

Nietzsche instigates a radical deconstruction of the category of truth by situating its construction within a web of metaphor as the concealed origin of language (Derrida 1997: 19; van Tongeren 2000: 71).[67] Nietzsche's argument can be understood to begin by recognising the impossibility of ultimately grounding truth. Consequently, what is called truth is understood to originate in contingent, historical and dynamic human relations and the linguistic conventions that structure these relations (Nietzsche 2000: 54; 2006: 313, 319).[68] As a product of these relations, language and truth cannot be grounded in reality that lies beyond language and beyond contingency. The self-evidence of a natural reference between reality and language is polemically restated as mere illusion in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense* (Nietzsche 2000: 55). Nietzsche (55) proclaims this contingency with zeal:

> What arbitrary differentiations! What one-sided preferences first for this, then for that property of a thing! The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth…The thing in itself (which is precisely what the pure truth, aside from its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the character of language and something not in the least worth striving for.

Against the epistemological conviction that categories are natural, and that they are derived from nature, which is presented by epistemological strategies, metaphoricity is extended to all utterances (Derrida 1982: 227). There

[66] This reading of Freud as a grammatological thinker emphasises the opening logic of the system developed. Resonant with Saussure (1983: 68), Freud (in Derrida 2001: 26) writes that "[memory] is represented (dargestellt) by the differences in the facilitations of the ψ neurons". This is not the only reading to be made (Cilliers & Gouws 2001: 244). Like Saussure's (1983) system, Freud's is both grammatological and metaphysical, or both deconstructive and structuring if such a distinction can be maintained.

[67] "Nietzsche, far from remaining *simply* (with Hegel as Heidegger wished) *within* metaphysics, contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos and the related concept of truth or the primary signified, in whatever sense that is understood" (Derrida 1997: 19).

[68] The second text referenced is *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* in which Nietzsche (2006: 311-361) examines the related themes of truth and morality in order to argue against a generalised rule based morality.

is only an aesthetic or metaphorical link between the language and reality (Nietzsche 2000: 56, 57). The metaphor, in joining two unlike things, does not totally close the space or difference between these things. For example, to say that life is dream does not create an identity between 'life' and 'dream'. It is more like an approximation or a correlation of only part of each thing. An aesthetic expression remains insufficient because it is not a full and natural identity: it does not signify the presence of a natural essence to a concept or a word.

Nietzsche's critique of truth as a fixed unity is a critique of all dogmatic philosophical positions or metaphysics, traced back to Plato, to which he opposes the idea of plurality or difference (van Tongeren 2000: 134). Metaphysics posits truth as a stabilising origin which is an immediate certainty and which lies beyond explanation and is thus shielded from contingency (135). The stability of metaphysics is only an illusion produced by epistemology that is ultimately indemonstrable (Nietzsche, 2000: 56). When its epistemological shield is obliterated, fundamental categories such as being and truth are usurped by the forceful movement of wills (Derrida 2001: 354, 369; Nietzsche 1909: 213; 2003: 66-67; van Tongeren 2000: 135, 159). The world as will to power is the perpetual play of differences between forces that do not come to rest. This description of reality displaces its function as a fixed foundation for meaning. A 'foundation' that is a dynamic process of interaction is not foundation in the conventional sense of stabilising and securing something. Following the argument from deconstruction, one can propose that it is a foundation under erasure or an explanation that is also a non-explanation because it certifies nothing and founds nothing but uncertainty and openness (Derrida 1997: 286-287).

The argument here is not that Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger are proto-grammatologists in relation to Derrida's pure grammatology as a science of pure absence. This would be a "metaphysics of absence" because absence would function as a transcendental origin in the system, shielded from the structuring of arche-writing (Gasché 1994: 25). Arche-writing is complicit in the appearance of presence in the system, but it cannot produce the purity of either presence or absence (Derrida 1997: 92). That would be to avoid the problem of presence by declaring it solved.[69] In this sense, all grammatology will always only be 'proto'. It will never rid itself of presence.

III. MEANING, ITERABILITY AND *DIFFÉRANCE*

Thus far, this chapter has sketched the movement of deconstruction as a countermovement to the metaphysics of presence. Both forms of logic – opening and closure, respectively – operate within a broader system of signification – the arche-writing – that produces structure and de structuring. This system should not be

[69] The problem of metaphysics is not one that can ever be solved. Derrida himself acknowledges the folly of trying to evade metaphysics by trying not to use its concepts. The process of calling metaphysics into question is one that is perpetual (Wood 1998: 68, 69). The vocabulary, trace, *différance* and space all themselves tend towards metaphysical sedimentation. Thus Derrida's critique of metaphysics is never yet complete. It depends on its iteration (68, 69).

understood as an ontological entity. On one level of description, the system is nothing more than the persistence of signification without a metaphysical origin. On another level, the system is produced in the description itself. Perhaps it can be formulated thus: the system is *différance*; and there is no *différance* without its description. Further attention is now turned to the internal dynamics of this system with attention to iterability and further exposition of the *différance* that initiates the chain of supplements: iteration, violence, play, trace, space, and temporisation. Heterogeneity and homogeneity in the system are also introduced with reference to the "paradox of structure and event" (Culler 1983: 95).

Before the meanings of the system as *différance* are explored, the sign itself requires explication. Given that the sign is arbitrary and its meaning is no longer naturally linked to consciousness, its meaningfulness is acquired through circulation within the structure of language.[70] As it has already been argued, from its inception, a sign is a mark that is marked by the possibility of its own remarkableness, and this possibility is its iterability (Derrida 1988b: 8). A sign is never purely singular but is marked with its own idealisation, which is the possibility that it might become a type because it is a generally recognisable form (Derrida 1997: 91). This discussion returns to sign as a mark of absence introduced above.

Derrida (1988b) in *Signature Event Context* reads John L. Austin' s *How to do Things with Words* (1971) as deconstructing the link between meaning and consciousness. This is achieved by replacing the role of consciousness crystallised in Saussure's argument with the speaker's actions. The displacement of consciousness as the producer of meaning is enabled by the deconstruction of the opposition between constative and performative speech. And this in turn is enacted by demonstrating and undermining the hierarchical opposition of constative speech and its supplement, performative speech. Performative speech is distinguishable from constative speech on the basis that constative language carries its meaning within itself, and performative language, utterances such as 'I love you' or 'you are guilty', depend instead on their context to communicate effectively (14-15).

However, all meaning according to Austin, referring to what is communicated by the text, is determined by the context in which it is uttered (14). This theory in which meaning is located in the context assumes a context that is saturated, definable, limited and transparent so that it can be correctly interpreted. The context is thus elevated to a transcendental level that escapes contingency and uncertainty. It further assumes that the sign itself is absolutely embedded in its present context. In order to make this case, Austin opposes serious speech acts to non-serious, trivial examples such as a play in which the words, 'you are sentenced to death', for example, obviously do not condemn an actor to die because – this is the crux – they are merely quoting (15-17). The mere

[70] "A signifier is from the very beginning the possibility of its own repetition, of its own image or resemblance." (Derrida 1997: 91)

repetition of words, for Austin, out of context means nothing and is parasitical on normal serious language which it only imitates.

Repetition, the function of the parasitic form of language, is what allows a written mark to function as language in the first place. If the word 'fruit' was not recognisable as a distinct differentiable from all others, it could not begin to signify anything. If it is recognisable then it must be repeatable, if only in principle. Iterability as recognisability is the a priori condition of the possibility of meaning.[71] Whenever words are used meaningfully they are thus always repeated. Citation or quotation, rather than being the parasitic exception, is the more general logic (Derrida 1988b: 15-17; 1992a: 226). This iterability necessarily exceeds the context in which a word is repeated. Meaning is not exterior to the context but the context does not exhaust the meaning of the sign or enclose the sign totally (Derrida 1979a: 81; 1981a: 7; 1988b: 9). Derrida goes further arguing that the context, no longer determining meaning, is also not determinable itself (Derrida 1979a: 76; 1988b: 63).

The context can always be expanded to include more information or shifted to include different information (Culler 1983: 123).[72] Different information becomes relevant as frames of understanding shift. Two examples of such shifts are new discoveries in natural science or different understandings of human beings in political economy. Intention is also part of the context but so is the speaker's non-intention. The subject does not enter

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[71] Searle (1977: 200) in his *Reply to Derrida*, an attempt to resuscitate language as the communication of intended meaning, accuses *Signature, Event, Context* of the fundamental error of conflating permanence – the fact that a written mark survives its author/intention/origin – with iterabilty – the fact that a sign can be used in different contexts. Derrida allegedly misunderstands repeatability, which belongs to all signs written and spoken, to be peculiarly "graphematic" in order to claim that writing is more general than speech and slay the subject as the producer of meaning:

> But again this possibility of separating the sign from the signified is a feature of any system of representation whatever; and there is nothing especially graphematic about it at all. It is furthermore quite independent of those special features of the "classical concept" of writing which are supposed to form the basis of the argument" (201).

This argument is made with haste. Its tenets are familiar. First, Derrida does not argue for the special privilege of physical marks or 'classical writing'. Rather, the features of this writing, the structural absence of both author and reader or its 'permanence', as well as the absence of the signified or its 'iterability', are both pronounced manifestations of that larger system of signification which Derrida strategically calls a kind of writing (1988b: 48; 1997: 91, 108). The strategy undermines the metaphysical gesture discussed above. Derrida (1988b: 9, 50-51) argues for the structural necessity of permanence and iterability, which Searle restates as the alleged omission of the text:

> But the sign possesses the characteristic of being readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost…As far as the internal semiotic context is concerned, the force of rupture is no less important: by virtue of its essential iterability…No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code here being both the possibility and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (1988b: 9).

And further on the argument is extended to all language: "Are they [permanence, iterability and spacing] not to be found in all language, in spoken language for instance, and ultimately the totality of 'experience' insofar as it is inseparable from the field of the mark…" (10).

[72] This claim resonates with the claim that the boundary of a complex system, in this case the text, can always be expanded in space until it extends to the largest possible complex system as life and the universe (Cilliers, Richardson & Lissack, 2001: 8). Even this system remains open because of its spatio-temporal distribution. See chapter 1 and *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, especially page 365 (Derrida, 2001: 351-370).

here reconstituted as a self-presence (Derrida 1997: 69). Rather, Derrida includes the unconscious which exceeds both the speaker's and listener's intention and comprehension (Culler 1983: 24; Derrida 1997: 89). Additionally, the attempt to delimit the context or the frame of understanding, because it is itself not given, transparent and certified, is itself circumscribed within the context.[73]

The sign, each time it signifies, is both singular and already differentiated within itself. Its iterability gestures toward its place within the structure and towards its own structure which allows it to be copied and, in that instant, obliterates its own originality. This is the paradox of structure and event that could also be the paradox of paradigm and example or sameness and difference. An excellent demonstration to which Derrida diverts much attention is the proper name. The proper name is always caught in a system or a chain of differences. If the name were naturally bonded to an essential identity, it could maintain its perfect singularity that one tends to attach, especially to one's own name. However, in order for that name to signify that singularity, it must be recognisable. And if it can be recognised, it can at least in principle but also in practice, be repeated. This is the violence of writing described by Levi Strauss (1961: 292-293),[74] a type of violence Derrida (1997: 109) extends also to arche-writing in which nothing can be named without also being classed. Language as writing cannot preserve singularity. The structure of writing as a structure of difference allows for the appearance of the origin and its violent destruction (10). This original violence is the logic that supports all classification and labelling.

The structure of writing and iterability as violence is complex. The first moment is the inscription within a system. The mere act of naming, before the name is repeated, is violent:

> To think the unique within the system, to inscribe it there, such is the gesture of arche-writing: arche-violence, loss of the proper, of absolute proximity, of self-presence which has never been given but only

[73] "Attempts to describe the limits always make possible a displacement of those limits, so that Wittgenstein's suggestion that one cannot say "bububu" and mean "if it does not rain I shall go out for a walk," has, paradoxically, made it possible to do just that" (Culler, 1983: 124).

[74] Levi-Strauss sees the introduction of writing into society as contemporaneous with the introduction of violence (Derrida, 1997: 110). It is not violence generally as the deliberate use of force or even cruelty that he bemoans. It is the differentiation, hierarchisation and stratification, which writing brings to civilisation that opposes it to nature. It is this arche-writing that he (Levi-Strauss, 1961: 292) thinks is missing from the Nambikwara, an 'illiterate' South American tribe:

> If we want to correlate the appearance of writing with certain other characteristics of civilization, we must look elsewhere. The one phenomenon which has invariably accompanied it is the formation of cities and empires: the integration into a political system, that is to say, of a considerable number of individuals, and the distribution of those individuals into a hierarchy of castes and classes. Such is, at any rate, the type of development which we find, from Egypt right across to China, at the moment when writing makes its debuts; it seems to favour rather the exploitation than the enlightenment of mankind.

Pursuing a Marxist critique from another angle, writing is what allows for the creation of classes, categories and identities that structure life (Derrida, 1997: 119). There can be no differences, also no social differences, without the code that creates that difference.

> dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance (112).

This originary violence severs the proper name from what is properly its own. The name is always already internally split. This internal difference is spacing; it is a schism between the name and itself. The name is the identification of difference that, following Nietzsche (2000: 55-57), is properly metaphorical (Derrida 1997: 89). Space within the signifier is an internal differing and an active deferral of its fullness (1988b: 9; 1994: 17).

The signature is subjected to the same logic in *Signature Event Context* and *Limited Inc abc* (Derrida 1988b). The signature is always singular, new and original; and also, in order to be verified as a signature, unoriginal. One cannot be made up every time someone signs something:

> Are there signatures? Yes, of course, every day. Effects of signatures are the most common thing in the world. But the condition of possibility of those effects is simultaneously, once again, the condition of their impossibility, of the impossibility of their rigorous purity. In order to function, that is , to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production (20).

Presentation is the possibility of representation and its own internal division (Derrida 2001: 321, 361). Yet, the name and the signature and the word manage still to retain a singularity, a suggestion of uniqueness that is as irreducible as iterability. The signature, like the proper name, is both structural and an event. This is the paradoxical logic of repetition (Derrida 1994: 10). Each repetition is marked with both a trace of the event and of the non-event. Every time a sign is used, its meaning is something new, caught up in new contingencies. It novelty is an event. However, for an event to be a pure event, it also needs to destroy the possibility of its own return. The sign, whose meaning changes and reforms as it is used, is an event each time it is used; and it is also part of a general structure that makes this event possible (Derrida 1988b: 119).

Translation can be read as a paradigmatic instance of iteration as structure and event (Derrida 1994: 22). Its very task is to maintain the same as something totally different. This difference is resisted by reinforcing the authority of the original.[75] However, from deconstruction, an argument is made here for the necessity of that difference. At this point a note on interpretation is pertinent: a text with a meaning that is secured in an origin, a pure and undifferentiated meaning, even if this meaning was very complicated, could sustain a theory of interpretation that merely found this meaning and brought it to light (Derrida 1981a: 23). A text that is open to an open context is constituted in part by intentions that are never quite present, and that contains the logic of iterability at the level of the sign, also contains this logic of iterability at a global level. That is, each reading is marked with a

[75] "…as internal division of the trait, impurity, corruption, contamination, decomposition, perversion, deformation, even cancerization, generous proliferation or degenerescence. All these disruptive 'anomalies' are engendered…by repetition" (Derrida 1992a: 211).

certain structure, with respect to the structure, and it is also an event because it is a reconstruction of context, a reiteration of signs and the privileging of different information. The act of reading transforms the text; it is itself also writing (Derrida 1981a: 63; 1981b: 63).[76] This is a second interpretation of interpretation that is captured in the sense of translation.

What is at work here is *différance* as the logic of the system of arche-writing. *Différance* is not an origin, it is not a being and it is not a source (Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 85). It is the system itself. What is meant by this elliptical statement is that *différance* does not transcend the system and it cannot be a transcendental centre of the system. *Différance* is the structure of the structure itself. It is the attempt to think a system without a centre[77] and it must therefore avoid all centrality and any attempt to shield itself from structurality, contingency and absence (Derrida 1982: 7). That said, within the structure of relations of difference between signs, both the possibility of meaning and the impossibility of completeness of meaning must be explained. *Différance* is something like an origin, if this 'origin' can be thought of as complex and distributed (9). Difference can be said to produce effects (Wood 1988: 63, 64). Derrida (1997: 92) acknowledges the complicity of *différance* as arche-writing in the presentation of the present/presence. However, the productivity of *différance* is not simply transitive. It cannot have the structure of causality of an autonomous agent moving an inert body. If *différance* is implicated in the generation of meaning, then this meaning is not separated from the signs themselves. *Différance* cannot be seen as an entity that attaches itself to the sign as the signifier and signified were attached to and completed each other (Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 88). The semantics of the system can no longer be seen as a realm that is separate to the syntax and which independently completes the syntax from outside.

In order for *différance* to be an autonomous agent in the system, it would have to be a clearly defined principle that logically and observably causes the system to be what it is. But *différance* falls short. It is "neither a word nor a concept" (Derrida 1982: 3, 7).[78] Of course, it is written, it is word and it is being conceptualised here and thus retains conceptuality. But, it is also very literally not a word, not an accepted word. It is a neologism: a corruption of language. Yet through its use and in its use it acquires meaning. Regarding its conceptuality,

[76] Derrida (1992a: 211) refers to the problem of reading, critique, teaching a text and writing about it as instances of translation as interpretation. The 'original', even marked with its own difference, still imposes itself as the paradigm. Every interpretation, in other words, cannot be made to simply say what it wants because it is still responsible to the text even when the text is open. This difficulty of interpretation is captured in the functioning of the law, which must remain resolute, consistent and the same; and yet also answer to the specificity of the case before it, and be sensitive to each new context (212).

[77] Derrida (2001: 278), having located this attempt within an epistemological rupture, is thus implicated in this very event.

[78] Derrida (1981a: 6) argues that metaphysics belongs to a logic and not a concept. No concept contains the metaphysics itself. It is articulated by the functioning of specific concepts in a certain system of oppositions, within a specific chain. Against this, *différance* must instead be, "a process of textual labour and different sort of articulation" (6).

différance is not a concept if a concept is understood as a name with a proper and complete describable reference and an exhaustible content (6). The replacement of the 'e' in 'difference' with the 'a' of *différance* is strategic. It gestures both towards the importance of differences in constituting meaning, and to the writing/speech deconstruction, because it is a difference that makes no difference in speech because it cannot be heard (4, 5). It also gestures toward the double movement of *différance*, first as generative, and secondly, as its own countermovement, as a force that disrupts and displaces (Derrida 1981b: 45). *Différance* is not a word that hangs alone. It – structured by the structure it describes – is supplemented by a chain of other concepts that explain and supplant its logic (Derrida 1981b: 57; 1982: 12).

As the structuring of the structure, *différance* is the play of traces that is both active and passive (Derrida 1982: 9, 11). Play is the movement of trace that is not directed by an origin (Derrida 2001: 352; Gasché 1994: 49).[79] As such, because it does not follow a straight path from signifier to presence, meaning is instead traced, tracked through one sign to another and another without coming to an end (Spivak 1997: xv). This is because the traces of other signs to which meaning defers are themselves also always never more than traces of still other signs. The trace left by the movement or the play of the trace is the generative movement of *différance* that is not presence but a "simulacrum of presence" (Derrida 1982: 24). Because it is a simulacrum and not presence itself, the trace, the imprint of the difference of the other and differences of all others in the system, also dissolves what it builds. The meaning generated in the play of the trace is not fixed. It is dynamic. The trace opens up appearance and sense in general (Derrida 1982: 19; 1997: 63).

The trace, because it must be tracked through the network of differences in the system, is also a detour that plays itself out in space and time (Derrida 1982: 13). In fact, without space and time, the trace could not play. The system would be a tightly stacked hierarchy in which movement would not be possible. Without movement as the very possibility of change in the system, time would be reduced to a homogenous extension of the present. The system, because it is movement, is spacing itself, in which differences can differ. In order to distinguish between two signs, there must be room between them that allows difference to unfold. There must be space in which the movement of the trace enables the distinction between what is and what is not (10). Spacing allows the movement of *différance* as a spatio-temporal activity. As a spatial phenomenon, this movement is captured in the previously outlined description: it is the active differentiating and passive being differentiated of each sign in the system. Added to this seemingly disinterested differentiation is a more forceful moment of disagreement

[79] Play is also possible within systems with stabilizing origins, but it is constrained:

> The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure…the center also closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible (Derrida 2001: 352).

between signs (8). Signs are in contest producing meaning as a result of the competition of different forces (Derrida 1997: 155). Meaning is not innocent. Its origin is forceful. The movement of the trace through the sign as a detour in space is also a detour in time.

The meaning of a sign is never resolved. It never stops, because each sign it differs from and defers to for its meaning is itself sustained and moved by the movement of the trace (Derrida 1982: 8). Something is always held back, reserved and deferred until later (Derrida 1997: 66). The movement of *différance* opens up time-space that cannot be separated from the system as dynamic organisation (Derrida 1982: 13; 1997: 60, 68).[80] This time-space disrupts presence and all categories that are grounded in it: the transcendental signified; the self-present subject; Being and every other metaphysical foundation. Spacing allows a sign to change in time and with its context. It is what allows the sign its polysemy (Derrida 1981b: 43).

Spacing also signifies something other than the unmarked spaces inside the system. Caputo (1997: 97) reads *différance* as the confrontation of unmarked, 'unmarkable' and un-mastered space that is outside the system.[81] Rather than something of a different type in relation to the space opened by difference and differing within the system, this seemingly more exterior exteriority is a reiteration of internal spacing. Or conversely, space between signs is the outside inside the system. If spacing inside the system becomes evident in the movement of *différance* between signs, then spacing outside the system becomes evident in the difference and differing between this signification and non-signification. This confrontation with space is what situates the operation of *différance* at the limit of meaning and sense as such (99). This liminality is what prevents *différance* from either escaping the structure, or from being drawn in as just another word. The openness of the system is what prevents its ossification.

The past, present and future as unfolding moments in a straight, determined line are deconstructed by this understanding of time-space (Derrida 1997: 67). The movement of trace remains open to the future and the past (Derrida 1982: 13). Because the system is thoroughly temporal and unfolds in time, its history is paramount and constitutive (Derrida 1981b: 49). Just as the sign cannot be wrenched from its relations of difference in space and remain meaningful, so the sign cannot be frozen in time and understood only in terms of a here and now. The here are now of the sign already recede into the past and future, and begin to distribute across relations of

[80] "In constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what might be called *spacing*, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space of time (*temporization*). And it is this constitution of the present, as an "originary" and irreducibly nonsimple...synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions and protentions...that I propose to call archi-writing [arche-writing], archi-trace or *différance*. Which (is) (simultaneously) spacing (and) temporalization" (Derrida 1982: 13, author's emphasis).

[81] Caputo (1997: 97-99) calls this space the "void" or "khora" following Derrida's readings of Plato's conception of khora. The void is addressed in an essay titled *Khora* (Derrida 1995: 89-130). However, this outside can also be called space, the other, justice, the gift and the future (Derrida 1994: 25, 26, 37, 59; 1997: 68; 2001: 97-192; 2002a: 230-259)

difference. Each time the sign is written, it is written on its history of effaced and changing meanings (Spivak 1997: lxxxiii). This change in turn feeds back into the system because of the movement of the trace.

Derrida (1997: 89) argues that it is impossible to understand the system without understanding its history. The system is not synchronic and cannot be frozen because of the preceding elaboration of its structure as "generally complex" (89). Within the history of the metaphysics of presence, history has always been linear, whether the line was drawn from the present straight into the past and future as its continuous extensions, or whether it was a circular boundary without perforation that designated a completely homogenous field (Derrida 1981a: 7; 1981b: 56; 1982: 16; 1994: 70). However, the movement of *différance* does not unfold linearly. Relations in the system are non-linear (Derrida 1981b: 50; 1997: 109). The deconstructed time-space does not sustain a homogenous field (Derrida 1994: 16; 1997: 86, 87; The Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 89). Derrida writes (1997: 101), "In its syntax and in its lexicon, in its spacing, by its punctuation, its lacunae, its margins, the historical appurtenance of a text is never a straight line". Relations within the system are constantly changing and shifting. The economic condensation or accumulation around a particular sign to which attention was directed earlier, as well as the active and passive deferring of signs in the system, produce relations of asymmetry (Derrida 1982: 16). The field is heterogeneous. Understanding a non-linear system in terms of its history, which remains open, like its context, involves the choice of a frame that allows meaning to play against this closure (Derrida 1994: 16, 21). The non-linearity of relations enabled by *différance* stands juxtaposed with linear metaphysical dichotomies.

Metaphysical oppositions, although they, like all signs, are enabled by *différance*, are also undone by its movement. *Différance* exceeds the meanings it generates. Its movement always produces an excess and leaves a reserve that forces the marks of classification open to modification (Wood 1988: 67; Derrida 1992a: 228, 2001: 365). *Différance* institutes the relations between signs and allows for contagion within the open web of interaction (Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 85). This heterogeneity of meaning cannot be thought within a system that locates meaning in essences and consequently understands oppositions – man/woman; good/bad; reason/emotion – as natural, given and reified hierarchies. The counter-oppositional movement of *différance* is intensified in the logic of strategic deconstruction.

The violence of instituted and protected meanings manifested by metaphysical oppositions, for example, 'heterosexual/homosexual' in which homosexuality is most often written into a relation of both exteriority and inferiority to heterosexuality,[82] must be countered with its own violence (Derrida 1988b: 41; Spivak 1997: lxxvii). It must be actively un-structured by a deconstruction. Derrida describes the strategic intensification of *différance* thus:

[82] This argument takes the same form as the deconstruction of the speech/writing opposition, mirrored in the logic of the supplement. See page 67-68.

> I often use this rather easy pedagogical scheme, that in deconstruction there is a first phase in which you have to oppose, to reverse order, the hierarchy. And it is a negative move. In politics you have to violently oppose something before you can neutralize the opposition, or the previous logic, in order to open the way to another distribution, prepare another structure (Derrida 1987b: 184).

Derrida (1981b: 36) cautions against the bypassing of this counter-violence and the rash movement toward the neutralisation of categories. If in a relation of inequality, such as is implied in metaphysical dichotomies, the dichotomy is declared undone before its effects have been reconstructed and while actual inequality still persists, then this neutralisation can do more harm than good by concealing violence in the system. However, neutralisation or re-inscription of the opposed terms by an elaboration on each sign's contamination on the other and of the other, acknowledging the *différance* at play is equally necessary (Derrida 1981a: 6).

Oppositional difference blurs the more intricate differences between things by suppressing *différance* (Derrida 1987b: 183). Deconstruction does not seek to undo difference in the pursuit of sameness in deconstructing metaphysical oppositions. Instead, the erosion of the absolute status of bilateral differences allows other differences, dynamic differences, non-linear differences to flourish. This allows for a much richer understanding of difference and of the conceptual field delineated in the differences (183). Racism, sexism and other such ideologies are ideologies of difference that are static. Each seeks to contain the heterogeneity of the system of meaning by imposing categories that are premised on essential, exclusive identities that impose closure on the system. Deconstruction deconstructs this institutionalised difference in order to allow dynamic differences to emerge. These dynamic differences, operating with the logic of the trace, do not respect the integrity of boundaries, categories and classes.

The marking of a distinction that divides the system into general classes, whether between genres of literature, gender, or genus, always implies the possibility of its own transgression (Derrida 1992a: 223).[83] This argument can be made with reference to the iterability of the distinction and it can also be made with reference to play. The heterogeneity of the system always manifests on its 'lowest' level of differences and resists genre (Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 89). In the case of the system of signification, this is the difference of every single sign from every other sign. *Différance* is the limit of the attempt to reduce these differences by impressing generalisations upon them (1981b: 40). The irreducibility of the sign must not be mistaken for the conservation of some pure essence. What is essential to the sign is only difference (Derrida 1992a: 225). The movement of *différance* undermines the motif of internal consistency and purity propagated by essentialist philosophies and dogmas (Derrida 1981b: 64). This is not to say that no classification or genres are possible. On the contrary, classification within any system or code is unavoidable (Derrida 1988b: 9; 1997: 109). It is merely the status of

[83] Genres or group identifications are subject to the logic of iterability: "…as internal division of the trait, impurity, corruption, contamination, decomposition, perversion, deformation, even cancerization, generous proliferation or degenerescence. All these disruptive 'anomalies' are engendered…by repetition" (Derrida 1992a: 211).

this classification that is shaken and the concealment of its violence that is exposed. A text participates in its classification but it cannot be contained by it (Derrida 1992a: 230). Derrida (1998: 9) points to overtly creolised spaces as privileged windows on the logic of violence, classification and excess. This motif will receive more considered treatment in forthcoming chapters.

IV. THE BOUNDARY, THE LIMIT AND THE OUTSIDE

The forgoing description of the dynamics of the system assumed that somewhere the system must have an inside. The logic of arche-writing; *différance*; trace; play; supplementation; spacing; temporisation; and the opening and closing of meaning each repeat the effort to characterise the possibility of meaning. The system opens the possibility of signification, given the absence of an a priori explanation, foundation or centre from which meaning could originate. The system's internal organisation sustains a 'here' and 'now' that is opened by a heterogeneous and non-linear time-space (Derrida 1997: 86; The Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 89). The retention of the 'here' and 'now' always gestures towards a 'not here' and 'not now'. The discussion of signification could not take place without a concurrent discussion of space or non-signification. Phrased differently, the inside of the system as the possibility of meaning has a limit beyond which there lies an outside. The system with both an inside and an outside is repeated at least twice within deconstruction: there are particular texts – first instance – and the general text – second instance (Derrida 1988b: 59). Derrida (1997: 60) writes of a 'language' generally, the text, *différance*; and of a text, the book or document open to the general economy of writing and textuality (149). It is argued below that this separation is not an absolute one and subject to a certain structural ambiguity or 'undecidableness'. Without the objective reality attributed to the general text within the structuralist paradigm, the general text cannot exist without particular texts. Two systems, two 'insides' demand the explication of two 'outsides' and the boundary.

The outside or non-system in deconstruction – already encountered as space within the system – is not simply exterior and appears at moments to lose its exteriority in relation to the system altogether. The notion of text that Derrida (1997: 9; 1981a: 36)[84] espouses appears to be totalising on one reading. For example, in *Of Grammatology* he (Derrida 1997: 158) writes, "There is nothing outside the text". And further on: "There has never been anything but writing" (159). The system of language prefaced with these statements and others like them appears as a totalising system in which everything is reduced to language. It also appears to be a closed system in which language has no relation to anything outside it. However, the general extension of writing and textuality can be restated following the logic of writing developed so far. For example, one could say that there is no sense or meaning that escapes the attempt to ontologise or render it present in space and time, nor is there any sense that escapes the absence of presence (Derrida 1981a: 4; Gasché 1994: 24). Or in other words,

[84] See footnote 48.

everything that has sense and that is known falls short of guaranteeing presence and thus falls short of guaranteeing itself as absolute truth (Derrida 2001: 278).[85] There is non-text or non-meaning within the text as far as it may extend. This understanding of the outside refers to the system in general, but also to particular meaningful systems that are constituted within the general system.

Non-text or non-meaning does not destroy identity in the system of signification. Changing perspective to consider particular systems within the general system, it is clear that a lean notion of identity as distinctness rather than essence is retained (Derrida 1981a: 6; Gasché 1994: 16). Derrida's (1988b: 20) treatment of repetition with regard to the signature relies on this recognisability. It implies that in order for recognition to take place, an edge or boundary that at the very least distinguishes it from what it is not. What is demonstrated by the signature is also necessary for any singular text (Derrida 1979a: 76). It is true of any meaningful system that can be identified, whether it is a novel, an artwork, a nation or the solar system. The notion of a boundary as such is not in question. It is only the nature of that boundary that is challenged.

Iterability points to another understanding of the outside of the particular text. The argument was made earlier that the meaning of the sign and the text is not purely intrinsically determined and is enabled by the context (Derrida 1988b: 63, 185). The boundary between the text and its context must therefore be porous, allowing flow in two directions. The context 'acts on' and encloses the text; and the text resists this closure and exceeds it (Derrida 1981a: 7). The text and context operating within the logic of arche-writing defer to one another and differ from one another. Their respective closure is interrupted and displaced by the trace (Derrida 1979a: 84; 1982: 8; 1988b: 60). The logic of the context's own openness as a practical impossibility of deciding where the context ends because of the volume of information that could still be relevant and is not yet included will not be repeated but it does need supplementation. The context is itself textual (Critchley 1992: 38; Derrida 1981a: 63). What this means is that the non-linear opening of time-space in which the system plays itself out opens the context to perpetual movement.[86] This is why the context cannot be the imposition of total closure on the code. It is both that which encloses the text and that which is included in the text itself, contributing more difference to the text's play (Derrida 1988b: 8, 63, 79). Like the text, the context must have an edge to be read. And like the text, the edge of the context cannot be ultimately resolved (Critchley 1992: 33; Derrida 1979a: 81, 92, 107).

[85] "If there is nothing outside the text, this implies, with the transformation of the concept of text in general, that the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself (even if the motif of "outside or bust" may sometimes play a reassuring role: a certain kind of inside can be terrible), but rather a different placement of the effects of opening and closing" (Derrida 1981a: 36).

[86] "If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field that is, language and a finite language excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of play, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a centre which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions" (Derrida 2001: 365).

What is considered to be marginal within a clearly delimited area, just inside or just outside the boundary, is the site of continual drawing and redrawing of the inside/outside distinction. This point can be illustrated with reference to the example of the boundary between masculinity and femininity considered as texts.[87] The boundary between these texts is not most emphatic at their respective middle-points which conform to stable agreed meanings such as – very crudely – 'men are strong and rational' and 'women are nurturing and emotional'. The boundary works and is at work in distinguishing men and women in accordance with this exaggerated 'central' meaning. However, the distinction and the meaning it produces in the system must do most of its work in creolised cases in which the it is not clear whether something should be included in 'masculinity' or lies outside it. In this case, recourse to the middle both strengthens its reach and weakens or distributes it by increasing the complexity of the boundary. This limited example also makes another point about the boundary: it is everywhere in the system, rewritten at every sign. It does not really enclose anything.

Having rendered the boundary complex and thus undecidable, Derrida (1997: 59) inserts a 'but', a fold in the argument. The impulse to stop play in its tracks is not only irresistible, but also a necessary process of understanding (Derrida 1997: 59; Gasché 1994: 39). The boundary as the distinction between the inside and the outside is a frame or 'parergon' (Derrida 1979b: 3, 37). It is a judgement. The frame, of which the exemplary case is the frame of an artwork, is a construction that constitutes the inside as an inside and signifies the beginning of the outside (34). The necessity of this constitutive role of the frame already threatens the purity of the inside because it cannot simply delimit itself as an essential interiority (Derrida 1993a: 80). This is because the frame itself can be construed either as an extension of the inside, or as an intrusion of exteriority. It is either part of the artwork or part of the wall and also neither (Derrida 1979b: 24). In both cases, it remains an addition, a supplement that is grafted onto the work itself or onto the context (Derrida 1979b: 20; 1981a: 11; 1988b: 82). This process of grafting is not innocent. By imposing closure on the play of textuality, this play is altered. Reverberation against the frame distorts play (Derrida 1979b: 30).[88] This is not to say that without a frame, a purer meaning exists. The frame remains necessary and constitutive but it and the distortion it imposes is ultimately arbitrary and violent (30). Derrida (1981a: 9) reiterates this argument with reference to the preface, which like the frame cannot be either totally interior or exterior with respect to the text it prefaces.

[87] In considering masculinity and femininity as texts, it is the consideration of these domains or identities as meaningful and not the identification of lived identities with linguistic constructions (Derrida 1993a: 23). The border is felt as a physical crossing point, like between two territories or cultural spaces. It can also play out between different languages or discourses. And it reinforces the space between terms. Every boundary is an iteration of the logic of difference as differing and deferring, of contest and relation.

[88] From a critical political perspective, this is both an argument for the distortion of ideological frames on arguments and politics; and an argument that renders the clear separation of a text from its ideology as a clearly identifiable entity problematic (Derrida 1981a: 43).

The undecidability of the boundary is an effect of space inside the system. While space is implicated in the movement of *différance*, it remains other than textuality. To exceed the system in this sense is to escape marking and to lie beyond meaning. Space transcends signification. It lies outside sense. This strange formulation of space inside and outside is necessary to resist the reification of the outside as an eccentric origin of the system, and in order to resist the construction of a metaphysics out of deconstruction. Gasché (1994: 21) makes the claim that the text as it is discussed, always makes room for the other. This idea is repeated on two levels that are, again, implicated by one another but remain theoretically separable and significantly so.

Alterity within the system is difference between texts and also between people as texts. Each text is opened by the play of the trace and the trace is set in motion by the deference of each sign to the other without consuming the other or identifying with the other in the sense of becoming the same thing, the same word, or the same sign (Derrida 1979a: 101). Derrida (1987b: 177) uses ash as a metaphor for the trace: it is the absolute mark of the trace of the other that is absent, that cannot be subsumed inside the same, self or I. Within arche-writing, both the sign and the text are constituted in relation with the other and with all others in the system. There can be no *différance* without alterity, singularity and non-identification (Derrida 1994: 31; 1997: 60). The movement of *différance* that has been described as violence is thus also the very possibility of ethics in the system because no element inside the system can be without being with others (Derrida 1997: 37, 139-140). No node in the system is meaningful alone. Derrida (1988b: 9; 1997: 68) argues that spacing or *espacement* is the genesis of alterity within the system. Spacing itself, in order to keep the system open, retains a "radical" otherness in relation with the system itself (Derrida 1981a: 5). While it resists presence, it retains forcefulness within the system (Derrida 1981a: 5; 1997: 71).

The motif of alterity is one that Derrida in *Violence and Metaphysics* (2001: 97-192) writes on in conversation with Emmanuel Levinas' deconstruction of the encounter between the self and the other in which the other is fully disclosed within the self's knowledge and perception of the other. This tendency has pervaded the history of western philosophy (Levinas, 1986: 346).[89] Levinas (348) seeks to reintroduce asymmetry into the self-other or ethical relation by reframing it as a heteronomous experience in which the self defers to the other, rather than one of identification. The experience of the other by the same is not an extension of the self; rather, this self as an enclosed unity is interrupted and enriched by the face of the other, which is not the other itself but only its trace (351). The other comes from outside presence. It makes an infinite appeal to the self as absolute non-

[89] "Western philosophy coincides with the disclosure of the other where the other, in manifesting itself as a being loses its alterity. From its infancy philosophy has been struck with a horror of the other that remains other – with an insurmountable allergy...philosophy handed down to us reduces to this return not only theoretical thought, but every spontaneous movement of consciousness" (Levinas 1986: 346).

presence to which the self is called to respond. This call to responsibility is infinite (353).[90] The other is pure absence, while presence is something that belongs only to the self-subject who may be marked with an interior alterity that must not be conflated with the transcendence of the other (358).

Levinas' argument is sketched here as a foil to Derrida's more 'corrupted' notion of alterity. Following Cornell (1992: 69), it can be argued that the other that is completely transcendent falls into a chain of binary opposition – self/other; same/different; inside/outside – that the system cannot maintain without impurity or without allowing a contagion across the boundary. Instead, the alterity that marks the other is already marked with an intrusion of the same. "[All] egos are others for others" (Derrida 2001: 157). The purity of the other is interrupted by a trace of the self as its other. Furthermore, the asymmetry instituted by deference to the other is maintained as a dynamic relation that always retains the possibility of reconstitution. The other also defers. Ethics does not escape textuality, which includes the other as another. The system cannot totally consume the other within the system (Derrida 1994: 14, 15). It must be repeated that the system is not an absolutely totalising system. It remains open. Singularity escapes the system. The system cannot signify the singular without contaminating it with a trace of the possibility of its own repetition or without marking it with generalities (14). A trace of the other is not full disclosure of the other any more than traces of the world fully disclose the world in itself .

This discussion calls for an explanation of the relation between signification and the world in itself. Following the argument made so far, the boundary between text and the world is complex. Insofar as the world is meaningful to us, this meaning is structured by the trace, which means it is constituted differentially and it is open to change and development (Derrida 1982: 19; 1997: 63). The world is not fully disclosed in signs because the complex distributed reference provoked by *différance* does not have the essential object in the world as its pure origin. Explanation within a dynamic system, enabled by a frame, is partial and distorting (Cornell 1992: 4-6; Derrida 1979b: 30). Any classification that claims to be absolutely true, presupposes inert, dead and unsurprising matter that fits into fixed concepts (Derrida 1981a: 23; Morin 1992: 58). The text is not dead and it does not assume a reified universe in a linear time-space. Acknowledging the spacing both within and without the system is an acknowledgement of internal limits which have hitherto been referred to as boundaries, and the limits to all sense, knowledge and meaning in general. The limit is a boundary of which only one side – the inside – is visible. However, like the boundary, *différance* producing change in the system allows these limits to be reconstituted (Culler 1983: 123; Derrida 1993a: 47, 67).

The acknowledgement of the openness of the system is an acknowledgement of the impossibility of making a decision once and for all within the system because a decision as a frame imposes spatial and temporal closure

[90] "The I before the other is infinitely responsible. The other who provokes this ethical movement in consciousness, and who disorders the good conscience of the coinciding of the same with itself involves a surplus for which intentionality is inadequate" (Levinas 1986: 353).

that reverberates back into the system. The confrontation with the limits of sense, knowledge and certainty is what Derrida calls "aporia" (Derrida 1993a: 21). Aporia is the impossibility of calculating or applying a rule in order to work out what to do or which way to go; and aporia is the necessity, in the face of this undecidability, of nonetheless making a decision (Derrida 1994: 27; 1993a: 12). What is worked out here is not different to the discussion of the border. When reading a text, the reader can find herself both inside and outside the text simultaneously. The undecidability, which is not indecision but the impossibility of clearing up all ambiguity in the system, does not do away with the decision itself. In fact, it is the impossibility of deciding by knowing which way to go that opens up the possibility of the decision as a decision, as a choice for which responsibility cannot be deferred. Derrida (1994: xix-xx, 21-31; 2002a: 230-259) also frames aporia and undecidability in terms of the law as a system of which justice is its other or its outside.

Derrida (2002a: 230-259) writes about aporia as the experience of responding to the call of justice. Justice is outside the operation of the law. Within the logic of arche-trace that allows us to speak meaningfully about law, lawfulness, morality and ethics, nothing can guarantee that our laws, or the intellectual and social frames that frame laws, are just. In order to know once and for all what justice is, one would have to freeze the system and trace all its relations until the true meaning of the system could be found and the system could be adjusted to fit that perfect meaning. In the face of the structural impossibility of such a task, Derrida nevertheless retains justice as a possibility that sustains the logic of perpetual change and transformation. Justice as an aporia is another name for that forceful outside implicated in the transformation of the system. It is *différance* as the possibility of the other for which space opens. It is quasi-transcendental and not fully transcendental. This follows because justice is not inside signification and thus has no content. Its force in the system is not determinate. I cannot appear in the system as an untainted idea of the good or of god. It cannot become an origin any more than space but, like space, its invocation in deconstruction must actively resist reification. Because it cannot ever be instituted or programmed into the text due to the structure of the text, it is impossible within the text. The question of justice always proceeds from the future as the outside. It is never a question of presence. It exceeds the metaphysics of presence (Derrida, 1994: xix).[91]

Aporia has three moments (Caputo 1997: 136-138; Cornell 1992: 133-135). First, aporia is the suspension of the law as a rule which governs decisions. It is the "epokhe" of the law because within the logic of *différance*, we know that no rule as a general distinction can itself be justice (Derrida 2002a: 251). The decision must respect the singularity of the event, while the rule can only ever be general. Secondly, it is the confrontation with undecidability even if, or especially if, all possible efforts to know what to do with recourse to knowledge and arguments are exhausted (252). And thirdly, in this moment of undecidability which cannot be extended

[91] The confrontation with justice as aporia is only introduced here. It is relevant to the broader project with which this thesis is engaged and will be treated with specific attention to *Force of Law*: *The "Mystical Foundations of Authority"* (Derrida 2002a: 230-298).

infinitely, justice as the future possible impossible cannot wait (255). Justice makes its demand now, but it makes this demand as a possibility and for the possibility of a just future. This future is discontinuous with the present and cannot be disclosed in the present (Derrida 1994: 59). Justice is not the fulfilment of the system; it is the possibility of transformation that opens up in the cracks and disjunctions in the system (26).

Justice is the possibility of deconstruction (28, 30). The structure of the system, the opening and closing of the system as signification, is dependent on alterity as non-signification. This is the other, reiterated as space, non-signification, alterity and justice. Space is the possibility of the future of the system as different and discontinuous with the present-presence of the system. The system organises itself by structuring and by deconstruction; by closing and by opening what has been closed. For both these movements to be sustained as movement there must be space. Because justice like space is not within signification, it has no structure, and is itself undeconstructable (31). There is no deconstruction, change, transformation without the undeconstructable.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter has reconstructed the system of arche-writing that permeates several deconstructive texts through the lens of critical complexity theory. Although this system is not always easily identifiable because it is not written as a cohesive and totalising modern system and also cannot be identified as an ontological unity, its logic is reiterated in the repetition of a constellation of terms such as *différance*, trace, space, iterability, supplementarity, and so on. One of the tasks of these movements and logics is the dual gesture of both explaining the possibility of signification in a system that has no proper origin and no pure centre; and to show the limits of this possibility as each is marked with the impossibility that it might ever escape its own deconstructive tendency. In other words, if these infrastructures function as origins in the system, they are origins for whom the system might conversely be an origin. They do not transcend the structuring of the system. This lack of absolute foundations deems deconstruction vulnerable to charges of relativism both from its supporters and critics.

Richard Rorty (1992: 235) argues that taking the systemic language of deconstruction seriously and positioning Derrida as a rigorous philosopher is disingenuous. He makes a two-pronged argument. In a first gesture, he (242) reduces all philosophical or literary uses of language to a practical effort to make language work for us, to solve a problem, or to serve an interest. In other words, language and truth claims are only pragmatic and have nothing to do with the possibility or impossibility of truth in any rigorous way. The second gesture circumscribes deconstruction within this relativist logic of expediency. In other words, deconstruction is seen as arguing eventually only for the folly of all attempts to make rigorous arguments by way of rather a theatrical demonstration in its texts (240). If Derrida's arguments, especially in the earlier texts considered here in which a systematic and systemic motif emerges rather pronouncedly, are taken seriously, then Derrida must be considered a transcendental philosopher, another metaphysician of the type he critiques.

To this argument, at least three points of rebuttal must be raised. First, the text is not the reduction of the world and everything in it to language. The epistemological uncertainty that emerges within deconstruction is not a denial of the world or on any penetration between sense and reality in itself; it is only a denial of pure and immediate access to a world that can be disclosed without reserve. Furthermore, Derrida never abandons truth or logic, but demonstrates the limits of truth and logic and in fact uses truth and logic in a rigorous manner that is evidenced by close readings of philosophical problems worked out in his texts. And finally, deconstruction is not relativism. The retention of the notion of justice as the name in which deconstruction happens, as the possibility of the other in the system, does not suggest that judgements are arbitrary and expedient. Rather, the task of deciding within the system is an impossible task that generates an infinite responsibility. It is not pragmatics but ethics that perpetuates the logic of deconstruction. Knowledge that supports decisions is not impossible within the logic of *différance*. However, absolute knowledge that would shift responsibility from the individual or the system to a calculation with respect to the decision is dissolved by its movement.

This is why deconstruction can be considered to be strategic. The movement against a system of metaphysical oppositions grounded in presence makes a break with all epistemological positions that rely on the dogmatic adherence to foundations (Derrida 1997: 83). This epistemological uncertainty produced by *différance*, which carries with it an acknowledgement of the necessary error and urgency of all knowledge and decisions in the system, is not grounded in knowledge itself. Knowledge is grounded in ethics. Aporia opens this possibility because it opens the possibility of a decision for which the decider bears a radical responsibility within the system and therefore to the others in the system. Any strategy formulated within the logic of deconstruction is made in light of the epistemological uncertainty it casts on the system. Deconstruction as a strategy can never become a substantive programme. Like all meaning, its substance is always contextual, partial and ultimately unjustified. Like complexity theory, deconstruction cannot separate epistemology from ethics.

The work of deconstruction is never finished. The non-linear time-space which opens the system to play and to a future that is discontinuous with the present, ensures a perpetual motion that requires unceasing intervention, in the name of this future. Each deconstruction implies the possibility of a reconstruction, for which deconstruction cannot provide a priori content (Derrida 1987b: 84; 1988b: 41). This discussion has introduced violence. It has considered the notion of violence in the system implicated in both the organisation of the system itself, and in deconstructive interventions.

This chapter has repeated the structure of the previous one with two aims. The first is to show how a reading of Derrida's texts allows for the construction of a system that breaks with certain philosophical positions that have repeated the metaphysics of presence. This metaphysics resonates with the reductive modernist strategies which characterise modernism, whether premised on a transcendental subject or object. Deconstruction and complexity theory respond to different specific philosophical problems, but these approaches can be collected within a

movement of inhibiting play and complexity with recourse to an unstructured metaphysical foundation. Derrida (2001: 352) characterises it as follows:

> The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play. And on the basis of this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were at stake in the game from the outset.

Both deconstruction and critical complexity theory attempt to face up to the anxiety for which the centre has served as an anecdote.

The second aim of the iteration of the structure of complex systems was to allow for a resonance between this structure and the seemingly foreign terminology and history of deconstruction. To this end, detailed explanations of *différance* and other core concepts within deconstruction were necessary. The internal dynamics of the system of signification is not a totalising system. Even the internal dynamics of the system, which can be given a description with due consideration of the parergonality of this description, are not fully disclosed in the system. The deconstruction of the line which had previously structured both space and time within the system prevents the system's ossification. It allows both the opening of internal structure and the opening of the boundary of the system. The system is opened to internal difference, the possibility of new differences not yet included in the system, space, justice and the future.

The discussion of the outside of arche-writing, particularly as the other and as justice as a quasi-transcendental, could give the impression that Derrida 'capitalises' this outside as pure transcendence or renders it absolute. This is a strategy that he himself aligns with the metaphysics of presence as the metaphysics of dichotomies (Derrida 1997: 86). However, for reasons that were argued earlier regarding the implication of the outside inside the system, arising inside the system as a confrontation with the limit of interiority, this outside can be reframed as precisely that which prevents capitalisation. Derrida must posit a forceful outside as part of the dynamics of the system in order to resist capitalisation as such. What has been suggested in this chapter is that creolisation, hybridity and impurity are a necessary outcome of the heterogeneity of the system. These themes are also of significance in the discussion of the violence. This line of argument is most thoroughly developed in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

THE SYSTEM IS VIOLENCE: THE COMPLEX SYSTEM AND THE FIRST LEVEL OF VIOLENCE

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence is a concept that is often deployed as if its meaning is unproblematic. However, its meaning, extending to both what counts as violence and how it is valued – for example, legitimate and illegitimate or necessary and gratuitous – is not simple or self-evident. This complexity is brought to the fore in a systems based understanding of meaning in which the logic of *différance* structures relations of difference in the system with consequences for the grounding of all definitions and theories. What is considered violent depends on how these relations of difference are structured and on the context in which they are constituted. The significance of the context is evidenced by commonly held divergent perceptions of capital punishment. To some, the institutionalised killing of a convicted criminal is not so much violence as the restitution thereof or perhaps justice itself; while to others, killing enacted by indifferent state machinery is the most grotesque form of violence imaginable. From a third perspective, state killings might be acknowledged as violent, but defended as a necessary violence. From this viewpoint, having the monopoly on this violence is what constitutes the state as a state and produces order and legitimate structure in the social system. A systemic understanding implied in each of these explanations is not the only legitimate frame for an analysis of violence. As a counterpoint to this systemic understanding in which complex violence will be explored in this chapter, the more confident and precise exposition of violence carried out by Hannah Arendt (1970) in *On Violence* is introduced here as both a foil and a challenge to complexity thinking, warning against certain gestures and demanding clarity and relevance to social reality. Because it is motivated by the ethical ideal of a nonviolent society, the precision of this analysis as well as its uncompromising stand against violence must be taken seriously.

Derrida's (1997: 112) analysis of violence in the system, through which this analysis of violence in the system is structured, appears to be an attempt to get beyond the self-evidence of what constitutes violence. This analysis of violence in the system can be read in the same pattern in which Derrida (91) positions his analysis of the system as a text or as arche-writing. That is, rather than seeking out from the beginning of *Of Grammatology* (1997) what writing is by locating and explicating its stable essence, arche-writing is an answer to the question of what writing *must be* in the absence of full presence or in a system without a centre. This chapter repeats the form of Derrida's argument. Rather than pursuing the meaning of violence by the aggregation of close readings of its changing meanings in several authoritative texts, complexity thinking as a form of systems thinking that is embodied in critical complexity theory and deconstruction is developed as the point of departure. Against this systemic understanding, the question is posed: what must violence be within a system structured by *différance*? In this regard, this project is not so much a treatment of violence in itself, but a treatment of violence in the

system without a centre. To this end, it is the system that must be properly explored and understood in order to get at violence, rather than violence that must be understood to get at the system. However, following the argument from complexity, there is no doubt that such an approach produces its own blind spot (Morin 1992: 150; 2007: 2). It is for this reason that Arendt's (1970) various concerns are used to interject at points.

A first answer to the question of what violence must be comes from critical complexity in resistance to the modernist epistemological paradigm, and from deconstruction with regard to the metaphysics of presence. Violence is implicated in what might be called the 'old' paradigm, although this paradigm of presence has neither been replaced by the complex system, nor worn by its insights. By returning to the example of writing, and with reference to Nietzsche as a proto-grammatologist, violence is generalised on one level to coincide with the play of the system set free from old anchoring origins. The consequences and dangers of such a generalisation are explored below.

Having cleared some conceptual ground with regard to deconstructive or complex systems, it is already evident that absolute meanings and clear categorical distinctions such as those proposed by Arendt are not tenable within a critical complex frame of understanding (1970: 44-47). Violence, like all other signifiers, can always be placed in several chains of supplementation. A first, relevant to this chapter, might be: power; force; signification; *différance*; creativity; violence. And a second that has emerged as significant within both deconstructive and critical complexity writing is: oppression; exclusion; violation; suppression; violence. This violence as an exclusion and violation is paramount in the development of the ethics of a deconstruction and critical complexity approach (Cornell 1992: 155-169). In an abstract but fundamental sense, the isolation of violence from the system as a whole is artificial. Its meaning cannot be defined in absolute and fixed terms. However, this does not mean that a limited provisional account of violence in the system must not be given.

Within the discussion thus far conducted, the complex system has been described as a system that has an inside, a boundary and an outside that is implicated in both the inside and the boundary. These three sites of organisation remain relevant in the discussion of violence. Derrida (1997: 112) identifies three levels of violence in the production of the system of meaning. The first is at the level of the organisation of the system itself; it is the original violence of the system as the complex origin of meaning. It is on this level that writing as a system of relational meaning can itself be considered violence. The second level of violence concerns the imposition of closure in the system. It is the violence of the frame or boundary. The third level of violence is empirical violence, which includes acts such as rape, murder and war. It is violence that injures its object. This chapter is directed at the task of clarifying violence in relation to the first level of violence, the fundamental organisation of the system, and particularly its relation to *différance*.

II. HANNAH ARENDT'S EXPOSITION OF VIOLENCE

Arendt (1970) writes in a world irrevocably changed by the scale and reach of violence as a political instrument of the Holocaust and World War II, and in the context of the Cold War, in which the ever escalating threat of violence from either side appeared, from a certain perspective, to be making the world more peaceful by containing empirical violence (3, 5). Within this context, violence as a phenomenon in its own right was marginalised, a mere secondary issue in the treatment of the primary interest, often war or international relations (8). This concern is echoed by Sylvia Walby (2009: 191-192) in a recent complexity-related publication that attempts to introduce a systems understanding to society as a whole, and within society to frame violence as a complex system unto itself.[92] Within the historical situation in which Arendt's writing was produced, what was given attention was the justification of violence, either by its ultimate inescapability or with reference to its purpose. This justificatory rhetoric was widely incorporated in the analyses of political revolutions in the Third World and European and American student uprisings (Arendt 1970: 12-15, 19, 21). The discourses developed around violence tied it to the task of setting right the unjust and exploitative social hierarchies in the world. Within this logic, violence took its place in opposition to power, as an instrument of the weak.

Arendt's treatment of violence (1970) is a firm stand against violence and against the rhetoric of its absolute and inescapable necessity that she reads in her philosophical contemporaries and in the canon. She (Arendt, 1970: 12, 14, 20) pays particular attention to Georges Sorel and Frantz Fanon – particularly the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001) – as authors who provide apologies for violence. Her choice of interlocutors was motivated by their influence in the political arena. Sorel (1999: 78) argues for the inevitability of violent struggle in society and for its determinate link with socio-political vitality:

> Not only can proletarian violence ensure the future revolution but it also seems the only means by which the European nations, stupefied by humanitarianism, can recover their former energy. This violence compels capitalism to restrict its attentions solely to its material role and tends to restore to it the warlike qualities it formerly possessed.

Arendt (1970: 71) does not quite identify Fanon's writing, a call for colonised people to stand up and seek enfranchisement by deliberate and uncompromising means, with the mechanical theorisation of society and

[92] Walby (2009: 193) presents violence as "an institutional domain, a social system in its own right and not reducible to any other". Her analysis is drawn into the conversation because it, briefly, brings theories of violence which maintain an opposition between violence and power, and consequently and hastily cast violence as the occupation of weak and disenfranchised, into a complex systems understanding, which undermines it. Like Morin (1992: 3; 2007: 4), Walby (2009: 199) links violence with modernity. However, for her, the modern state – which, following Weber, she sees as the centralisation and monopolisation of violence – is a goal toward which society should strive. Its centralisation of violence, Walby (196-199) argues, will protect weak parties who are the victims of the strong in societies. As this chapter progresses, it will become evident that critical complexity theory cannot support this legitimisation of violence by virtue of its centralisation.

violence attributed to Sorel. However, its insistence on revolutionary violence as a response to colonial violence alerts us to a dangerous propensity, which in excess leads to the idea that violence cannot only be justified, it can itself be just.

Arendt (20) also engages with Jean-Paul Sartre (2001: 7-26), who in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* makes an evaluation of Fanon's text that links violence both to the subject and the wider social system. The system is understood to be constituted by a racist logic disseminated by Europe and the West. In this system, the order that was established through the violent subordination of colonised subjects is not recognised as violent (8). On Sartre's account, violence is used in the first place to exclude certain peoples from the category of humanity on the basis of race, and thus assert by way of this violence the subjectivity of the white race. This gesture is then reversed. The colonial subject asserts his subjectivity by means of counter-violence (18-20). Given the first systemic violence, this second one is irrepressible. Violence has already called up its counter-violence with dialectical necessity. Sartre (25) believes that this dialectic can move to a peaceful synthesis: "Will we recover? Yes. For violence, like Achilles' lance, can heal the wounds that it has inflicted". Violence is necessary and inevitable for the system to restore itself to a more just order. Sartre (26) attributes arbitrariness to violence: "you may be sure we will not avoid it…they'll go for us and hit out blindly..." Violence is therefore justified on a systemic level, without regard for individual subjects' suffering or accountability.

Fanon himself (2001: 27) sets out the programme of decolonisation as one of systemic transformation. In a system instantiated by violence, violence appears to those who are violently subjugated as the only possible means of escaping it. There is certainly evidence of what Arendt (1970: 20) calls Fanon's "rhetorical excesses". In particular, the alignment of violence with the reclamation of power and dignity is a point of concern. Fanon (2001: 57) does not consistently advocate violence for all colonised people or all people who have suffered violence. Rather, it is described as the last resort of those for whom the system does not allow other forms of agency. Violence, according to Fanon's (27-84) argument, is a means to power. Violence of the powerful and counter-violence of the weak answer each other with escalating intensity (69). Fanon's essay raises the question of the possibility of violence coming to an end, when its movement has already begun. The arguments presented in *The Wretched of the Earth* suggest that an end is at least very unlikely. This position, one that advocates liberation through violence, conflates power, subjectivity and violence; however, Arendt objects.

Arendt (1970: 4, 44-47) makes several emphatic and clear conceptual distinctions between terms often conflated in social scientific research and writing: power, strength, force, authority and violence. Power can be understood as a capability, either to act or to control. Further, for Arendt (44), power is of the group, not the individual. It is the effect of a group of subjects acting in concert. When power is mistakenly associated with an individual, what is actually meant by 'power' is strength (45). Arendt (45) also warns against the use of the term 'force' in a discourse on violence, because it is a term misappropriated from the natural sciences, which tend to naturalise

the discourse of violence as if, like a mechanical expenditure of energy in a natural system, violence cannot be judged. One further term that is conflated with violence is 'authority'. For Arendt (45), authority is a legitimised hierarchy. It does not involve coercion. It involves consent.

These concepts are kept apart from one another in order to speak specifically about violence. The bleed of one into another confuses the meaning of violence. It compromises the ability to identify it and to alleviate its effects and restore peace. What all the concepts discussed above have in common is that they all structure society by different means (43). Within this scheme, violence is an instrument, a means to achieve power (48, 51). However, there is an inverse relation between violence and power. Those who have power have no need for violence; and the converse is also true. Power increases with greater consensus and cohesion of the group, while violence does not depend on numbers (42). Significantly, violence, unlike power, authority and strength, does not depend on a structure like the group, a specific configuration of the system, a consensus or a hierarchy that enables it. Violence comes as an interruption of that configuration. Violence is therefore implicated in a certain kind of transformation. Arendt (30) makes an important qualification on this point. She argues that it is only if history is thought as a linear progression towards a final telos that violence can interrupt the system. In other words, if history were inherently closed to change then it would be the case that change necessitates violence. However, if history is an open-ended accumulation of transformations, then the system without violence remains open to change.

Violence is arbitrary because is merely instrumental, and because it interrupts the foundations of society and has no foundation of its own. It does not respect the singular or the individual.[93] The arbitrariness of violence is not, however, to be confused with irrationality (64). Irrational acts are acts without reason. Violence is a rational instrument for the achievement of a goal. The opposition of violence and reason seeks to 'animalise' violence. However, violence is not an extension of some natural order. It is the instrumentalisation of reason itself (82-83). It is only when violence is separated from its end, in a seemingly endless series of attacks and reprisals, that violence seems irrational. This distinction between nature and violence, which is then a distinctly human social phenomenon, is important. It is echoed in a slightly different tone within deconstruction (Derrida 1997: 37).[94]

Walby (2009: 195), in her systems analysis, undermines the separation between power and violence. She also reverses the inverse relation between violence and power that Arendt (1970: 42) theorises. She writes: "The predominant theorisation of inter-personal violence as a consequence of a disadvantaged class position is

[93] Violence has no natural purpose. Its force is not discriminating. "[Violence] harbours within itself an additional element of arbitrariness; nowhere does Fortuna, good or ill luck, play a more powerful role than on the battle field" (Arendt 1970: 4).

[94] The opposition between violence and non-violence in the system repeats the opposition between artifice and nature within the history of philosophy (Derrida 1997: 37). Both are oppositions that are deconstructed. In these deconstructions, violence associated with artifice returns from its exile beyond the system.

challenged by its use by dominant groups to maintain gender and ethnic/racial/national/sexual hierarchies" (Walby 2009: 195). An understanding of violence which opposes it to power excludes the maintenance of essentialist oppositions by the powerful, and already ignores a deeper operation of violence in the system. Arendt's (1970) frame of enquiry is blind to this systemic violence.

The framing of violence as an empirical, arbitrary use of force, usually by a single agent or groups of agents must be shifted in order to render other forms of violence visible. Indeed, Slavoj Zizek (2008: 1; 8-33) points to the erasing effect that this subject-centred frame has on other forms of violence, the execution of which emanates neither from a definite single nor collective agent.[95] These other forms of violence are instead structural features of the system in which empirical or subjective violence manifests. Structural or objective violence takes two forms. The first form is the violence of language or symbolic violence, the "imposition of a certain universe of meaning" (1). This also involves the suppression of any contrary meanings. The second form is what Zizek (2, 10) characterises as 'systemic violence'. This is the maintenance of an established hierarchy in society through economic, social and political institutions and mechanisms. This tripartite interrelated structure of violence – subjective, symbolic and systemic – complicates the use and theorisation of the concept 'violence'.

In this analysis, instances of empirical violence that seem to disrupt an apparently peaceful status quo can be interpreted as more than the irrational outbursts of individual agents. The meaning and hierarchy disrupted by this violence are also opened to new interpretations. When reframed in an analysis which contextualises subjective violence, for example a violent strike at a gold mine or a violent revolt in the ranks of low level military personnel, within a system of relations, violence is no longer simply the actions of bad individuals, or simply unjust or simply unmotivated (9). Understanding violence as an interruption to the perpetuation of the system due to its causing a systemic adjustment is related to Walter Benjamin's 'divine violence' (10, 137).

Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* (1978: 277-300), which begins by framing assessments of violence in terms of the law and making a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence, suggests that there are certain instances of violence that are produced by the excessive production of the system's own logic. This violence undermines the system, which is also violent, and it therefore undermines the injustice of the system because it brings about a different order of things from outside the system's violent relations (277, 300). This account of violence is sympathetic to the anti-liberal stance of Sorel and Sartre (Hanssen 2000: 3). Divine violence, which must be distinguished from both law-making and law-sustaining – violence that instantiates and conserves the system – violence that Benjamin (1978: 297) calls mythical, comes as pure structural interruption. Because it

[95] "Opposing all forms of violence, from direct physical violence (mass murder, terror) to ideological violence (racism, incitement, sexual discrimination), seems to be the main preoccupation of the tolerant liberal attitude that predominates today…Is there not something suspicious, indeed symptomatic, about this focus on subjective violence…?...Doesn't it desperately try to distract our attention from the true locus of trouble, by obliterating from view other forms of violence and thus actively participating in them?" (Zizek 2008: 9).

comes as an interruption to the system, it is not always recognisable within the system: "If mythical violence is law-making, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them…" (297). Mythic violence can never be just because it arises within the system itself (Cornell 1992: 156). However, divine violence, because of its exteriority, still possesses this potential. Rather than violence interrupting a peaceful order, justice, the divine, interrupts a violent order violently.

The question of the whether or not what is called violence can ever be thought just is one which Arendt (1970: 21, 63) answers in the negative; although she does concede that under extreme conditions of oppression, the absence of power produces no alternative to the violent pronouncement of one's grievances. However, this violence cannot restore peaceful relations. She (80) argues that all actions in the world always change the world, but that violent acts only change the world into a more violent one. It is precisely for this reason that she draws attention to the respective problematic positions of Fanon, Sartre and Sorel's respective appraisals of revolutionary violence. The question of whether violence can ever be considered just or even appropriate is one that complexity theory and deconstruction also have to answer.

Derrida's (2002a: 230-259) response in *Force of Law*[96] is that violence itself is never just. However, referring back to the previous chapter in which the logic of deconstruction was explicitly linked to deliberately violent destruction of hierarchies, this 'no' must be qualified (Derrida 1988b: 41; Spivak 1997: lxxvii). Derrida (1981b: 36) preserves a space for what might be termed 'necessary' violence, but stops short of identifying this violence with justice itself. This simultaneous employment and disavowal of violence will become clearer once further exposition of the system is carried out. In line with Zizek (2008: 159), the complex systemic position preserves a space in which systemic violence remains visible and counter-systemic violence cannot be reduced to the irrational actions of individuals. Rather, context always matters in determining the meaning of violence. But before anything further can be said about violence in the system, attention is turned to what is meant by 'system' when this term is informed by both complexity theory and deconstruction. Within this description, some initial remarks can be made regarding the violence associated with the metaphysics of presence or modernist epistemological strategies.

[96] This essay will not be specifically addressed here as it is central to the discussion in chapter 5. Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* will also be relevant there. However, in substantiation of the claim that deconstruction does not advocate violence:

> I have often called for vigilance, I have recalled myself to it…the risk of giving authorisation to violent, unjust, arbitrary force…In the texts I just evoked it is always a matter of differential force, of difference as difference of force, of force as *différance* (*différance* is a force *différée-différant*); it is always a matter of the relation between force and form, between force and signification, of 'performative' force…(Derrida 2002a: 235)

Justice is, however, as argued in the previous chapter, outside this economy (242).

III. BETWEEN THE SYSTEM AND THE SYSTEM

a. SUPPLEMENTING CRITICAL COMPLEXITY THINKING

Complex systems thinking is a leap away from atomistic modes of thinking, those that see subject and object and self-enclosed units, toward the relations and spaces between elements and the larger phenomena of which they are a part (Derrida 2001: 351-370). I have positioned this idea of a system in proximity with an epistemological break that separates two theoretical paradigms that have been called modern and postmodern respectively. This break refers to a shift away from the conceptualisation of the structure of thought as secured by a transcendental origin – modern thinking – toward the conceptualisation of this structure without a transcendental origin (Cilliers 2005: 262; Derrida 2001: 278, 369). The system as it is developed in both critical complexity theory and in deconstruction begins with Saussure's (1983: 67) assertion of the anteriority of difference in the system and also the idea that elements within the system related and are constituted through these relations. Despite this common frame, it was stressed in chapter 1 that it is not endeavoured here to collapse the distinction between these two theoretical positions, although, critical complexity theory, especially as it is developed by Cilliers (1998a), is already constituted in part by its inclusion of deconstructive tools. This constitution is significant, especially because deconstruction was read in chapter 2 as an attempt to develop a model of a complex system of meaning, extended to all attempts to make sense. The centrality of meaning in deconstruction can be used to reinforce a similar centrality of meaning in the complex system.

The simultaneous sameness and difference between the system of complexity theory and the system of deconstruction finds an explanation in Derrida's (1988b: 8; 1997: 91) notion of iterability. To recapitulate, the appearance of a sign depends on its ability to be recognised and is contemporaneous with the possibility that it might be repeated. The sign's meaning, because it does it is not determined by an essence, is co-constituted by what is external, its context. It is therefore always divided within itself: both the same and different with each repetition. What is iterated in critical complexity theory and deconstruction is the notion of a system that structures itself through its interactions. It is the self-organising complex system (Morin 2005: 11).[97] Or elsewhere, it is the post-metaphysical system, one that attempts to dislodge itself from the self-evident logos (Derrida 1981b: 52). Or the system without a centre (Cilliers 1998a: 5, 89; Derrida 2001: 278). Or the system without a proper origin (Derrida 1997: 37; 2001: 369; Morin 1992: 38-41).

[97] "Organised complexity means to our eyes that systems are themselves complex because their organization supposes, comprises, or produces complexity…[A system] is a relation between parts that can be very different from one another and that constitute a whole at the same time organised, organising and organiser" (Morin 2005: 11).

While each respective theory has overtly shaped and altered the presentation of the other, this resonance and alteration are of the movement of supplementation[98] within this project and not simple identification. Supplementation is not able to consume or erase the other's difference. The strategy followed from this point will use the complex system beginning with and constituted by difference and already opened by *différance* as a point of departure. Where the word 'system' is used, it refers in the first place to an attempt to confront and understand complexity. Deconstruction read as a manner of systems thinking – with due acknowledgement of the partiality of this reading and the space for other valid readings – is used to supplement this system. Deconstruction is particularly important in speaking about violence in the complex system, for which critical complexity theory does not have so extensive a vocabulary.

The need for further attention to the parallel reading of the system from complexity theory and the system from deconstruction beyond chapters 1 and 2 is motivated by the need for caution against the reductive simplification of the relation between these theories. It is for this reason that considerable attention was directed at the clarification of the respective intricacies of the complex and deconstructive systems individually. To rush too quickly into a merging of these two theoretical fields, stressing their difference without thorough attention to the way concepts within each respectively deconstructs the notion of a determined system, fixed by its origin, assumes too much in an area of philosophy that is by no means saturated with commentary. There is a marked deficit in literature that compares or contrasts complexity theory and deconstruction.[99] Mark Taylor (2001) – echoing Michael Dillon's (2000) misgivings that were noted in the margins of chapter 1 – warns against precisely the gesture executed here that relates complexity theory and deconstruction. Dillon (2000: 4, 5) acknowledged the affinity between these two theoretical approaches. This affinity is the anteriority of relationality in both complex and poststructural systems. However, to restate the problem, it is the nature of this difference that allows Dillon to maintain the strong opposition between complexity theory and poststructuralism.

Taylor's apprehension is motivated by other concerns. Taylor (2001: 14) relates the need for complex understanding to this historical moment, which he understands as falling between perceived states of global equilibrium. In other words, we are living in a volatile transformational era in which uncertainty abounds. He

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[98] The logic of the supplement preserves the exteriority of the supplement to that which it supplements, and also transgresses this boundary:

> The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence...But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void (Derrida 1997: 144-145, author's emphasis).

[99] In my research I have found that the most extensive project that brings critical complexity theory and deconstruction together is *Complexity and Postmodernism* (Cilliers 1998a). There are more undertakings that draw complexity theory into conversation with the poststructuralism of Gilles Deleuze than that of Derrida. Deleuze uses the language of complexity science in his philosophy that encourages the comparison between this philosophy and projects within natural science. For thorough illustrations, see the work of Keith Ansell-Pearson (1999) and Manuel De Landa (2002).

(Taylor 2001: 14), in line with Cilliers (1998a: 3) and Morin (2005), distinguishes complexity theory, from which he draws insights, from chaos or catastrophe theory. His (Taylor, 2001: 72) reading of complexity as a theory with the potential to ground critical intervention then moves through poststructuralism, urged on by an ethical imperative to act for the possibility of a better future. It is the openness generated in our complex world that produces this possibility.

Taylor (2001: 55) engages with three core poststructuralist perspectives: Derrida's deconstruction, Foucault's social constructivism and Baudrillard's simulation. While he is generally positive about the contributions of these thinkers to social critique, he points to a deficiency in all three perspectives. They all lead to paralysing uncertainty.[100] Derrida, like the complexity theorists, is understood as being interested in systems far from equilibrium.[101] That is, systems that are what they are in virtue of their instability and thus movement. However, it is argued that the emphasis on instability is taken too far in poststructuralism and that this undermines the possibility of theorising stable structures and renders rigorous scientific understanding that presupposes structure in the system moot. The allegation that poststructuralism rejects the stable structured system is informed by the assumption that the poststructuralism perspective is oriented by an opposition between a rigid hierarchical system, which excludes difference, and freedom, which is difference itself. Poststructuralism can therefore only be a sentinel to the coming complexity because all it can muster is the opening of rigid systems with no workable alternative (Taylor 2001: 15). Complexity theory, on the contrary, is heralded as a way to move beyond the characterisation of the system as repressive and so navigate the impasse between scientific reductionism and poststructuralist pure interruption, promising rigorous knowledge, room for revision and a platform for action (60).

As a reply to Taylor, one could raise two points. The first is that deconstruction, by way of *différance*, the trace and spacing, opens structure to movement, development in time, uncertainty and provisionality (Derrida 1993a: 21; 1997: 62, 83, 89, 90; 2001: 284). This does not undo structure. It does, however, acknowledge what Derrida (2001: 278) calls “the structurality of structure” or, in other words, dynamic self-organisation. The second point is that deconstruction does not undo knowledge, but changes its status. From critical complexity theory, it can be argued that the impasse or the need for decision rather than calculation that follows from deconstruction is

[100] Poststructuralism is often called to account on the charge of being anti-foundationalist to the point of an irrational and immoral unwillingness to make judgements about whether something is good or bad or good or evil, a legacy tied to its Nietzschean heritage, and hence also unwillingness to advocate action or indeed to act in the name of something that is good (Hanssen 2000: 3, 7).

[101] See Cilliers (1998a: 4). Being far from equilibrium is one of the most general characteristics of complex systems and the condition for the system’s ‘life’. The movement of *différance* is implicated in the push from equilibrium or stasis. As opposed to static oppositions, in this case difference with an ‘e’, “[there is] *différance*...as soon as there is a living trace, a relation of life/death or presence/absence” (Derrida & Roudinesco 2004: 21).

iterated in the complex system (Cilliers 2000c: 27, 29). The claim that the deconstructive system undermines science or rigorous knowledge as a motivation for action depends on a theory of representation between knowledge and reality that assumes that the only way to enable knowledge is the establishment of a fixed one-to-one reference between objects in the world and objects within sense (Norris 1998: 69). Without this natural link between reality and representation, the 'artificial' systemic one destroys the possibility of knowledge. However, to believe in this destruction requires that one first accept that foundations are necessary for knowledge to exist.

The distributed reference of an epistemology without metaphysical foundations discards this foundationalism. It has been argued from the perspective of both critical complexity theory and deconstruction that knowledge, sense and language are not closed systems (Cilliers 1998a: 83; Norris 1998: 69).[102] It is through knowledge and language that the world as a complex system is open, not closed.[103] The complex system is both the attempt to explain the possibility of meaning and knowledge and its limits through the development of ten general characteristics (Cilliers 1998a: 3, 4). These characteristics are restated here, enriched by deconstructive language, with a particular eye on locating violence in this system.

b. Characterising the Complex System Again: The Ten Characteristics of Complex Systems Supplemented by Deconstruction

The first characteristic of complex systems as discussed by Cilliers (1998a: 3) is that they are constituted by a large number of elements. None of these elements has an atomistic identity and none functions as an origin within the system. It is the relation between the elements that matters. These relations are not merely significant in understanding the system. They constitute the system. Without relations there would be no system; elements themselves become meaningful in the system. The sign within deconstruction is inscribed from the first instance within a system as its possibility of being meaningful (Derrida 1988b: 9). The system of deconstruction is relations of dynamic difference. It is relations of *différance*. It is the plural and dynamic movement of trace (Derrida 1997: 63). The elements constituted by *différance* are always marked by internal difference, the

[102] What deconstruction does is to move away from self-evident simplicity of linguistic reference towards the complexity it conceals (Johnson in Derrida 1981a: xv; Norris, 1998: 71). This does not mean that reference, or the fact that when we speak, think and act there is an 'about' which orients that language, knowledge and action, falls away completely (Norris, 1998: 85). Rather, reference or the 'about' of these spheres of meaning is complexified and retained. Norris (85) writes, "Sometimes this referential moment escapes notice since the terms in question may plausibly be viewed as capable of rigorous definition at the intra-systemic level". And thus the argument that is pursued in *Of Grammatology* (1997) and beyond it, unhinging the signifier from its signified appears to do away with reference as such.

[103] Laurent Dobuzinskis (2004: 440-441) identifies the rejection of foundationalism premised on the revaluation of the relationship between language, culture and knowledge as the initial point of intersection between Morin's work and poststructuralism or postmodernism. He (440) extends the affiliation of complexity thinking with poststructuralism to Nietzsche and Heidegger, which echoes arguments made in chapter 2 and further on in this chapter.

element/sign differing from itself in time, and by external difference, the sign differing from other signs, from the system as a whole and from the system's environment.

Derrida (1982: 8) describes the differing and deferring of signs as a paradoxically active and passive process and also frames this oscillation between passivity and activity in a way that implies contest and domination of one by another. Relations are characterised by dissimilarity which is passive and by "allergic or polemical otherness" (Derrida 1982: 8). These relations of *différance* are what allow the system to organise. As this process involves both order and disorder,[104] it requires that elements are acted upon, moved, structured and obedient, and also free to escape this structure. At every level, what might be seen as a passivity or acquiescence of a part to a part, or of a part to the whole, can be understood as complementarity between elements (Morin 1992: 118). This is the ability of the part, or indeed the whole, to be organised and to remain organised. Without it, the system would disintegrate because the system's self-organisation always requires some level of conservation or maintenance.

Complementarity is not balanced by a countermovement, but it is challenged by one. This countermovement is the second aspect of *différance* that characterises the internal dynamics of the complex system and the text (Derrida 1982: 8). This can be described in complexity language and it is at play at every level of organisation from the lowest to the highest (Morin 1992: 119). On this point, it is important to note that when speaking of various levels in complex system, what is spoken of is in fact various relations that are distributed in time and space and not particular layers within a fixed pyramidal hierarchy. Morin (1992: 116-120) calls the countermovement "antagonism". It is necessary in a dynamic – rather than static or dead – system in which movement in time requires not only that structures are made; but that structures are made, unmade and replaced. Antagonism between elements replaces the ordering force of an origin. Asymmetry is the corresponding concept theorised by Cilliers (1998a: 95, 120, 124) that captures competitive, forceful interactions in the system. Relations between elements in a complex system are never static and equal. Structure presupposes that, although open to further change in time, all relations are characterised as less or more asymmetrical.[105] Complex

[104] The disorder which Morin (1992: 118; 2005: 11) implicates in organisation is quite specific. He (Morin, 1983a: 25-26) elaborates in *Beyond Determinism*:

> Disorder is not a notion symmetric to order. It is a macroconcept which, while still containing the idea of randomness, can include sometimes the ideas of disturbance and dispersion, sometimes the ideas of perturbation or accident (relative to a functioning operation, an organisation), and, when it is a matter of an informational/ communicational machine (such as the living machine), the ideas of noise and error.

This idea of disorder resonates with what Derrida (2002: 235) identifies as a differential force that undermines oppositions, order and law.

[105] "Closely related to the principle of non-linearity is the principle of asymmetry. Linear, symmetrical relationships give rise to simple systems with transparent structures. In complex systems, mechanisms have to be found to break symmetry and to exploit the magnifying power of non-linearity. This is ensured by a rich level of interaction and by the competition for resources" (Cilliers 1998a: 120).

organisation always involves dominance and suppression. However, dominance is always dynamic, it is always mutable.

Morin (1992: 119) writes that, “the idea of the system is not only harmony, functionality, higher synthesis; it includes, necessarily, dissonance, opposition, antagonism”. Complexity theory, particularly the critical complexity theory of Morin (1992: 119), draws on a lineage in which the relations between parts are competitive and characterised by struggle. While the idea of harmony in the system is retained, the difference between conflict and harmony as a binary opposition is not maintained. Rather, this relation of difference is one of the dichotomies that complexity theory undermines (Morin 2007: 8). If this is taken into account, then Morin’s (1992: 119) announcement of harmony and conflict in the system should not be taken to mean that somewhere in the system there is pure harmony and somewhere else there is conflict. Perhaps a better way of stating it invokes undecidability as it is worked out in relation to the motifs of the hymen, invagination and the fold (Derrida 1981a: 212-213; 1992a: 216). Organisation is both harmony or synthesis and conflict or dissonance, the way the vagina can be thought as both inside and outside. It is both at the same time. Deciding whether to describe it one way or the other is always an ethical judgement.

This system that is structured by relations of differences, it should be made explicit, is the system in general. It is the most general model of a complex system that departs from connectionism or structuralism as its base. It is not yet a human social system, or a legal system. Antagonism or polemical difference is not yet one person exploiting or dominating another. Neutralising the language of violence by invoking it in a general description of the system can be criticised on the same grounds that Arendt (1970: 45) disparages the use of ‘force’. It gives the appearance – one that is challenged by the normativity asserted in wider critical complexity theory – that, even when it is applied to human social phenomena, it involves only an unbiased mechanical account of events.

The second characteristic of the complex system, already evident in the description of antagonism and asymmetry, is the dynamic nature of interactions in the system. The complex system unfolds in time and this situation in time as well as its differential structure produces change in the structure of the system (Cilliers 1998a: 3). The temporal aspect of *différance* gives time a new significance in the complex system. It is the temporisation of *différance*, its distribution in time-space that opens the system to the possibility that it might not be a perpetuation of the present (Derrida 1982: 13). To retrace this argument, if a system is static then time is not a relevant force in the system and functions only as an impotent parameter. The system can move backwards and forwards in time with little consequence. However, the complex system is dynamic and its internal dynamic structures are of the nature that changes that occur are distributed throughout its entire non-linear network and cannot be measured or corrected without again irrevocably altering the system. The delay and deferral produced by *différance* are constitutive of relations within the system. The system’s differences are produced as “the effects of transformations” that cannot be captured in a description that examines a synchronic snapshot of the

system (Derrida 1981b: 27). If a system is dynamic, then time which involves both an active past and an open future holds the possibility of novelty and transformation.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth characteristics are all related because they each refer to an aspect of the interactions themselves. The third characteristic of complex systems is that the interactions between elements are rich. This means that no oppositional logic can contain the full meaning of an element (Derrida 1987: 83). Each element is connected to several other elements in the system (Cilliers 1998a: 4). In one sense, each element is also related to every other element because it is implicated in the system. This richness of connection is what allows for a richness of meaning.

The richly connected elements are not connected in a linear arrangement (4). This is the fourth characteristic. This idea has been discussed both within the complex system and within the system of arche-writing. Non-linearity, which affects both space and time, means that the development of the system cannot be expressed in simple terms without compromising these relations. As a consequence of non-linearity, the effect that elements have on one another is not always proportional to the force exerted by one or either element: "small causes can have large results" (4). The non-linearity of the system thus allows the system to shift in unpredictable ways. It appears to suggest that the system jumps from one state to another with a break or discontinuity between the two states. However, time in the system is continuous and the idea of a 'state' is an abstraction from this continuity. The notion of the trace in the system captures this continuity. Even if the system were to transform, it would still be constituted by nothing more than traces of past traces moving in time. As a limited example, the word 'deconstruction', although it acquired radically new and different meaning within texts written by Derrida and beyond, was used because its past use and non-use allowed this transformation and remain relevant (Derrida, 1988a: 1).

The resistance to simplification is the incompressibility of the system (Cilliers 1998a: 10); the non-linearity of the dynamics of the system in tension with an attempt to compress, simplify or reduce the heterogeneity of the system to a straight line (106). Linearity or simplicity in our models does not signify an absence of complexity or heterogeneity within the complex system (Derrida 1997: 86). It rather involves a repression of heterogeneity. This repression can also be the imposition of an order, a boundary, a hierarchy or successive levels. The arche-writing (and complex systems) breaks with linear writing (and simple models) that assumes that phenomena can be simplified without any problems. What happens between the lines disrupts the lines, making space for different ways of thinking (Derrida 1987: 183).[106]

Even though the system implicates each element within it in the constitution of every other element, this implication should not be understood in a strong sense (Cilliers 1998a: 4). Phrased differently, the fifth

[106]"The line represents only a particular model, whatever might be its privilege" (Derrida 1997: 86).

characteristic of complex systems is that most interactions occur locally and have a relatively small range of impact. This does not, however, preclude small interactions localised at one point in the system from having a wide-ranging impact. Non-linearity and richness of connection in the system sustain this possibility. If one thinks of the economic system as a complex system, then it makes sense to say that local farmers in Lesotho trading in mohair interact with a relatively small group of buyers and exporters; however, the introduction of this mohair into the international market, if it were, for example, introduced at a much lower cost than mohair from Europe, could affect the price of mohair in the world market. This in turn would affect the demand for mohair and feed back into the operations of local farmers in Lesotho. There is recurrency in the system (4). This is the sixth characteristic. Actions in the system produce reactions but these reactions do not cancel each other out. Rather, each calls up further reaction, steering the system away from rest.

The seventh characteristic of complex systems is that the complex system is an open system. It is open in three senses. It is open to what one might call its environment or its context. The boundary of the system must allow flows of resources and information in and out of the system (Clark 2005: 171). It is open within itself because of the movement of *différance* and the play of the trace – deferred and deferring and differing and distributing – that prevents internal closure (Derrida 2001: 365). It is also open in the fundamental sense that the system allows for non-system: an exterior that is not identical with difference within the system. It is not totalising. To illustrate within the social system, man and woman are different but both identities are marked within the system. Neither is so radically different so as not to allow the trace to traverse the distinction between these meanings. Each is the other's other in this sense, but not other than the system. There is something more different than interior difference. This is the unmarked and meaningless space or spacing in which the system operates. There is always something not systemised. Morin (1992: 14) emphasises this point when he writes that "every system which aims at enclosing the world in its logic is an insane rationalization".

A constitutive outside that allows for novelty thwarts all our attempts at totalisation and control. The outside or spacing is what produces the system far from equilibrium – the complex system's eighth characteristic – constantly moving with the force of *différance*.[107] Dillon's (2000) charge of different definitions of radical difference in the complex and poststructuralist systems respectively, can be answered both with reference to critical complexity, which does indeed leave theoretical space for a difference more different than distinctions in the system's code, and from deconstruction, which is to say that what might be called the radically different, while it may be given various names – justice, the other, the future-to-come – is nothing more mystical than this

[107] As it has previously been suggested, there can be no *différance* without an outside. Derrida (2004: 40) argues that *différance* is both:

> …*the same* (the living being, but deferred, relayed, replaced by a substitutive supplement, by a prosthesis, by a supplementation in which technology emerges) and *the other* (absolutely heterogeneous, radically different, irreducible and untranslatable, the aneconomic, the wholly other or death).

unmarked space or non-meaning. Both systems are in relation with this non-relationality, non-meaning or spacing insofar as relations, meaning and the elements require space to interact, differ and defer. The system is always open to what is not included in its description (Morin 1992: 195-197). However, this relation cannot be symmetrical. The system cannot see space as anything other than a hypothetical beyond-the-limit. From inside the system, the movement of relations between elements closes open spaces, allowing meaning to arise. However, the outside as such can never be marked. It can never be made to mean something the way an element in the system has meaning.

The ninth characteristic of complex systems is that they have a history (Cilliers 1998a: 4). The system is not more than its history, but this history is nonlinear and does not fully determine the future in the sense that the future can be extrapolated from it (Derrida 1981b: 49). This history is not stored in any one point in the system, but is distributed across the entire web of interaction. Furthermore, given the non-linearity of relations within the system, the history of interactions does not have impacts whose magnitude and significance can be calculated for all time. History, itself the movement of trace and *différance*, must be selected because it is not fixed in time or space. This selection, like all action in the system, feeds back into it in unpredictable ways (Derrida 1994: 14, 21). The openness of the system in space and time is also openness to the idea of a future that is not yet possible within the configuration of the system, but that might yet become possible (37). Within a complex system, the future understood in its strongest sense is not what is possible within the system, a latent potential about to be realised. It is exactly what is not possible in the system, and thus coincides with the radical exteriority beyond the system's limit. It is the impossible whose content cannot be determined because it cannot be imagined within the system itself.[108]

The tenth characteristic of complex systems is that the elements within the system are ignorant of the operations of the system as a whole (Cilliers 1998a: 4). If we were to use this model of a complex system to model a social system in which the elements in the system would be people, institutions such as courts and banks and various other agents, then this seems counter-intuitive. As subjects making decision in the legal system, for example, we can find out what is legal and illegal. There are known procedures as to how the law should operate and what can be done if the law is to change, and we can ascertain the consequences of various behaviours and make informed

[108] It is the possibility of the impossible or the outside of the system that allows us to think of something like change or to hope for anything like progress. However, this progress would only ever be to come and never yet achieved: "wherever deconstruction is at stake, it would be a matter of linking an *affirmation* (in particular a political one), *if there is any*, to the experience of the impossible, which can only be a radical experience of the *perhaps*" (Derrida 1994: 35, author's emphasis). The future is the system's exterior in its most radical sense. Thus far, the argument for an open or unmarked future has only been made from the perspective of its operation within the organisation of the system. Derrida (1994: 37) makes the point in another way: he argues that to deny the future or the possibility of alterity to the system is to make an ungrounded assumption that turns the open system into a monstrous unity that consumes absolutely everything. This would be a totalising system.

decisions as to how to act appropriately within a specific situation. However, this is not what is meant by ignorance in the system.

No element in the system can 'know' – used very loosely here, for certain elements within complex systems are not afforded the subjectivity necessary to know – what is happening everywhere in the system, understand it in its entirety and control it. Cilliers (4-5) explains:

> Each element in the system is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole, it responds only to information that is available to it locally. This point is vitally important. If each element 'knew' what was happening to the system as a whole, all of the complexity would have to be present *in that element* (author's emphasis).

The element would function as a transcendental signified shielded from the complexity it generates (Derrida 1981b: 13, 65). An example of this gesture in a systemic paradigm that has already been mentioned is Saussure's (1983: 31) dual-faced sign. Without a centre, the system can be regulated only by conventions established within the system itself. It organises itself but it, the emergent system is not an autonomous subject with unidirectional agency over its components. Organisation is distributed across all components, the emergent system as a whole and the interactions between these quasi-levels. Order flows from the bottom up and the top down.

The structure of the complex system is repeated here, changed by its encounter with deconstruction. Each of the characteristics of the system contributes to the system's openness, to its continual development and to the ethical understanding of knowledge of complex phenomena. The complex system structured by *différance*, the trace, spacing, the boundary, the frame, undecidableness, the mutual implication and co-constitution of subject and object, heterogeneity and heterarchy within its structure and non-linear relations between its elements, incorporates the limits of what Derrida (1982: xix-xx, 9) refers to as "mastery".[109] In straightforward terms this means that our understanding of the system, enabled by the system, is not ever identical to the truth of the system, what the system actually is in itself, and cannot capture all the system is, has been, will be and could be

[109] There are two forms of mastery at work in the philosophical project insofar as one can impose unity onto this project. Each reflects a mode of violence identified within the complex system. The first form of mastery is hierarchy of which Derrida (1982: xix) writes that "the particular sciences and regional ontologies are subordinated to general ontology, and then to fundamental ontology". In other words, philosophy is afforded the task of uncovering the right order of things. The asymmetry of relations of different forms of knowledge enables a comprehensive understanding of everything in its place. The second form of mastery is envelopment:

> Homogenous, concentric, and circulating indefinitely, the movement of the whole is remarked in the partial determinations of the system or encyclopaedia, without the status of that remark, and the partitioning of the part, giving rise to any general deformation of the space (Derrida 1982: xx).

Hierarchy and totalisation are repetitions of the violence of metaphysics to which attention and reaction is directed within deconstruction and critical complexity theory, and subsequently also here and in the previous two chapters. These forms of mastery coincide with phallocentrism and logocentrism discussed in chapter 2 (xxi).

from every possible angle. The consequences of this inherent limitation for the description of the general system or particular systems are outlined below.

c. Complexity and the Recognition of Violence

The previous two chapters argued that critical complexity theory and deconstruction, respectively, espouse theoretical positions which open an intractable gap between knowledge, which is mediated, and unmediated reality. The gap between the unmediated world in itself and knowledge of the world enabled by the models of the world, of which the critical complex system is one, produces two significant consequences. The first is an unavoidable normativity in every attempt to know the system (Cilliers 2005a: 257). And the second, derivative of this normativity, is an ethical understanding of understanding that requires an acknowledgement of normativity and for this acknowledgement to affect the way that we try to know the system, the way we act and the decisions we make (Cilliers 2000c: 27, 29). *Différance*, whether it is understood as a spatial or temporal phenomenon, or elaborated further, is foremost an insistence on mediation of all sense, experience, knowledge and language (Derrida 1992a: 8; McKenna 1992: 80). It does not stand between the subject and the world like a lens between a photographer and her model; but rather allows for the subject to be constituted as a subject in relation with a meaningful world.

If language and meaning open the world to us, then the structures of language and knowledge we have will determine what kind of world is ultimately opened to us.[110] Morin (1992: 58) points out that a dynamic and critical, complex epistemology allows us to understand the world that is similarly dynamic and complex; while a rigid epistemology with fixed, essentialist categories produces a world that is dead. A world that is indeed unlike the changing and surprising one in which we live. It is not only an epistemological error. It is judged as an *ethical* error because the complex system sees violence in rigid atomistic categories that suppress complexity (Derrida 1998: 9; Morin 2007: 4).

This ethical content that is produced within the epistemology of the open de-centred system requires careful expounding in order to understand the charge of violence that the complex system lays against proponents of the metaphysics of presence. The openness of the system, again, refers to the system's continuous unfolding in time, which is the absence of naturally given boundaries that allow for the system to be understood in terms of pre-framed moments in time by means of a synchronic analysis (Cilliers 2005b; Derrida 1981b: 27-28; McKenna 1992: 73). The system is open because of its spatial distribution, that is, the internal play of the system, the

[110] John Protevi (2001: 45) describes the relation between the system and the world as one of the trace. The world is other than language. Or, phrased differently, language has no natural relation with the world. However, the world enters language in traces that are not the world itself but information 'about' the world. This is akin to Cilliers' and Gouws' (2001: 243-244) analysis of the trace within the brain modelled as a complex system. Traces are like translations of the outside that arise inside the system triggered from outside.

distribution of meaning across spaces between the same and the other, the confusion of the boundaries and the heterogeneity and dynamism of structure that characterises the complex system and its elements.

As a consequence of openness, no rule or calculation is adequate and can be maintained in an absolute form within the system (Cilliers 2000b). Without an absolute rule or foundation of all identifications and guarantee of our descriptions, the content of our descriptions cannot but retain an element of normativity and the responsibility for that normative moment cannot be transferred to the system itself. The subject/observer is always ultimately responsible for its decisions. This responsibility is further complicated by the impact of the boundary or frame. The open structure of the system results from complexity of the system. In order to under to understand the system, its complexity must be reduced. The observer cannot, either in terms of its own limited perspective and knowledge in or terms of the system, take all past, present and future relations of the system into account in any one description. Drawing a boundary or reducing complexity always destroys these relations and reverberates back into the system, which, unfolding in time, is irrevocably changed in this process (Cilliers, Roodt & de Villiers 2002: 9). All models must reduce this complexity to be intelligible. Acknowledgement of the significance of characteristics that are lost or obscured in this process is paramount in the critical engagement with complex phenomena.

The moment of normativity enters every model not only in overtly ethical issues like whether a model is harmful to the world, but already in the act of selection of the frame in which the model becomes meaningful and in the specification of a boundary that excludes the environment from the system (Derrida 1979b: 34). What Derrida proposes to expound in his use of 'violence' to characterise the process of framing is not a theory of violence as a general project; but rather to position the particular violence of theory, philosophy, knowledge, decisions and actions on a continuum and, in so doing, challenge existing theories of violence that seek to define narrowly (McKenna 1992: 24). In other words, the distinction between what is considered violent and nonviolent is challenged by doing exactly what Arendt (1970: 43-45) sought to guard against. That is, to blur the boundary that contains violence itself and to generalise it to the extent that it applies to several new spheres of meaning. Indeed, the meaning of violence is expanded well beyond the use of implements to physically harm another. Hanssen (2000: 9) suggests that violence after the interventions of Critical Theory and poststructuralism includes diverse, conceptually difficult areas such as "psychological, symbolic, structural, epistemic, hermeneutical and aesthetic violence".

Deconstruction and critical complexity theory make a distinction between theories that are less and more violent than others. More violent theories are those that neither recognise nor acknowledge the violence at work in thinking (Cilliers 1998a: 107; Morin 1992: 3; 2007:4). Without this recognition, the very possibility that this violence might be eradicated from the system disappears. Cilliers (2000a; 2000c; 2005b) and Morin (1983a: 25) argue that if one follows the argument from complexity, taking the structures and incompressibility of complex

phenomena discussed above into account, then all rules, laws and estimations of complex systems must continually be reviewed. Complex models therefore have provisionality at their core. It is motivated by a deep concern with epistemological violence.

Derrida (1987: 183; 1981b: 41) reads the violence of the metaphysics of presence as the violence of distorting and suppressing plural and dynamic differences that constitute a complex system of meaning. Thus the violence of the system of metaphysics is intimately linked to the theme of metaphysical dichotomies, in which one meaning is structurally exterior and inferior to the other. Alan Bass, in his preface to *Writing and Difference* (Derrida 2001: xviii) sees another related violent gesture in the totalising movement of this type of system. Because it must explain everything in terms of boundaries, rigid oppositions and hierarchies, everything must first be subsumed within the system, allowing for no superfluous differences to remain outside the system. This violent gesture of totalisation is repeated within structuralism in which the system as an objective reality leaves no room for escape and no possibility of spaces where the system is in fact not all that is the case.

In sum, the violence of metaphysics of presence is the repression of *différance.* In his analysis of the supplement, Derrida (1997: 141-164) harnesses the play of the superfluous differences to undo the opposition between writing and speech that binds signs to the system of metaphysics. By his own pen (1981b: 36), this and other deconstructions are acts of necessary counter-violence that disrupt and transform the system. It may be sensibly interjected that the necessary – textual – violence perpetrated by deconstruction is a far cry from the necessary violence against which Arendt (1970) makes a decisive stand or even from the revolutionary action that Sartre (2001: 7-26) or Sorel (1999) advocates. Derrida's (2002a: 255) own defence of his call for violence or force is a step back that calls the violence he advocates the use of differential force, something quite separate from a call to arms. This raises two questions. What is violence as differential force? And how does it relate to the acts of violence such as rape and murder? The questions are posed once more at the end of this chapter.

The description of violence from deconstruction and complexity theory – and all theories that bring in areas of meaning that seem to deviate from the pure violence of the battlefield – is neither gratuitous nor necessarily pinned against the nonviolent ideal expressed in Arendt's (1970) text. The pervasiveness of philosophy and epistemology in all forms of knowledge, and the decisions and actions that follow from this knowledge, requires an understanding of violence that accounts for this interrelation (Derrida 1981b: 19; McKenna 1992: 72). In other words, this particular description of violence is not confined to the analysis of philosophy simply because it begins there. However, by focusing only on the war, it may be argued that one covers over the violence that is at work in the philosophical, legal and economic justifications for that war that enabled it.

Both critical complexity theory (Morin 2007: 4) and deconstruction (Derrida 1998: 9) preserve the link between the agency of subjects and violence in order to, like Arendt (1970), preserve a space of accountability. However, the widening of the lens through which violence is seen repeats Zizek's (2001: 9) disquiet about the motivation

and outcome of focusing exclusively on individual agents of violence and individual victims. The complex understanding of violence within the system comes as what Robert Zacharias (2007: 104) calls the "and yet" of deconstruction. It is the simultaneous recognition that a certain position is both valid and requires supplementation. The 'and yet' is what prevents the confusion of deconstruction and destruction. The deconstructive or complex systemic understanding of violence does not destroy the idea of violence as subjective or as instrumental physical harm, but subverts the dominance of this definition and supplements it with the layered analysis, of which the exposition follows.

IV. THE ORIGINAL VIOLENCE OF MEANING: ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND WRITING

A vocabulary with which to talk about violence is not yet developed within the critical complex system. Although Morin (2007: 3-6) does take steps in that direction with the notion of mutilation, particularly the mutilation of knowledge, this notion is not explained in *Blind Intelligence* (2007). Similarly, Cilliers' (1998a: 95, 120, 124) exposition of asymmetry in the complex system, understood as a necessary condition for the emergence of structure and meaning, read in conjunction with the ethics of critical complexity theory advocated in the position outlined above, also begins to gesture towards the need to develop the description of the system in this direction. Derrida (1988b: 41; 1997: 101-140), on the other hand, in *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1997), in which the system of arche-writing is worked out most extensively, and also in other texts, pays considerable attention to the concept of violence, both as it appears within texts that operate within the closure of the metaphysics of presence and within the revised system of writing.

An argument put forward by Elizabeth Grosz (1999) suggests that all Derrida's texts concern what he reads as violence. Grosz (1999: 9) gathers several terms together under the theme of violence in deconstruction: violence; trace; force; discord. Derrida (1997: 112), within the system of arche-writing, proposes a three-tiered structure of violence. These levels are: the violence of the origin or systemic organisation; the violence of meaning, the frame and the boundary; and empirical violence, violent acts such as rape and murder (112). The close reading of Derrida's three levels of violence detailed below supports Grosz's (1999) assessment. The structure of this violence is explored here by briefly considering the historical association of the narrow conception of writing with violence, and then turning to the complex structure of violence with particular attention to the original level – the violence concerned with the origin – in this structure.

The violence of metaphysics lies in the fixing of meaning by suppressing complexity and ossifying boundaries. Epistemological strategies that employ this violence reinforce it with a second violence that deconstruction works, in the first place, to expose. This second violence is the erasure of the first. Phonocentrism, logocentrism and all the other dogmatic 'isms' that turn on their respective centres, because they found themselves on an

unquestioned hierarchy and because they are totalising positions that do not allow for revision and transformation, cannot see or even deliberately un-see their own violence (Derrida 1982: xix-xx; Morin 2007: 2). The possibility of acknowledgement and redress disappears with this blindness. What deconstruction works to actively demonstrate, is the mediation of all meaning in the broadest possible sense wherever metaphysics posits its 'violent' construction of immediacy or presence (McKenna 1992: 80). Deconstruction is concerned with demonstrating the violence of the origin.

These epistemologies, called 'violent' from within the perspective opened by the complex system, lodge their own allegations of violence against writing. In order to postulate the purity of presence and the nonviolence of true knowledge, thought and speech, violence needed to be externalised and subordinated to presence. It had to be legislated that "writing does not inhabit speech, but the outside of speech" (Derrida 1997: 127). Writing – the arbitrary system of marks wrenched from a proper origin whose character is that of the paradigmatic supplement to natural language – is closely associated with violence within the history of philosophy (34-37, 121).[111] The necessity of externalising the violence of meaning repeats the need within the metaphysics of presence to exclude the arbitrariness of writing from the natural order of reference that was explored in the previous chapter with reference to Derrida's (155) analysis of the supplement. This is because arbitrariness is what begets violence. What was dangerous about the supplement, its contamination of the pure and natural, is also the source of its violence (104-105). From the perspective of those philosophies that are determined by presence, violence is its destruction.

The identification of writing with violence is not denied by deconstruction (106).[112] Instead, Derrida (101-140), reading Claude Levi-Strauss (1961: 286-297), whose attention to writing is carried out only for the purpose of dismissing it as the instrument of oppression within societies that have moved toward ever greater 'civilisation' and the destruction of a more pure and innocent natural and original order, takes this identification very seriously. The question that informs this chapter is thus taken from *Violence and the Letter*: "What must violence be for something in it to be equivalent to the operation of the trace?" (Derrida 1997: 101). In other words, in

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[111] Saussure's (see 1983: 67) phonocentric exclusion of writing by virtue of its distance from consciousness and its unnatural relationship with speech is central to this argument. His (67) exclusion of writing instigates the development of the arche-writing in *Of Grammatology* (1997). Derrida (1997: 34) identifies a particular fear, repeated since Plato's *Phaedrus*, in this Saussure's exclusionary gesture:

> [The] *Phaedrus* denounced writing as the intrusion of an artful technique, a forced entry of a totally original sort, an archetypical violence: eruption of the *outside* within the *inside*, breaching into the interiority of the soul, the living self-presence of the soul...(author's emphasis).

[112] Derrida (1997: 106) writes:

> …that digression about the violence that *does not supervene* from without upon an innocent language in order to surprise it, a language that suffers the aggression of writing as the accident or disease…but is the originary violence of a language which is always already a writing. Rousseau and Levi-Strauss are not for a moment to be challenged when they relate the power of writing to the exercise of violence (author's emphasis).

order to locate violence in the system of writing that is deemed the absence of presence, attention must be directed to the other of presence, the instituted trace that allows writing to be externalised in the first place.[113] Acknowledging that writing is violent, Derrida (1997: 37) argues that arche-writing, in its form elaborated in chapter 2, is also violent.

As a first step, in order to cast violence as the trace and to cast the trace outside of sense, the metaphysics of presence must reassert that pure space in which nonviolence can be identified with meaning that comes about without the trace. The trace, it has been argued, is the necessary outcome of a system that is constituted out of differences without a transcendental origin (Derrida 1997: 46). That is to say, the trace operates in a system in which the play of reference never comes to rest at some natural point, whether this is an absolute truth, a pure idea, or the thing in itself, pure positive reality (Derrida 2001: 352). The absence of the origin produces a deferral of reference that distributes itself across the entire system in which meaning arises out of the intrusion of the other in the same (Derrida 1982: 9, 11; Spivak 1997: xv). Identity is constituted by reference beyond the self, to the other. The trace, within this frame, is opposed to natural order – stipulated as order emanating from an origin – and its associates, presence, simplicity, originality and peace.

To illustrate this point on a very simple level we can use the example of the sign 'body'. The meaning of 'body' is always already understood only by calling up or tracing its common opposition to the soul, and, in line with earlier arguments made, its relations with every other sign in the system (Derrida 1997: 46, 61, 63, 65, 89, 90). However, because the trace of 'soul' in 'body' is not merely a relation of dissimilarity, but rather a mutually constitutive relation, the trace of 'soul' in 'body' is not a mark that is momentary or can be effaced by a discourse that tries to remove all traces of 'soul' from the meaning of 'body'. Its mark is changing but it is permanent. The intrusion of the other sign, 'soul', on the interior meaning of the sign 'body' has always already begun. This intrusion iterates the original intrusion of the arche-violence of writing as the supplement to speech discussed in chapter 2 (Derrida 1997: 34).

The trace is moved onward by the absence of the origin (Derrida 2001: 278). It is not only opposed to natural order, but institutes itself in place of it. Where no natural link between, for example, knowledge and the world can be established, the trace as a buoyant system of conventions usurps the place of nature. The trace and its movement of intrusion and contamination in a play of differentiation is a function of the system of writing as an

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[113] Derrida (1997: 101) asks the question of writing, not only to specify it, but to move away from the self-evidence of violence. Perhaps, it can be argued, as much to open and unsettle the meaning as to stipulate it. Grosz (1999: 9) adds:

> If violence is no longer so simply identifiable and denounceable, if it is not readily delimited in its spheres of operation, if it becomes ambiguous where the divide between violence and its others can be drawn, then violence is a form, possibly the only form, that writing can take.

arbitrary system.[114] The arche-writing as trace is the arche-writing as violence because its presence/absence destroys absolute presence (Derrida 1997: 148). This destructive and arbitrary violence, Derrida (1997: 37) argues, is the entire system of signification: "violence of writing does not befall an innocent language. There is an originary violence of writing because language is first, in a sense...writing." This crux of Derrida's exposition of violence in the system can now be summarised.

Writing is a dynamic system of distributed traces moved by *différance* because it is merely conventional and has no natural origin. Because it operates by the trace that destroys natural order and replaces it with an arbitrary one, it is considered violent. However, as all sense is structured by the logic of the trace, all sense must in some fundamental way be produced in violence. Writing, which was previously discussed as the supplement of absence to a presence that cannot sustain itself, is thus also a supplement of violence to an ostensibly nonviolent order that cannot sustain itself.[115] The arche-writing, the arbitrary and differential system that allows for the appearance of writing as well as speech, is the unnatural institution of the trace that carries the violent disease of writing beyond itself (Derrida 1997: 142). What makes the force of signification within writing violent is not force itself, but the character of this force which is unmotivated by an absolute foundation. It has neither a natural subject nor a natural object and no source of legitimacy.[116]

The destruction of the origin is at the same time a violent destruction of the original and singular (Harvey 1986: 136-137).[117] This idea was sketched in the introduction to the tripartite structure of violence in chapter 2 in the discussion of iterability. Levi-Strauss, the interlocutor in Derrida's (1997: 101-140) exposition of violence, attributes several powers to writing. The first, often understood as its primary task, is the preservation of knowledge that spans beyond the limitation of individual or collective memories, allowing for greater advances in knowledge and the movement toward enlightenment (Levi-Strauss 1961: 290-291). Writing, here, is still

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[114]"...as we know, these two motifs – arbitrary and differential – are inseparable in his [Saussure's] view. There can be arbitrariness only because the system of signs is constituted solely by the differences in terms, and not by their plenitude... 'Arbitrary and differential,' says Saussure, 'are two correlative characteristics'" (Derrida 1982: 10).

[115] With reference to Rousseau, whose name can perhaps be read as the first name of the dual philosophical problems of supplementation and purity, writing is cast out of language and then reincorporated as something necessarily inside the system that nonetheless insists on its exteriority:

> Rousseau condemns writing as destruction of presence and as a disease of speech. He rehabilitates it to the extent that it promises the reappropriation of that which speech had allowed itself to be dispossessed (Derrida 1997: 142).

[116] This point is not identical with Arendt's (1970: 4) analysis of violence as arbitrary in her description of the randomness of violence, especially on the battlefield. However, it has a noteworthy resonance. Violence, unlike force, a word which Arendt (1970: 45) discards for its organic connotation of neutral inevitability rather than rational human choice, finds no natural or just object but harms without discrimination.

[117] "What language [as writing] kills is thus the purity of the idiom…In the movement from impurity to purity we can perceive perhaps the very movement of *différance* itself" (Harvey 1986: 137).

something that comes from outside thought. The second but more primary function of writing on Levi-Strauss' (1961: 292) account is the creation of structures of difference in society that produce an unnatural order in which individuals are moved into a "hierarchy of castes and classes". He (Levi-Strauss 1961: 292) argues:

> If my hypothesis is correct, the primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings. The use of writing for disinterested ends, and with a view to satisfactions of the mind in the fields either of science or the arts, is a secondary result of its invention...

Furthermore, the violent artificial order instituted by writing that produces relations of violence between human beings is entrenched by its permanence (293). Hierarchy and classes do not merely destroy the natural state. Writing as the institution of these violent orderings inserts space that disintegrates the presence of subject to fellow subject and subject to object. The space necessitated by the trace destroys the possibility of more authentic social interaction facilitated by presence, thus writing renders society "inauthentic" by its arbitrariness (Derrida 1997: 136).

The exceptions in this regard, societies in which hierarchy, classing and exploitation persisted without graphic writing, are not understood to threaten the hypothesis because structures of dominance are comparatively fleeting. What writing allows is thus a permanent state of hierarchy and classing, the reach of which cannot be escaped. A society without writing, even where force is used, such as the Nambikwara studied by Levi-Strauss (1961: 296), are without violence because they preserve the intractable singularity of all people and objects, going so far as to refuse to attribute standard values to objects in the process of bartering.

This view is problematic in that it assumes that a society without a standardised alphabet is one without arche-writing (Derrida 1997: 125).[118] It is also problematic in its assumption of an original and innocent language. It is an ethnocentrism that is blind to its own violence of negating the violence it witnesses in a neutralising description (Derrida 1997: 113-114, 116, 120, 123). In light of this, Derrida (1997: 101-140) is set the task of rewriting violence so that it accommodates the physical or empirical violence that Levi-Strauss denies by opposing unwritten cruelty of a natural order to the more base violence of 'civilised' society, while maintaining his original hypothesis that the trace is indeed equivalent to violence in the system. In order to include hierarchy, categorisation and empirical violence such as murder, rape or war, violence must have at least three countenances.

The manifestation of the three levels of violence begins with the origin. This is the origin of the metaphysics of presence that renders itself nonviolent by reducing its own violence to that of a supplement, both exterior and

[118]"We are dealing here not only with a strongly hierarchized society, but with a society where relationships are marked with spectacular violence" (Derrida 1997: 135).

inferior to the original.[119] The first level of violence, the inception of the system or the code, is unearthed by returning attention to the convention of naming within the Nambikwara, who are deemed without writing and without violence. Against this, Derrida (1997: 110) recognises the "obliteration of the proper" or the destruction of the original that is the possibility of writing in the Nambikwara. These people, who resisted the generalisation or classification of singular things, were assigned proper names that were kept secret, as if the utterance of the name were violence against the person to whom it referred or who owned the name (Derrida 1997: 111; Levi-Strauss 1961: 296). The secrecy of the name is an acknowledgement of its iterability. Even the most singular of signs, whether written or spoken, contains the possibility that it be recognised, repeated, and thus carried beyond the context which guaranteed its singularity (Derrida 1988b: 20). To attribute names to something, even a proper singular name, even one that is never again uttered, is to inscribe what is singular within a system that cannot tolerate its singularity (Derrida 1997: 112).

The name is never only a name but always already an identity that assigns a class by means of a covert or overt generalisation (Derrida 1997: 109; Harvey 1986: 136-137). Thus Derrida (1997: 112) writes:

> There was in fact a first violence to be named. To name, to give names…such is the originary violence of language which consists in inscribing within a difference, in classifying, in suspending the vocative absolute.

To use a name is a violation because, as it has already been said of writing in general, its iterability[120] severs the original – the proper name – from its origin, at once destroying its originality. Without an origin, the possibility that the name might yet be meaningful is the system itself. It is the code that enforces its identity (Derrida 1988b: 9). The space between the name and its origin creates space within the name itself.[121] The name, deferring to the system for its meaning, is incapable of being a plenitude in itself (1988b: 9; 1994: 17). With this violent destruction of the origin(al) at its inception, the singular is marked by the arche-violence as the intrusion of the other on the same (Derrida 1997: 37, 113). Because the name is not a plenitude, it is continuously and violently supplement by traces of others. This first level of violence is the system itself as an origin-less entity, one oriented "towards the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin" (Derrida 2001: 369). The first level of violence is thus the possibility of meaning without an origin: writing.

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[119] McKenna (1992: 90) writes that, "[the] structure of violence is itself complex because it is violence itself that expels another violence". In other words, in the constitution of meaning, there seems not to be a moment that is somehow before the commencement of violence. In the beginning, if there ever was a first word, that word would appear to be violence. The 'arche', the most original, is not an origin at all if the origin is read, as it is in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (Derrida 2001: 351-370351-370), as a source of stability in the organisation that tends towards an equilibrium state. Violence as the origin of the system of meaning must instead push the system away from equilibrium.

[120] The iterability of the name is both its permanence in time that outlives the singular and its repeatability that classes the singular. See chapter 3 and *Signature Event Context* (Derrida 1988b: 1-23).

[121]This the "violent spacing" of language (Derrida 1997: 108).

The second level of violence to which we have already gestured without regarding it in this particular structure is "reparatory, protective, instituting the 'moral', prescribing the concealment of writing" (Derrida 1997: 112). This second level of violence is perhaps where those epistemologies, against which critical complexity theory and deconstruction are oriented, are placed. That is, within the system of *différance*, to speak with certainty enabled by a prosthetic origin, whether one speaks of the laws of science or the penal laws that govern social interactions or the moral laws that govern sexuality in society, is to enact this second violence. This is perhaps the violence of the frame or of boundary judgements that suppresses the trace (Derrida 1979b: 30). It is the violence of deciding the boundary both in the sense of delimiting it, producing a description of the system, and deciding the boundary so that it might be penetrated. This the violence associated with the hymen, both in designating the boundary between inside and outside and the violent penetration of the inside enabled by the hymen's description (Derrida 1992a: 213, 216).

These two levels of violence are constitutive of meaning: they enable the dynamic construction and deconstruction of order and disorder in the system. They are systemic in the sense that they describe the fundamental movement of the system as trace and *différance*. The second level of violence is analogous to the symbolic and systemic violence to which Zizek (2008: 1, 2) draws attention. The first is the forceful movement that enables and undermines order, the differential force that Derrida (2002a: 235) considers irrepressible.[122] Although the remainder of this chapter will return to the first level of violence, it needs saying that Derrida (1997: 112) subordinates these forms of violence, necessary and unavoidable though they may be, to a third form of violence. This is the empirical violence that is most often recognised as violence. The mostly physical manifestations of violence, such as rape, murder, war and genocide, are gathered in their diversity in this level. Operations at lower levels allow for the constitution of specific acts as violence in particular contexts (Derrida, 1997: 112). The frame, its constitution, its exclusions and distortions, make violence on this third level appear and disappear. The third level does not escape textuality. It participates in the constitutive violence of the lower levels (Grosz 1999: 11). This level of violence is the most complex because it is always in fact all three levels of violence at once (Derrida 1997: 112).[123] The challenge is that in spite of this, the effects of violence, harm and suffering, demand that these three levels are separated and valuated.

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[122] This understanding of violence as the decentred system recurs in other poststructuralist projects, notably Foucault's. Hanssen (2000: 14) writes:

> Indeed one 'figure' of violence, whose persistence and recurrent circulation in contemporary poststructuralist thought the book [*Critique of Violence* (2000)] pursues is that of a counterforce or counterviolence (*Gegenwalt*) that takes the form of what Foucault and Derrida have called 'antidogmatic' or 'antimetaphysical' violence. Thus the use of a symbolic, figurative, discursive force, wielded as a counterprinciple, is meant to undo metaphysical, institutional sedimentations of force, especially the violence exercised by instrumental reason, with its logic *and* practices of exclusion.

[123] This point can be illustrated with reference to any attempt to specify and value within the system. For example:

V. THE FIRST LEVEL: THE POSSIBILITY OF A SYSTEM IS THE POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE

The complex system as a meaningful system structured by the movement of trace, space and *différance* is a system moved by force, by clash and by competition. Rather than to reinvent violence from a systems perspective, following the deconstructive logic discussed above, violence understood as the forceful interruption of a generally nonviolent condition is displaced and generalised in a movement that mirrors the displacement and generalisation of writing (see Culler 1983: 89-110). It is this generalisation that enables deconstruction of the opposition between violence and nonviolence and results in arche-violence being inserted into the chain of substitutions that characterise the system as such (Derrida 1981b: 40). Violence supplements *différance*, trace, space, supplement, parergon, graft and writing, which means that each of these terms, while it exceeds the arche-violence, is also intractably marked and moved and even made possible by it. As Harvey (1986: 129) argues, in the system without an origin, to imagine a language that is itself not force is unthinkable. Violence is not located somewhere in the system. In a sense, the complex system *is* violence. The recognition of the violence of the metaphysics of presence and epistemological strategies that repeat its violence (referred to as modernist strategies in chapter 1) is not the recognition of violence that is foreign to the complex system. Rather, the critical complex system is an attempt to make all violence explicit by demonstrating the inescapability of different modulations of violence at all levels of the system. This description of violence does not follow from its essential meaning; it is the result of a model. This theory of violence is made possible by the system itself.

Violence as arche-violence falls into that category of deconstructive tools that Gasché (1994: 4, 7) calls "infrastructures". On the one hand, this violence, like *différance* or trace, is the possibility of the system. It is not an origin in the sense that it is a source of the system, but rather, within the system thought without an origin, it remains a condition of possibility that the system might yet persist (Derrida 1982: 9; Original Discussion of *Différance* 1988: 85). From another angle, in line with Gasché's (1994: 4-7) caution against reading the infrastructures as objective realities, violence is also a limit to the possibility of the system. The arche-violence cannot be characterised once and for all in an exhaustive description that would shield it from the very dynamic transformative system it institutes. This limitation would fix violence as an absolute origin, an eccentric centre.

> The difficulty is always to distinguish between...a sexual violence that is 'tolerable', in a way, because it is 'structural', the violence that inhabits relations of passion and love – which always include, indeed, a form of violent asymmetry...and on the other hand, types of aggression for which the distinction is difficult to delineate. That's why there are laws against rape, or at least what everyone agrees to call 'rape', even if the most widely shared passion never excludes some kind of asymmetry from which the scene of rape is never completely erased (Derrida 2004: 31).

And further on, Derrida (2004: 32) continues how to draw the boundary "between a violence that is legitimate, in some way irreducible...and the violence that is called abnormal or abusive"?

However, the first level of violence is not located at the centre or any specific point in the system, but like representation that is distributed over all relations in the system,[124] so violence must be, to be implicated in this organisation, distributed over all relations in the system (Cilliers 1998a: 33-34, 69, 81). The differential character of elements in the system closes the possibility that force associated with particular elements or clusters might be singular and unidirectional. That would require that this force is generated from within a particular element.

The polemical differences that produce conflict and contest between elements (Derrida 1982: 8), the antagonism that resists reification and closure (Morin 1992: 119), and the asymmetrical relations of dominance and subjugation within the system (Cilliers 1998a: 95) are all produced by the movement of arche-violence. Relations of conflict and hierarchy are not something that the complex system can avoid. In this sense, Levi-Strauss (1961: 292) is correct in attributing a constitutive role to the violence of writing or arche-writing in relation with violent relations of dominance in society. The hierarchisation at the lowest level of organisation of the complex system is indeed constitutive of higher emergent hierarchies in the system. However, unlike Levi-Strauss's (1961: 293) estimation of the hierarchies enabled by writing as permanent hierarchies based on the relative permanence and immutability of the written mark, the system as arche-writing, while it tolerates and can reinforce certain stable structures, at bottom retains the possibility of transformation at every moment.

Furthermore, the hierarchies instated within complex organisation, while they can of course become violent in line with Derrida's (1997: 112) second and third level of violence often associated with unidirectional force and domination, are not characterised by this tendency in the first place. Rather, complex hierarchies are characterised by both upward and downward causations and are not neatly nested within one another but rather reflect the heterogeneous composition of relations between elements in the system (Cilliers, Heylighen & Gershenson 2007:10; Juarrero 2000: 33). Juarrero (2000: 33) explains:

> It is true that the word "hierarchy" implies a unidirectional flow of order or authority, always and only from higher to lower…To counteract this connotation, students of complex dynamical systems have coined the neologism "heterarchy" to allow inter-level causal relations to flow in both directions, part to whole (bottom up) and whole to part (top down).

As writing as *différance* enables the construction and deconstruction of meaning, so writing as distributed violence in the system enables not only the construction of asymmetry, antagonism and hierarchy, but also the disintegration and reversal of hierarchy. At every moment of transformation within the system, there is no pocket of interaction that escapes the heteronomy of organisation in the complex system.

[124] "Saussure (1983) presented us with a system of *distributed* semiotics by arguing that the meaning of a sign is a consequence of its relationships to all other signs in the system. Meaning is therefore not a specific characteristic of any discreet unit...the whole system is involved – the meaning is distributed" (Cilliers 1998a: 81, author's emphasis).

The arche-violence as an infrastructure of the complex system undermines any theory of violence as merely repressive because it is clearly generative of all relations. It also disrupts the clear separation of concepts that Arendt (1970: 44-45) wanted to maintain. Arche-violence – the first level of violence – is not associated with any instrument and not directed at any specific end. It is neither rational nor irrational. On this low level of description, arche-violence is not yet a proper concept that can be given a value. Violence, power, authority and force cannot be disentangled here. Arendt's (1970) strong opposition of violence and nonviolence depends on the clear separation of violence and nonviolence in the system, which is not tenable given the distributed nature of violence. On this account, it is nonviolence that constitutes and violence that destroys.[125] Violence no longer lies outside language and politics as something that contaminates these areas (Hanssen 2000: 162-163). Seeking to rid the world of damaging relations of domination and the use of arbitrary physical force to achieve political means is important; however, in opposing violence to nonviolence, the possibility always exists that this very distinction makes certain violence invisible. Whatever description one may assign to nonviolence that would inform community consensus which supports it, this description would be subject to the logic of parergonality and thus implicated in the maintenance of an order produced on the second level of violence (Derrida 1997: 112)

The deconstruction of the opposition between violence and nonviolence in the system, generalising violence to the extent that is fundamental to the system's organisation, produces a description of violence that is so pervasive that the possibility of escaping it even momentarily seems theoretically impossible. This is precisely the fault of a systems-based approach that Katherine Hayles (2000: 137-162) identifies as the violence of the system. The system itself, she argues, is blind to this violence, instating itself everywhere. Once the system is described in any detail, it appears omnipresent. This follows from the shift from an atomistic to a large-scale holistic approach instated by the system:

> As I see it, the problem with systems theory is that once a system stands revealed in all its pervasiveness and complexity – whether it be the invisible workings of power in Foucault's society of surveillance or Lacan's psycholinguistics, or Maturana's autopoiesis – the system, precisely because of its logic and power, is likely to seem inescapable (161).

This is violence of totalisation of which structuralism as a systems perspective also stands accused (Bass in Derrida 2001: xviii). To offer a possible way out of this violence, she (Hayles 2000:160-161) offers the narrative

[125] Hanssen (2000: 162) elaborates with reference to several of Arendt's texts:

> For Arendt, there could be no doubt that coercion-free deliberative speech was the organ in and through which power was actualised – not this time as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. Because violence constituted the limit of silence or mute aggression, as she argued in numerous of her articles and books, it simultaneously spelled the end of power, which is what it resolutely needed to be situated outside the arena of political speech.

For Derrida – see especially *Force and Signification* (2001: 1-35) – on the other hand, it is necessary that the involvement of force in the production of meaning is rehabilitated so that it may be opened to critical interrogation and intervention.

as the force of time that opens the system to new configurations and open futures that emphasise the system's contingency. Critical complexity theory has this forceful future or exterior already theorised into its dynamic structure.

The emphasis on the boundary and the outside, the undecidability of which prevents the final closure of the system, has been argued in both preceding chapters to guard against totalisation. However, on the other hand, this project too has emphasised the generality of the system, the pervasiveness of mediation through the system in the constitution of all sense and the role of the largest possible system – everything that is or could still be meaningful – or the general text in the meaningful constitution of all that is particular. On its own, the threat of totalisation is one that requires careful attention in the unfurling of the notion of the system. The pervasiveness of violence ever extending its reach through the extension of the system renews the urgency for vigilance against the deification of this model.

Derrida (Derrida 1981a: 36; 1997: 9, 158, 159) makes himself vulnerable to the accusation of totalisation in several places by asserting the pervasiveness of the general text. However, he (Derrida 2001: 278) has also argued against the system as totalising on the grounds that it is an open system – open in the sense that it cannot enclose reality and open in the sense that it is in constant transformation. Of the pervasiveness of the system of arche-writing as violence, he (Derrida 1997: 127) writes:

> If it is true, as in fact I believe, that writing cannot be thought outside of the horizon of intersubjective violence, is there anything, even science, that radically escapes it? Is there a knowledge, and above all, a language, scientific or not, that one can call alien at once to writing and to violence?

The answer to these questions of escaping violence and the system itself are negative. If one considers the example of singularity as discussed in *Spectres of Marx* (Derrida 1994: 14-15), one is met with a paradoxical movement. At first it appears that the system's intolerance of the singular as demonstrated by the sign's iterability is purely one of violent exclusion and suppression of difference. However, one can also read this intolerance of the pure otherness of the other as a rather more benevolent slippage that in fact regards the otherness of the other as something almost sacred (14, 15). The system thus allows the singular to exceed it, to slip outside, because inside the system the other is marked by the movement of the system. The intolerance of the system need not be negative. The system is all violence all the time, not only then in the sense that its movement is violent, but also in the sense that subjects, constituted within the system or systems in which they participate, language and knowledge included, are implicated in the carrying out of the system's violence against other subjects. This is the movement that is invoked when it is asserted from a deconstructive frame that there are no innocent meanings anywhere (McKenna 1992: 72). Neutrality is a myth begotten of the myth of the pure origin.

VI. NIETZSCHE'S (VIOLENT) WILL TO POWER AND COMPLEX ORGANISATION

In terms of the analysis carried out to here, violence generates meaning in the complex system. It is implicated in the very life of the system. Without *différance*, to which the movement of the system in time – its temporisation – that allows for the dynamic organisation away from equilibrium is attributed, the system would stagnate (Derrida & Roudinesco 2004: 21). In terms of complexity thinking, such stagnation is synonymous with death. In other words, without arche-violence there is no *différance*; without *différance* there is no dynamic organisation; without dynamic organisation there is no complex system. It is only in a stagnant equilibrium state that a system could be without arche-violence. The arche-violence initiates conflict and relations of dominance and deference between elements characterised by Derrida (1982: 9), Cilliers (1998a: 95) and Morin (1992: 119). Dominance is never entirely unidirectional in flow and is not necessarily good or bad. However, the 'heterarchical' system (Cilliers, Heylighen & Gershenson 2007:10; Juarrero, 2000: 33) is not to be identified with an egalitarian system.

Forces exerted within the organisation of complex systems do not balance each other. In order to maintain a state far from equilibrium, there can be no balance. Furthermore, the non-oppositional motion of *différance* results in distributed forces that can never quite be quantified because they have quite fully expended themselves. Instead, they are carried on into the future, moved onward by the trace, and never exactly traceable in the open play of interaction.

To say that forces are not traceable does not mean that they cannot begin to be traced, but rather that in tracing a force, one is always in fact tracing several forces, pulled in several directions in a dance analogous to the tracing of meanings (see Derrida 1997: 61-65; van Tongeren, 2000: 161-162). In *Force and Signification*, Derrida (2001: 20) explores the systematic separation of force, forcefulness and violence from meaning within philosophy. In the process of rehabilitating the violence within meaning, the question of where "violence and the force of movement, which is more than its quantity or direction" has already been theorised, is raised.

The complex system is not the first to attempt to think the infinite play of forces; nor to link the life and creativity of the system within this dynamic violence. Arendt (1970: 74), having expressed concern over both the validity and the consequence of this association, traces this tradition back to Friedrich Nietzsche's will to power and Henry Bergson's[126] vitalist philosophy. She (74) reads each of these philosophers as offering an apology for

[126] Bergson, whose work is not treated within the limitations of this project, deserves mention here because of the significant attention his work has received within recent research into complexity theory in conversation with philosophy. This research includes works by Keith Ansell Pearson (1999), Stephen Linstead (2002) and Damian Popolo (1993). Ansell Pearson situates Bergson in the company of Freud and Darwin as forerunners to the poststructuralist biophilosophy of Gilles Deleuze. Popolo (1993: 96) too establishes coincidences in the dynamic systems thinking of complexity theorised by Progogine, and the philosophy of Deleuze and Bergson respectively. Linstead (2002), while he also pays specific attention

and incitement to violence. A relationship between Nietzsche and Derrida, in respect of each philosopher's grammatological project, was established in chapter 2 with reference to Nietzsche's ontology as a critique of metaphysics (Derrida 1997: 286-287; 2001: 354, 369; van Tongeren 2000: 135).[127] A direct analogy between the system of critical complexity theory and Nietzsche's philosophy has been drawn in order to elaborate on the subject as a complex system (Cilliers, Roodt & de Villiers 2002). What is of particular interest in Nietzsche's (1909: 213) writing, with regard to conceptualising complex organisation as violence, is his description of the world as will to power.[128]

This is the hypothesis that all the world is the dynamic interaction of forces, themselves moved by still other forces in an unending motion that involves both "action and resistance" (6).[129] The perpetual interaction of unequivocal forces is not reducible to a simple and homogeneous unity but rather gives rise to a complex whole in constant motion (7). This tumultuous interaction is an open-ended play that produces a foundational pluralism, a constant interruption to any attempt wrap it up in words, even Nietzsche's own words, which do not escape the play they instate (Derrida 2001: 253, 369).[130]

The will to power is a qualitative description of the world or reality as a plurality of wills. The singularity of the 'will' is only an attribute of the word and not the activity it describes (van Tongeren 2000: 159-160). Forces are not paired in oppositions, nor are they homogeneous in value or mode. As Derrida (2001: 369) emphasised, like all self-organising complex systems, the world as the will to power is not ordered from any centre.[131] At the

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to the relationship between the complexity language used by Deleuze and Bergson, draws attention to the affinities between Bergson's account of the vitality of organisation and poststructuralist thinkers in general, including Derrida and Foucault.

[127] "…if we wished to choose several 'names', as indications only, and to recall those authors in whose discourse this occurrence [to think the system without an origin] has kept most closely to its most radical formulation, we doubtless would have to cite the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of Being and truth, for which were substituted the concepts of play; critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness, of the… Heideggerean destruction of metaphysics, of ontotheology, of the determination of Being as presence" (Derrida 2001: 354).

[128] Nietzsche (1909: 213) proposes the will to power against other static ontologies: "But *what is life*? A new and more definite concept of what 'Life' is, becomes necessary here. My formula for this concept is: Life is Will to Power". And elsewhere: "*This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you too, are this will to power yourselves – and nothing besides!" (Nietzsche in Wick 2002: 74, author's emphasis).

[129] The activity and resistance echoes the dynamic relations of Morin's (1992: 119) antagonism and Cilliers' (1998a: 95) asymmetry in the complex system.

[130] In §2 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche (2006: 313) writes:

> The metaphysicians' fundamental belief is *the belief in the opposition of values*. It has never occurred even to the most cautious among them to raise doubts here at the threshold, where doubts would be most necessary...For may there not be doubt, first of all, whether opposites even exist...? (author's emphasis).

[131] "Every centre of force adopts a perspective towards the entire remainder, i.e. its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance. The 'apparent world', therefore, is reduced to a specific mode of action on the world, emanating from a centre" (Nietzsche in Cilliers, Roodt & de Villiers 2002: 6).

lowest level of organisation, the world as will to power is pure heterogeneity. The diversity of wills reacts, each to all others and to the system as a whole, in various configurations (van Tongeren 2000: 161). The outcome of adopting the will to power as dynamic, forceful organisation is an understanding of reality that, like *différance*, is thoroughly temporised. Put differently, the world as will to power is not present, it is not a presence, it is a becoming, the past and future of which stretch outwards in a wide range of unrealised possibilities (63). Furthermore, the world as will to power is becoming as struggle, in which the dominant, the strong, the law, dogma, truth and indeed every appearance is not arrived at by a peaceful movement radiating from an origin. Rather, all appearance is borne of violence.

Some have given into the temptation to read Nietzsche as a metaphysician providing an account of the essential substance of the world as the clash of wills (see for example, Wicks 2002: 71-75), which stands in contradistinction with Derrida's (1997: 19) interpretation.[132] Wicks (2002: 131) also echoes Arendt's (1970) suspicion of descriptions of violence that lift it to the level of a catchall explanation that justifies its appearance and even propagates its proliferation. A first source of substantiation for this reading is found in the "neutrality" of Nietzsche's description that appears to present itself as a non-normative amoral account of the way things are (Wicks 2002: 131). This accusation must be taken seriously, for it can equally be lodged against the complexity theorists whose scientific rather than political sounding description of the dynamics of complex organisation tends towards the same amorality or neutrality. Against the charge of foundationalism, van Tongeren (2000: 157) elaborates at length on the cautiousness of Nietzsche's counter-narratives, especially in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Suppose [...] and [suppose] [...] is it [then] not permitted to make the experiment and to ask the question whether..." The preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* (2006: 311) establishes the text as an extended and elaborate hypothesis: "Assuming that truth is a woman – what then?" Further evidence of Nietzsche's strategic uncertainty is found in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense* (Nietzsche 2000: 53), which opens as if it were a story or a myth: "Once upon a time, in some way out corner of the universe...clever beasts invented knowing".

This being said, undisputable evidence of the warring temperament that Arendt (and Wicks) fear can be produced. For example, in *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche (2006: 488) asserts:

> I consider life itself instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is decline. My assertion is that this will is *lacking* in all the supreme values

[132] Van Tongeren (2000: 159) sheds light on this clash of interpretations, referring especially to section 36 of *Beyond Good and Evil* in which the world as will to power is presented as a plural and dynamic phenomenon, an hypothetical alternative to monadic descriptions of the world. But he also notes other passages in which Nietzsche does seem to suggest that will to power is itself a mystic unity:

> In a certain sense the world as will to power is unmistakenly a metaphysical assertion, metaphysics being the branch of philosophy that attempts to conceptualise what reality is as such, and thus, what all reality is. This does not prevent, however, this proposition being significantly different from other metaphysical designs that have been presented in the history of philosophy, and even being to a certain extent antimetaphysical.

> of mankind – the values of decline, *nihilistic* values hold sway under the holiest names (author's emphasis).

However, it can be argued that these brazen moments only contradict the dynamism and antimetaphysical flavour of the will to power, and do not negate it. Rather, these moments must be read as they stand in conflict with the will to power as disunity and transformation (van Tongeren 2000: 159).

Passages such as the one above, taken from *The AntiChrist* (Nietzsche 2006: 488), suggest that will to power is associated with subjects as enclosed unities. On this reading, the will to power is a justification for the subject asserting his will by violence and thereby increasing vitality. However, the will to power goes all the way down, as it were. The self is itself the complex emergent whole resulting from lower level interactions, lower level clashes of wills to power (Cilliers, Roodt & de Villiers 2002: 2-7). At every moment, the will to power associated with a distinct and identifiable being or unitary force exerting itself against a weaker force is only the provisional outcome of an ongoing struggle. Singular forces are complexified by forces exerted within and from every direction without. Will to power resonates strongly with the deconstructive violence of the world as a complex system. It also provides an enriching supplementation to the lean vocabulary with which violence and force in the system, conflated at this level, can be described.

VII. CONCLUSION

The structure of this chapter has followed a line of argumentation that moves from the intensive theoretical exposition of the previous two into discussion of violence with the inclusion of perspectives of, among others, Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* (1970). This structure is motivated. First, both the discussion of critical complexity theory and the discussion of deconstruction, each framing the other, were oriented by a broader frame in which the distinction was made between those philosophical and epistemological strategies that derive meaning from some modulation of an originary presence, and those that do not. The closed, static system espoused by these theories of presence was not rejected with recourse to any alternative pure origin or absolute foundation. It is, within the writing of Cilliers (1998a: 136-140; 2002: 83; 2004; 2005a), Morin (1992: 58, 150, 386; 2007: 2-7) and Derrida (1987: 183; 1988b: 40-41; 1998: 9), interrogated on both epistemological and ethical grounds. Ethics is necessary in a complex world in which matters cannot be simplified to calculable problems without drawing normative elements into the process of both identifying the problem and deciding which way to go from there. Theories that are too rigid to acknowledge and negotiate this ethics of undecidability are associated with violence. The need to develop this notion within the critical complex system stems from this allegation.

A shift in thinking, towards the acknowledgement of complexity, has serious consequences for how we understand the world. Violence within the system is included in this world of meaning that needs to be

interrogated. It is not extensively worked out, but is captured in notions like mutilation and asymmetry.[133] Arendt's (1970) analysis of violence was brought in as challenge to the system. This was done deliberately because she writes with a clear separation of violence and nonviolence in which the former is rejected outright as a viable and lasting solution to political problems; and also because she (44-48) makes clear conceptual distinctions between violence and the often associated and conflated terms: power, strength, force and authority. The advantage of Arendt's conceptualisation of violence is that is makes the identification of violent and nonviolent means and ends simple, or at least simple to identify if not achieve. However, this view was itself shown to be problematic and in fact potentially implicated in the concealment of violence in the system.

Rather than attempt to work any predefined notion of violence into the complex system, this project begins at the other side, iterating Derrida's strategy in *Of Grammatology* (1997) in which the meanings of writing and violence are developed by looking at the system itself and by the 'violence' it produces in its complex interactions. Within the complex structure elaborated above, violence is manifested on three distinguishable levels. The first is a constitutive violence, the system itself as arbitrary organisation. The second level of violence is the violence of the boundary or the frame. The third level of violence is empirical violence. These three levels have serious consequences for the original clear meaning posited in the introduction. In the first place, the original violence, the first level to which the most attention was devoted in this chapter, undermined any notion of a strong opposition between violence and nonviolence. Indeed violence, here identified with a generative power, is an infrastructural movement within the complex system. It is implicated at all levels of organisation, in the antagonism, asymmetry and polemics and dominance between elements.

The first level of violence, also at work wherever the second or third level of violence is at work, expands the notion of violence to include all arbitrary force in the system, that is, all force in the system that does not radiate from an origin. This would suggest that the idea of power or authority in society, or, indeed any relation in the complex system, being possible and not being marked with violence, is unthinkable. The danger of this generalisation is one that brings us back to the ethics of complexity as both an acknowledgement of the impossibility of deciding as a condition of deciding and as an acknowledgement of the inevitability of fighting violence with more violence (Derrida 1988b: 41; Spivak 1997: lxxvii). This complicates the notion of violence further by positing a kind of violence that must be judged. Violence can be good or at least necessary for the survival of the system; or it can be bad. Bad violence, although it is often located at the third level of violence, empirical violence such as rape and war, need not be. It could be the violence of law that does not recognise

[133] Cilliers (1998a: 120) demonstrates a concern with these matters by applying asymmetry to human relations:

> The social system is non-linear and asymmetrical as well. The same piece of information has different effects on different individuals, and small causes can have large effects. The competitive nature of social systems is often regulated by relations of power, ensuring an asymmetrical system of relationships. This, it must be emphasised strongly, is not an argument in favour of relations of domination or exploitation. The argument is merely one for the acknowledgement of complexity.

same-sex unions, or, equally, the violence of epistemological strategies that impose a certain order and value onto the word in an attempt to cover over the original violence, the arbitrary movement of systemic organisation.

Derrida (2002a: 235) qualifies more emphatic calls in earlier work (e.g. 1988b: 41) for the mobilisation of violence of the system against itself by explaining this violence as a distributed force, a disruptive violence. However, this disruptive force, because it is not violence in the sense of the more overt second and third levels of violence, is illusive. Cilliers too (1998a: 120) emphasises that the necessity of asymmetry in organisation is not an argument that asymmetry in itself is good. The complex system offers no simple solution to this impossible problem. Violence, empirical or otherwise, like everything else in the system, is always constituted and recognised by means of a frame that must be selected or a boundary that must be decided (Cilliers 2004: 22; Derrida 1979b: 20; 1981a: 11; 1988b: 82). The frame itself will be violent because it is ultimately arbitrary, exclusionary and marginalising (Derrida 1979b: 30; 1997: 112). The idea that one might escape violence in the system, a problem to which Katherine Hayles (2000: 161) alerts systems thinkers, is a problem that is relevant to the rest of this project. It should be asked what becomes of nonviolence in this system and whether it does not participate in the construction of a more violent reality.

The question of whether or not the generalisation of violence in the system is itself good or bad is not one that is easily resolved. However, as with Nietzsche's theory of the will to power which was brought into relation with complex distributed violence, the question of value and of absolute authority even in the case of moral judgements is disrupted and complexified by the choice of a description of the system that is itself always the plural, diverse and open interplay of forces. The justification for this generalisation is that 'violence' cannot ever be permanently erased or unseen by such a system. In other words, in all its potential concrete manifestations, there is the theoretical space to construct a frame in which it could appear. For example, a patriarchal society may not consider the killing of women for the sake of the preservation of family honour violent. However, intensifying the play of arche-violence in order to deconstruct gender identities can disrupt not only this unseeing of violence, but the underlying symbolic and systemic forms of violence that produce the structure, hierarchies and categories by which, as Levi-Strauss (1961: 292) noted, this violence is legitimated. Even on a first reading, this theoretical posturing is not entirely convincing. Heeding Fanon (2001), it must be asked whether violent societies in which violent rule allow for potent agency that is not itself empirically violent. Does every society tolerate passive resistance or intellectual interventions, or do they only understand brutal uprising?

The provisional answer to the problems both of recognising good violence from bad, and of the possibility of working towards a system that is in fact free of violence is this:

> ...a general ethics of vigilance seems necessary with regard to all the signals that, here or there, in language, in advertising, in political life, teaching, the writing of texts, etc. might encourage, for example, phallocentric, ethnocentric, or racist violence (Derrida & Roudinesco 2004: 28).

It is certainly a rather lean answer. This chapter can be read as an exposition of the violence of the inside of the complex system. That is, the violence of complex dynamics, the first level of violence. The following two chapters are directed at the violence of the boundary and the implication of the outside in the conceptualisation of empirical violence and nonviolence. The second level of violence that is explored in chapter 4, is the level at which the violence at play in all our decisions is most evident. The normativity that gives complexity its ethical character is a result of the necessity of selecting a boundary or frame. The relation between bounding and violence requires careful attention. The ethics of complexity, which is sensitive to both levels of violence in the system, will also be introduced at the end of chapter 4 and discussed more fully in chapter 5. Both chapter 1 and chapter 2 emphasised the significance of the outside. This significance of the outside is that it is unmarked, it has no meaning, and it is both a necessary condition for meaning in the system and the condition that prevents the closure and finality of that meaning. To emphasise the argument already made, the outside, producing open meaning, opens meaning to ethics. The concept of 'outside', it will be argued, has an important relation with nonviolence in the complex system. While this analysis moves on from the original violence of the first level, this constitutive level remains significant in both forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 4

THE BOUNDARY IS VIOLENCE: THE SECOND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN THE COMPLEX SYSTEM

> *...as soon as a genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity (Derrida 1992a: 224-225).*

> *A reason must let itself be reasoned with (Derrida 2005b: 158).*

I. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 proposed that both critical complexity theory and deconstruction recognise a form of violence at work in the way human beings understand the world. This argument is expanded here by moving beyond only the possibility of meaning, to its proper constitution as understandable meaning in the complex organisation. The first two levels of violence are intimately related. The first level of violence is the violence of perpetually differing differences that produce the possibility of meaning. It does not allow for a stable, understandable meaning to appear. The overabundance it generates requires that it be limited in its excess in order to be understood. The second level of violence is the violence of fixing differences so that the excessive play of meaning is readable or understandable (Derrida 1979a: 117; 1997: 112). Because it functions as a quasi-origin like the trace, the first level of violence operates with the infrastructures behind sense. Its violence is exposed only in its description. The second level of violence, however, is more visible than the first. It is not infrastructural, but structural. If the first level of violence produces the complex system as an open system, then the second level can be conceptualised as that which simultaneously closes organisation (Derrida 1997: 112). The closure of open organisation is what marries the discussion of violence to the explication of boundary and to the process of bounding. This idea is central to the argument proposed here and demands a careful reading of the descriptions of closure found between critical complexity theory and deconstruction: the boundary itself; the frame; and the hymen.

Four significant ideas must be introduced in order to contextualise the second level of violence and in order to understand how, in the face of empirical atrocity such as rape, murder, torture, philosophers should come to turn their attention to words when theorising violence. The first of these ideas is that all language is performative (Derrida 2005b: 73). The meaning of language is not without its own force. It is forceful because the articulation of meaning is not a benign description of an objective reality. It participates in the construction of reality. The discussion around linguistic force can be traced back to Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1971) lectures delivered in 1955, in which he asserted that speech can be considered an act (Hanssen 2000: 169). To say something, in other words, is also to do something. The word 'force' referred to success of the speech act in

doing what it was intended to do. This force was not extended to all types of speech. In fact, Austin (1971) maintained a strong opposition between language that was forceful and language that was not. The opposition between constative and performative language preserves this function for only the latter. This idea that language could be thought of as an action and a forceful action was extended beyond Austin's technical linguistic analysis and taken up in different permutations in liberalism, critical theory and poststructuralism (Hanssen 2000: 169). A new tool for linguistic and also social analysis was introduced herewith, for if language can be framed as an action and not purely linguistic then its consequences can be extended to other extra-linguistic spheres. A linguistic analysis is thus relevant to all manners of social interaction.[134]

Derrida's (1988b: 13-21) deconstruction of this dichotomy extends the capacity to produce reality with that description/inscription to all language. Constative language is commonly thought to be falsifiable with reference to an objective state of affairs. If one reads the statement 'the girl is homosexual' as a constative utterance one need only check that the girl conforms to definitions of 'girl' and 'homosexual' that are independent of this particular situation in order to verify the legitimacy of the observation. Performative language, on the other hand, is understood to be fulfilled when it successfully brings reality in line with its assertion. For example, "You are guilty" constitutes an accused party as a criminal one. In this process, the person is transformed from an accused person into a criminal. What a criminal is understood to be – what he or she has been determined to be within a system of meaning – determines a certain fate, justifies a chain of events, limits his or her degrees of freedom to be something other than a criminal within the system. Similarly, it is not only the girl that fits into the definition of 'girl' and 'homosexual', but the definitions themselves that constitute the girl as a 'girl' and a 'homosexual'.

Because the deconstruction between constative and performative language was discussed in chapter 2, its mechanics will not be repeated. However, its significant effect, which is the generalisation of the power of the performative to constitute, shape and enforce reality, enabled by a context and the general text, must be considered when evaluating the argument that the level of activity explicated in this chapter should be understood as violence. The world is produced and ordered through meaning (Derrida 1992a: 252). Meaning structures relations between components in the system. Reality rendered meaningful within sense and knowledge also constrains the range of possibilities of how one interacts with the world (Morin 2007: 2-6; Sen 2006: 9).

[134] Hanssen (2000: 170) argues that the forcefulness of language is taken up in liberal theory in order to argue for the power of language to intervene in social matters:

> ...[Common] liberal conceptions of free speech rest on what appears to be an intuitive understanding of speech act theory, insofar as stress is placed on the performative enactment of political power in and through speech.

This idea is illustrated in the discussion of Arendt's (1963: 87) exclusion of violence from political speech in order to preserve its power to supervene in conflicts.

The latter is the second idea informing the description of this level of violence. Accepted meaning legitimates itself by legitimating certain relations, hierarchies and actions. The most overt incarnation of this ordering through meaning is the law, which Derrida (1997: 112) asserts is the quintessential embodiment of the second level of violence. Racist laws and social mores determine that actions motivated by racial difference are legitimate and acceptable. In its most extreme expression, this feature of meaning allows all racist, classist, gender-based and related acts of violence to find their justification in racist, classist, misogynist or homophobic ideas, whether codified or not. These particular manifestations of violence exemplified by the 'corrective' rape of homosexual individuals are made possible by their ideological frames.

A third and related idea that frames this analysis is that the second level of violence always contains the possibility that a third and empirical level of violence will arise (Derrida 1997: 112). The second level of violence can produce concrete and material effects. There is no more vivid an articulation of the impersonal violence of the law than Franz Kafka's (1948: 191) "remarkable piece of apparatus" in *In the Penal Colony*. In this narrative, an explorer visits an island on which a penal colony exists that has a developed a special piece of machinery. This machine is used to deliver punishment to the prisoners. The explorer is invited to witness this extraordinary machine at work and in this process bear witness to the efficacy of the punishment and indeed the material force of the law. A description of the mechanism is given so that the explorer may understand and appreciate how it functions.

It has three components: the Bed; the Designer; and the Harrow (193). The condemned man is laid face down and naked on the Bed and then constrained and gagged (194, 195). The Designer hangs directly above the bed and shares its dimensions. From it hangs the Harrow with its gleaming metal teeth. The officer explains with pride:

> Our sentence does not sound severe. Whatever commandment the prisoner has disobeyed is written upon his body by the Harrow. This prisoner, for instance...will have written on his body: HONOUR THY SUPERIORS (197)!

The force of the law is written onto the body of the prisoner who cannot move, cannot escape the process of inscription, and whose inability to escape results in his death. The reader is given other significant items of information. First, the officer in charge of the execution is speaking French and neither the assisting soldier nor the prisoner understands the description that is offered to the explorer (194). The functioning of the system of the law happens without warning. The prisoner also does not know his sentence. Instead, he is meant to "[learn] it on his body" (197). The misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the prisoner is resolved with violence.

Unlike the liberal recognition of the victims of violence (Arendt 1963: 8; 1970: 44-45; Hanssen 2000: 162-163), *In the Penal Colony* situates this suffering within the sphere of meaning and language. It announces the violence

of language and the constitutive role this violence plays in every functioning society. The most obvious message enforced in the penal colony is that the law does not have merely linguistic effects. Law is not closed to the social or the physical. When law is enforced, it is enforced in the world. Its material violence is, however, also linguistic. Or rather, it is related to the production of meaning. Writing the law on the body produces violence. Furthermore, the guilt of the prisoner is never doubted. It is a technical matter that is resolved by the system – the soldiers, the officer and the machine – that constitutes him as a transgressor of law in the execution of his sentence. The observer is given a full description of this process; however, neither the victim nor the soldier – his executioner – understands this explanation. The prisoner is not required to understand but only to respect the law because he is made to feel its effects. The image of the Harrow carving into the body of the prisoner is a poignant reminder that any discussion of violence that necessarily abstracts from concrete experience must remain mindful of the suffering of individuals engendered by violence.

The fourth idea underpinning this discussion is captured in the quotation at the head of this chapter. It also speaks of the law (Derrida 1992a: 224-225). In order to fix meaning or enforce the law, ambiguity must be cleared up, heterogeneity must be suppressed and the boundary must be sealed. Each sign must mean what it means and nothing besides. There can be no blackness inside whiteness. Or, if there is, then what is described is neither black nor white but must fall into its own category: grey. Ambiguity does not confuse classification if it can be explained away within a system of classification. In an essay on genre, Derrida (218-252) discusses this process of classification or subjecting the singular to an imposition of a general framework. Genders, genres and cultures are examples of this type of collective difference (Derrida 1993c: 90). The internal organisation or *différance* associated with the individual components of the system must be neutralised in order to establish and reinforce the boundary and in order to exclude what is really different from that particular system. Elizabeth Grosz's (1999: 9) proposition that Derrida's texts all concern forms of violence whether theoretical, interpretive, political or otherwise, are echoed by Derrida's (1998: 9) own observation of his work. He (9) insists on the purification of the constant interplay between motifs of purity and impurity as the locus of violence. To close, to halt, to arrest the play of *différance* is irresistible and the violence of this gesture is equally unavoidable (Derrida 1997: 59). Each of the three ideas discussed in this introduction – the performative force of meaning; the self-legitimating force of legitimate meaning; and the suppression of internal difference – are necessary features of an argument that asserts the violence of closure.

The language of the first level of violence – antagonism and asymmetry – suggests conflict. The boundary, stability, structure and the frame associated with the second level of organisation do not. The apparent neutrality of the language used to articulate violence at this level is not insignificant. The violence of the boundary is not bad. It is not merely constraining. It is also enabling. In order to be readable, a certain structure must be imposed on this chapter. Its meaning must be enabled by a frame. It must be constrained by the quotations at its head, by the architecture of its headings, by footnotes and the broader context of the project within which it is produced.

This chapter therefore proceeds by returning to the relationship between the three levels of violence in the complex system in order to guard against hasty simplification of this relationship into an unproblematic three-tiered typology. The language of levels is problematic but it is expedient. The interaction between levels of violence is related to the interaction between the freeplay and closure in the system.

The relationship described here enables a characterisation of the violence of the boundary in space and time. This in turn allows for an exposition of the implications of the second level of violence for language and the law. To remain within abstraction while purporting to address violence as it relates to concrete suffering in the world would be disingenuous. This chapter thus invokes two significant examples in the course of discussion. The first is the definition of rape in South African law which demonstrates the violence at work in the second level of organisation in the complex system. The second is Nelson Mandela's appeal to lawfulness against the racist laws of apartheid. This is used to show how the second level of violence is also involved in the pursuit of the end of violence. It is only in the context of the argument developed before it that the relation of the second level of violence to peace can be addressed and the consequences for the negotiation of this level of organisation can be explored.

II. THE SECOND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN THE SYSTEM

a. THE NEED FOR PAUSE IN IDENTIFYING THE SECOND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE

Derrida's (1997: 112) analysis of violence in the system distributed over three levels is extended in this chapter, beyond the organisation of the system as the play of difference on which the first level of violence functions. The lens is shifted from open, dynamic, complex organisation inside a system to the stable and robust structures that can be observed. In order to locate and characterise the second level of violence in Derrida's analysis, it is useful to recapitulate what was said about both the first and third levels of violence. As it is argued in *Of Grammatology* (112), the clear separation of these three levels of violence is not absolute. Rather, each level of violence involves and feeds into each other level. This interrelation and feedback also follows from the description of the complex system given hitherto.[135] What determines structure in complex systems is neither

[135] It should be recalled that the central tenet of complexity thinking is the shift from focusing on individual elements in isolation, to thinking in terms of relations between elements, the system as whole and the environment (Cilliers 1998a: 37-47; Morin 1992: 105-108; 2005). To focus on a single level of interaction is to fail to account for a set of relations within the system and to reduce the complexity of the system without full knowledge of the implications of that reduction for the understanding of that system. The tension between relations on different levels within the system and the reduction required by descriptions of that system can be illustrated by considering the relation between the whole and the parts of complex systems:

> In opposition to reduction, complexity requires that one tries to comprehend the relations between the whole and the parts. The knowledge of the parts is not enough, the knowledge of the whole asa whole is not enough, if one ignores its parts; one is thus brought to make a come and go in loop [*sic*] to gather the knowledge of the whole and its parts.

purely the interactions of the parts, nor purely the whole (Morin 1992: 113). The interactions between individual components are as deeply implicated in emergent systems and subsystems as these emergent wholes are implicated in structuring relations between elements in the system and there is both upward and downward causation in the complex system (114). The organisation of the system's structure is therefore distributed across all relations in the system: between parts; between the whole and the parts; and between subsystems, the whole and the parts (Cilliers 1998a: 91). Furthermore, these relations, like relations between particular elements in the system, are non-linear. They cannot be compressed and resist reduction (Cilliers 1998a: 4, 10; Cilliers & Richardson 2006: 11). If violence is not something that is inserted into the system from the outside, but is instead a characteristic of the interactions within the system – violence is "equivalent to the operation of the trace" (Derrida 1997: 101) – it is subject to the same incompressibility and resistance to reduction to a single privileged level as the interactions themselves.

This qualification of the 'levels' of violence does not really problematise the levels as such. To say that they are ambiguous or fuzzy is not to question that they exist. It is unclear what the ontological status of Derrida's (1997: 112) levels of violence is. One can infer, on a charitable reading, that these levels have a status similar to the general system of textuality. That is to say, the levels have no objective reality outside the description of these levels. The levels are not independent of their being understood. However, these levels of violence are still instantiated when we try to understand or to speak about the world. This is less problematic if the system being described is a book than if it is a family. In certain situations, it is obvious that one would want to claim that the violence really exists regardless of whether or not it is being described. This problem is symptomatic of the larger linguistic quagmire with which different iterations of complexity thinking are confronted. Once the gap between language and the world is opened, the relationship between language and the world is unhinged.

This said it is still always possible to offer a description on a micro (the level of interactions between elements), meso (the level of interactions involving clusters of elements or subsystems) or macro (the level of the system of interest as a whole) level. This does, however, require the acknowledgement that the maintenance of levels is at least partly a function of the way we understand violence and decisively not an ontological certainty. The separation of levels of organisation is a necessary reduction of the complexity of violence in the system. It is necessary insofar as it enables a description and understanding of violence. However, this reduction, like all reduction, cannot be made in an absolute way that does not allow for revision and does not acknowledge the blind spots created in this process. This description is not complete. It can always be adjusted by taking into account the specific relations that it marginalises for the sake of expedience (Levy 1993: 93). Given these

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> Thus, the principle of reduction is substituted by a principle that conceives the relation of whole-part mutual implication (Morin 2005: 10).

Because this discussion of violence is still also a discussion of relations in the system, the same logic of interrelation, of being "woven together", still applies when attempting a characterisation (18).

qualifications, it should be remembered that the second level of violence is both constituted by and constitutive of patterns of violence on the first level. The complex interaction between these levels of violence can be likened to the mutual constitution of the internal interactions of the system and its boundary elaborated in chapters 1 and 2. This analogy is elaborated in the exposition that follows below.

b. THE SECOND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE FIRST

The first level of violence, it has been proposed, is the foundational violence of the system.[136] It is the instatement of a system of meaning, that emerges from interactions that are produced within sense and understanding rather than found in nature as a pure ontological reality. In order to explain the need for the second level of violence, the fundamental characteristic of a meaningful element within the system should be recalled. All signs, in order to have meaning, must be recognisable, and in order to be recognisable, must be iterable (Derrida 1988b: 8, 20; 1997: 91). Iterability compromises the singularity of the sign. In order to be repeatable, the sign must have something generalisable about it. It must tend towards a universal form that can be reproduced with the same meaning. To inscribe the singular or unique within such a system, and indeed the very instatement of such a system whose movement destroys the singular, is the first violence.

Arche-violence destroys the original identity of the individual element through internal division of the self, distributed in time through repetition and generalisation (Derrida 1992a: 211). The second aspect of this division is the perpetual reference to other elements in the system (Derrida 1982: 13). This aspect of arche-violence destroys the original identity of the self by distributing the identity of the individual element across its relations of difference with other elements in the system.[137] The relation to the other is conflictual (Derrida in McKenna

[136] Asymmetry in the system is a result of the fundamental movement of organisation, which we have characterised as *différance*. It is the polemical differing and deferring of each element of each element to each other that necessarily involves aspects of inequality in these interactions (Cilliers 1998a: 95, 120, 124). It is the activity of *différance* and a necessary activity for the emergence of dynamic complexity, as opposed to static structures (95). Complex interactions are symmetry breaking. Chapter 3 asserted an analogy between Cilliers' (95) asymmetry and Morin's (1992: 119) concept of antagonism between elements in a complex system.

[137] This point demonstrates the role of the arche-trace as arche-violence, and ties it to the language of complexity:

> The arche-trace [... is] defined as the inevitable mark of the Other born by a self-present or self-contained entity...the site of referral to an Other still to come, is an infrastructural principle of asymmetry...(Gasché 1992: 12).

While this quote clearly illustrates the intrusive violence of the arche-trace, I do not agree with Gasché's (12) capitalisation of the "Other". In keeping with Derrida's (1981a: 5; 1994: 14, 15; 2002: 230-259) own insistence on a more radical alterity of the system or text's "outside", it is more appropriate to reserve capitalisation for this otherness, if for any. The other or difference within the system, whose mark or marks are announced by the trace, stands in a relation of asymmetry with the self/same/sign that works both ways (Cornell 1992: 62). Each other in the same is always also a self/same to another other and all also marked by the sign it marks (Derrida 2001: 158). The 'properness' suggested by capitalisation is thus compromised by the movement of arche-trace and arche-violence. In his discussion of Levinas in *Violence and Metaphysics*, Derrida (2001: 158) disrupts the logic of absolute or self-enclosed difference explicitly by asking whether, "a

1992: 101). There is no system without conflict and competition. According to Derrida's (1997: 111) description in *Of Grammatology*, complicity in the proliferation of violence is unavoidable. Violence engendered in the iteration of the sign is necessary and constitutive. Without it, the singular would not suffer the corruption of the other or the disintegration of its own self-identity by its distribution in time-space. However, it could also not maintain the possibility of being meaningful at all. The singular would be mute without its corruption (Gasché 1992: 16).

The first level of violence creates space within what would be enclosed unity. In so doing, it also creates the space necessary for the dynamic play of meaning to unfold. Referring back to the example of the sign, or indeed the signature, it is clear that unity only appears because it is already divided at the moment of its appearance. In the chapter 3, this spacing was located between the word and its referent, and also within the word itself, between the word and itself (Derrida 1988b: 9; 1994: 17).[138] However, as the first level of violence in the system, this spacing also refers to the impassable difference between sense, meaning and knowledge on the one hand, and pure, unmediated reality on the other. The epistemological gap upon which both deconstruction and critical complexity theory insist is the original violence that allows each theory to engage with the other. Regarding social systems, it can be argued that nature as a pure origin is replaced by culture, which is impure and contingent (Harvey 1986: 136-137; McKenna 1992: 92). The purity of observation of all complex systems including the biological or physical system is tainted by this artifice at work in meaning (Morin 1983b: 5). Gasché's (1992: 16) remark on the corruption at the root of sense is reinforced by Morin (1983b: 5), who argues:

> Indeed, the problem of the cultural, social, historical conditions of knowledge cannot be eluded. It is to the extent that science believes itself to be a pure reflection of the objective universe that it was able to take on hardly scientific airs of eternity, extra-temporality and extra-sociality. On the other hand, as soon as one sees that science is not limited to pure accumulated fact, but composed of and by theoretical systems, necessitating languages, ideas, logic...

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division between the same and the other, […] does not suppose, at very least, that the same is the other's other, and the other the same as oneself?"

[138] This space is opened by the play of the trace, moved on by the perpetual deferral of one sign to the next, causing a perpetual delay in space and time, between the sign and its complete and finite meaning. Caputo (1997: 100) summarises this violent spacing at the heart of deconstruction as a system of meaning structured by the trace:

> That meaning – and reference – is a function of the difference, of the *distance* or the "spacing" between the traces, what is called, in a perfectly serious way, the "play" of differences or traces, what is called, in a perfectly serious way, the "play" of differences or traces (author's emphasis).

The space within the sign allows for its insertion into different contexts in which the meaning will always maintain a degree of integrity or sameness, and at the same time allowing for contextual differences to supplement this sameness (Caputo 1997: 31; Derrida 1979a: 78; 1988b: 9, 63, 65).

It is in this sense that the first level of violence can be said to be involved in the appearance of any unified system. This is so even when the system in question is commonly understood as a 'natural' phenomenon.

The space opened between language and the world creates the need for the movement of trace so as to allow the simulacrum of presence. However, the arche-violence marks this presence with absence. Something else is required to erase this mark. This contamination requires a second violence whose purpose is precisely to conceal the first violence and to reinstate the origin (Derrida 1997: 112; Harvey 1986: 136).[139] The first violence, associated with the trace, *différance*, producing antagonism and asymmetry or antagonism in the system, is located at the possibility of meaning, but it is not sufficient for meaning to arise in the system. Meaning requires dynamic organisation, dissonance and contest; and it requires stability, structure and a boundary. It is with this latter group of requirements that the second level of violence becomes visible.

The second level of violence arrests the movement of the first in order to limit the play of the arche-trace and fix relations of asymmetry so that meaning can be interpreted. This arrest is achieved with a law:

> Out of this arche-violence, forbidden and therefore confirmed by a second violence that is reparatory, protective, instituting the "moral," prescribing the concealment of writing and the effacement and obliteration of the so-called proper name which was already dividing the proper... (Derrida 1997: 112)

This passage refers to the event described by Levi-Strauss (1961: 270-271) in which the Nambikwara hid their proper names as a matter of rule and of morality in recognition of the violence of naming. Their social norm at once acknowledged and denied the violence of the name. Moral law repaired the violence of the name by denying the name as such. Derrida (1997: 112) extends this gesture of reparation to all attempts to arrest the play of trace in the system.

The first two levels of violence can be thought as openness and closure in the system. The first level of violence is the distributed force of *différance* that disrupts the identity or closure of the sign with movement of the trace in time and space. The sign is thus left open to an infinite play of intrusion, of the disruption of its boundary (Derrida 2001: 365). When the meaning of a sign and its relation to other signs is specified, this intrusion must be prevented. One must confine the sign to itself and stop the trace in its tracks. In this way, the restitution of closure, of a boundary denies the lack of origin and the movement that this lack begins. Against this unending play of trace, the second level of violence functions as the origin, fixing meaning and preventing the original violence (Derrida 1997: 112).

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[139] The second violence counters the first and moves against it:

> [The first level of violence] requires a second, 'reparatory' or compensatory violence, the violence whose function it is to erase the traces of this primordial violence, a kind of counter-violence whose violence consists in the denial of violence (Grosz 1999: 10).

This violence is associated with all those mechanisms that legislate, that assume the authority of correctness, and that resist change and transformation. Derrida (101-112, 120) specifies certain examples in his discussion of *Violence and the Letter*: morality; the law; and philosophy. Each example espouses fixed hierarchical dichotomies that categorise and stratify the world. This list can be supplemented: reason; standards of truth and right; culture; religion; social identities and norms; academic discourses; and national borders (Grosz 1999: 10). In opposition to the violence it conceals, the return of the system to a stable state, "names itself as the space of non-violence" (10). The second level of violence is the denial of the arbitrary character of meaning in the system (McKenna 1992: 90). In order to do so, it must erase the mark of absence of the origin and supplant itself in place thereof. It must proclaim itself "the reassuring seal of self-identity" (Derrida 1997: 112).

Openness – associated with the first level of violence – and closure – associated with the second – are necessary conditions of complex organisation (Cilliers 2001; Derrida, 1997: 59, 125; Gasché 1994: 39; Juarrero 2002). When it is argued that the second level of violence repairs the first, what is meant is that it halts its movement. It does not redress asymmetry between elements in the system. It simply legitimates a specific configuration of that asymmetry. Levi-Strauss' (1961: 292) alignment of writing and violence,[140] which Derrida (1997: 106) proclaims undoubted and even indubitable, is precisely this rigid hierarchisation. Dynamic asymmetry is not sufficient for the establishment of hierarchy in any complex system. Stability is also required.

Given that both the first and second levels of violence in the system appear at this stage to have a source of legitimacy insofar as each is constitutive of the system as a system of meaning, the question can already be posed as to how and why one should seek to recognise, value, evaluate or redress violence at either level. And further, if in fact these two levels of violence are neutral and do not require recognition or redress, then it seems problematic to still refer to the arche-trace and the boundary as sites of violence rather than merely force and closure. In other words, it might be more appropriate, as Arendt (1970: 45) suggests, to reserve the word for empirical violence. The first answer that Derrida (112) offers to this concern is that empirical violence may or may not arise out of the first and the second. In other words, these two facets of complex organisation produce empirical violence. It is this that demands the recognition of and perhaps also intervention in the first two. The recognition of empirical violence interrupts the authority of the second level of violence and, in so doing, calls attention to the movement of arche-trace and arche-violence.[141] The operation of the second level of violence and

[140] This development of hierarchy is:

> ...the integration into a political system, that is to say, of a considerable number of individuals, and the distribution of those individuals into a hierarchy of castes and classes. Such is, at any rate, the type of development which we find, from Egypt right across to China, at the moment when writing makes its debuts; it seems to favour rather the exploitation than the enlightenment of mankind (Levi-Strauss 1961: 292).

[141] "It is on this tertiary level, that of the empirical consciousness, that the common concept of violence...whose possibility remains yet unthought, should no doubt be situated" (Derrida 1997: 112).

the clarification of the complex interrelation between arche-violence and the law that has been suggested hitherto requires that attention is turned to the problem of closure in the open, complex system.

III. CLOSURE: THE BOUNDARY, THE FRAME AND THE HYMEN

a. FREEPLAY AND CLOSURE IN THE SYSTEM

In order to articulate the second level of violence in the complex system as the violence associated with the imposition of closure, it is first necessary to recall the implications of the arche-trace as arche-violence for the conceptualisation of the function or possibility of closure in the system. Such a discussion must return to the concept of 'play', which was used to draw attention to both complexity theory and deconstruction as theories that argue for the anteriority of dynamic difference in the system. The relations of dynamic difference in the system are not oppositional in character (Derrida 1987: 183). This non-oppositional character of the element within the complex system has been argued with reference to Cilliers' (1998a: 3, 4) sketch of complex systems, and also with attention to the constitution of the sign within writing. The latter is a useful illustration of the notion of distributed reference or freeplay.

The sign or the component of a complex system in more general terms, can never refer only to itself or to its opposite (Culler 1983: 99). Within the system, if one were to trace the meaning of any one sign, one would be pulled in the direction of several localised points of reference, and still outward toward other signs and new differences that are all in constant flux. Several examples have already been offered as illustrations of this central point: the iterability of signs always invokes other signs, the past and the future in the constitution of meaning of 'this' particular thing 'here' and 'now'(Derrida 2001: 353). Relations of *différance* illustrated by this example produce an irreducible delay in the completion of the meaning of the sign. Meaning is always distributed in space and time. It exceeds the 'here' and 'now' of a particular description and is therefore irreducibly open (Derrida 1982: 7, 8). McKenna (1994: 80) develops this point by adding that the delimitation of a description is not only insufficient as a complete meaning; this insufficiency manifests as an error. To exclude undetermined meaning could be to leave out vitally important meaning. This error is characteristic of all attempts to determine meaning.

Freeplay produces the system as an open system, but it does not produce complex organisation as random organisation (Morin 1992: 102-105). Derrida (1988b: 116) summarises the consequences of freeplay for the process of description or delimitation in three points:

1. The freeplay of the system resists the confinement of binary oppositions, or indeed the confinement of meaning to any contained form, whether three or four or even four hundred oppositions are invoked.[142]
2. The freeplay of the system, although it resists containment, is also what allows meaning to be contained in the first place. It allows for the specification of meaning, while at the same time alerting one to the limits of any attempt to specify, to calculate, to formalise, or to decide its movement. [143]
3. Freeplay produces the system as a heterogeneous system in which differences on the lowest level of description survive any attempt to create a homogenous field and to secure full presence in the system.

The specification of meaning in the system involves a decision to stop freeplay at a certain point and suppress heterogeneity. This is a decision to contain it within a certain space, to gather its past organisation into a neat linear history and to stop present organisation from distributing itself into the future. To stop freeplay is thus to resist internal difference and change. In each sense, the specification of meaning in a calculation, a formalisation, a narrative, or any general description, is the imposition of closure.

Freeplay resists closure. It undermines the authority of any specification of meaning in the system (Derrida 1979a: 107; Gasché 1994: 21). A novel, for example, which must be read in time, must have a beginning and an outer edge (Derrida 1979a: 76, 83). It cannot be read at the same time as every other novel and is thus enclosed on itself. However, a novel requires that it participates in a linguistic system that overruns its boundary. One's understanding of a novel is also enabled and enriched by reading more, by having experienced more, by following the trace into other texts, reference works, criticism, historical contemporaries and more (107). The novel demonstrates both the inevitability of closure and the impossibility of self-containment. The meaning is constituted within these extra-textual elements or context that is itself governed by the logic of freeplay or complex organisation (Culler 1983: 123; Derrida 1979a: 81, 83). The example of the novel demonstrates two sides of the problematic instated by the text: the novel refers beyond itself while maintaining a level of unity or integrity; the outside or context, which is impossible to determine, disrupts the enclosure of the novel because it is implicated in the constitution of meaning inside the novel (Derrida 1979a: 82). The context is thus never purely exterior. The text and the trace gesture beyond what is simply present and invite an expansion of what is considered to be part of the original unity (Critchley 1992: 75).

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[142] As it was pointed out in chapter 2, Derrida (1987: 183) contrasts the containment of binarity or oppositional difference with freeplay or *différance*.

[143]This aspect of freeplay can be explained by returning to the trace with which it is associated:

> What I call the erasure of concepts ought to mark the places of that future meditation. For example, the value of the transcendental arche [archie] must make its necessity felt before letting itself be erased. The concept of arche-trace must comply with both that necessity and that erasure. It is in fact contradictory and not acceptable within the logic of identity (Derrida 1997: 61).

Without the trace, meaning could not be thought to be present in the system. The trace allows meaning to present itself as much as it renders the fullness of presence impossible.

This idea of the problematisation of the inside/outside dichotomy repeats the idea of complexity as *complexus*. It is not possible to determine what lies outside the system in any absolute sense (Morin 2005: 6; Cilliers, Richardson & Lissack, 2001: 6, 8). It is always possible to include more, to expand the boundary of what one considers to be part of the system under analysis. The notion of incompressibility discussed in chapter 1, the idea that something cannot be fully explained in terms simpler than itself, can be expanded on this point. The system is not incompressible in space. It is also incompressible in time. A perfect description, accepting this theoretical possibility for a moment, would need to evolve with the system (Cilliers 1998a: 4, 10; 2000c: 24). Not only the system, but also what is considered its context or environment and the relation between these two systems resists simplification in space and time (Cilliers 2001: 140).

That particular texts or complex systems can be recognised at all assumes that there must be a play of difference analogous to the differences between elements within the system on global level. In order to have some minimal identity, a particular phenomenon must be differentiable from everything outside it. This 'everything outside' refers to other particular texts or systems and the general system of textuality in which particular texts are produced (Derrida 1988b: 7, 148). Although the argument is made here that complexity thinking is an argument for irreducible openness, it is not an argument against all closure. It is an argument against reified absolute closure. Wherever lines are drawn that enable recognition or understanding, there is still always an overflow or excess, a disruption, and an extension of the line (Derrida 2001: 365). There is always more distributed in space, and more still to come distributed in time.

Derrida argues that the organisation of the textual system renders totalisation "useless" and "impossible" (Derrida 2001: 365).[144] That is, to enclose a system within a 'here' and 'now', at the same time arresting the system's development in space and time, is thwarted by complex organisation as *complexus*. However, this argument against totalisation understood as subsuming the system in an absolute description that provides a discrete account of all components, their history, and a determined future, does not mean that the system is random and chaotic. The freeplay of the system is the possibility of meaning. But in order for that play of meaning to become meaningful, freeplay is not enough. This can be explained with reference to the centre or origin which the complex system has been argued to be without:

> The function of this centre was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the centre of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form (Derrida 2001: 352).

[144] "If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field – that is, language and a finite language – excludes totalization" (Derrida 2001: 365).

The centre, in other words, allows structural organisation to organise itself into a structure in the more conventional sense. That is, a recognisable form with stable relations, hierarchies. If one were to specify the boundary of a properly centred system, it would follow that the only problem one would encounter would be to find the boundary, which in principle would be there to be found.[145]

The assertion that deconstruction and also complexity theory do not destroy structure in the process of acknowledging the dynamic and transformational character of that structure has been repeated at various stages within this project. It is relevant again here. Although the lowest level of interactions in the system is indeed given to a movement that divides itself in time and in space, this movement is counteracted by acquiescence, an inclination towards subjugation and a propensity to be organised. Structure within complex systems is always in tension and, at least in principle, decomposable. The first level of violence is implicated in this decomposition (Derrida 2002: 235). This is not an equilibrium argument, for that too has been rejected in the process of description of the complex system. However, it is an argument for a degree of closure, a stability towards which elements within complex systems tend. In other words, play is not entirely free even without an origin. There are constraints on play from within the system itself that allows structures to emerge.

b. The Boundary of the Complex System

Extensive attention to the conceptualisation of the boundary of the complex system was necessary within the discussion of critical complexity theory and deconstruction. However, its intimate implication in the genesis of violence in the system warrants more considered attention. There is no meaningful system that is without a boundary. It need not be an edge or a membrane. It can also be a centre, origin, an explanation, identity or definition. In one sense, the boundary is the distinction between the system and everything outside it. The boundary, in this description, is nothing more than difference whose significance is amplified by the perspective of the observer. The *différance* between an element in the system and the space and elements around it is a dynamic and distributed boundary. It is clear that in order that a sign such as 'school' maintain a level of intelligibility, that *différance* must be constrained in some way (Gasché 1994: 16). There must be closure in the system: the open sign itself must be closed. Another requirement of the boundary can be demonstrated by

[145] Understanding the system as a system of freeplay means that while the system itself organises by constant and dynamic differentiation, the specification of categories of different things is never a matter of finding these significant differences. There is always a measure of ultimately unjustifiable creation at work. Nietzsche (2000: 55), to whom Derrida (2001: 354, 369, 370) attributes the most rigorous recognition of this creativity, explains:

> Every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual experience to which it owes its origin; but rather, a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases – which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal.

The original violence of the system is that all words already have this property of destroying singularity (Derrida 1997: 112). All words are always already concepts in this sense.

shifting the observation to view a school as a complex system. A school has many levels of interconnection with other systems. It is part of a society, a culture, a system of education and other larger systems. It also shares its elements, people, books, and others, with different systems such as families, libraries and the legal system. And yet, it seems obvious that the school is distinguishable from these systems of which it is a part and with which it shares components and resources. In other words, there is something outside it. The school must be bounded for there to be an inside and an outside. This boundary is not simply a function of description but also of the internal organisation of the system itself. Closure is necessary so that the differences do not simply reverberate into the system's environment because there is no difference between system and non-system (Cilliers 2005b: 608). One could say that in order that the play of differences enable the constitution and stability of certain structures within that system, the reverberation of play needs to be constrained in some way.

The descriptions of the complex system made within critical complexity thinking and within deconstruction suggest that the boundary as a concept must be extricated from its common close association with the line. In his important discussion of closure in Derrida's texts, an important and recurrent theme in deconstruction, Simon Critchley (1992: 61) begins by identifying different forms of closure and various systems that are all closed in some sense. Logic, language, poems, novels, artworks, homes, persons, debates and eco-systems are all closed systems. Each is distinct and recognisable. The boundary of a complex system can coincide with a visual boundary but it need not. The boundary of the legal system can be understood as the point at which the legal code is superseded by a different one, such as a moral code or an economic one. In simple terms, the boundary of the legal system emerges where its components are constituted within a different network of differences. Even an element at the centre of the system is vulnerable to the ambiguity of its meaning and belonging. Thus a boundary must not be thought of as a circle enclosing a stable centre that devolves into fuzzy edges. Because it is the difference that constitutes both the inside and outside of the system, the boundary is distributed throughout the system. In this sense, when we invoke the identity of the system as a unity, we are never far from its margin. Conversely, when we are at the margin, we are also close to the centre (Derrida 1979b; 1981a: 5; 1982: 35, 1997: 44).[146] Outside and inside are produced by the boundary as a site of activity, a process rather than a thing (Juarrero 2002: 100).

In all cases, closure produces finitude within an infinitely open field (Derrida 2001: 355, 365). As a spatial designation, it distinguishes a finite territory (Critchley 1992: 61). It also denotes a temporal delimitation bringing something to its conclusion or its end. Critchley (61) does not read closure as the end itself, but as the pursuit of an end. In other words, closure is dynamic. The foundation, future or origin it organises around is

[146] This idea is repeated in the discussion of the frame (Derrida 1979b), the role of the preface in a text (Derrida 1981a: 5), the significance of a single footnote in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Derrida, 1982: 35), and the discussion of supplementation (Derrida 1997: 44, 141-157). What is at relegated to the boundary or even beyond it to the outside, can be demonstrated to be vital to the constitution of the system as it is at its centre.

static. The attempt to describe the system is an attempt to circumscribe it and to impose certain limits on it, whether spatial or temporal or both (63). The complex organisation of the system, as discussed above, allows these limits to be breached. The absolute closure of totality is breached by the movement of text (64). The boundary of the complex system is shifting and permeable and a function of the interaction of the complex organisation of the system with the act of observation (Cilliers 2000c: 24; Juarrero 2002). Closure always involves a double movement: non-belonging and belonging, or transgression and restoration (Critchley 1992: 87). The concept of the whole understood as a recognisable unity which must maintain a level of stability in order to allow for recognition is not destroyed by thinking complexity (Morin 1992: 103). Closure itself may be dynamic but its specification is not. To specify the boundary of a system is to specify a particular difference and to privilege it over all others (Critchley 1992: 64; Derrida 1987b: 183). For a system to be specified, the function of its boundary must be to exclude things that are not part of the system *here* and *now*.

In a sense, the emphasis on openness in complexity thinking – critical complexity theory and deconstruction – must always assume a boundary, border or level of stability that is susceptible to being opened. It is not pure openness. Transgression assumes something to be transgressed. In order to engage with a system, a language, a signature or a society, in order to name it and to try to understand it, there must be what Gasché (1994: 16) calls "minimal universal intelligibility". Anything that can be recognised must be contained. *Différance* generates a system that is open and closed at the same time. Openness produces the possibility of meaning; closure renders that meaning understandable. Derrida (1979a: 117) argues that neither movement can erase the other:

> If we say that the unreadable [complex organisation] gives, presents, permits, yields something to be read...this is not a compromise formula. Unreadability is no less radical and irreducible...

The boundary is generated by *différance* and yet resists *différance*. Stable structures emerge out of complex organisation. It is on this point that complexity and randomness can be distinguished. The boundary in the complex system cannot be disentangled from stability. The system generates itself by distinguishing itself from its environment. In other words, it entrenches the difference between itself and its environment. The effect of this entrenchment, which becomes the distinction between the inside and the outside of the system, is that internal differences feed back into the system in a positive way (Cilliers 2001: 141). This idea is useful and can be incarnated in practical examples. The English language is established as English by reinforcing the difference between it, and sounds and marks that are not English. In stabilising the boundary between English and other languages, the internal structures such as syntax or definitions are reinforced. In other words, the identification of differences on a 'higher' level or at the level of the whole requires that internal differences do not disrupt the difference between differences on a global level, between the whole system and its environment.

Operational closure is the distinction between the system and its environment enabled only by self-reference (Luhmann 1989: 138). This theory of closure has been presented in chapter 1 and dismissed as an appropriate

model for the boundary of the complex system. This notion emphasises the role of the boundary as keeping the environment outside the system, with the exception of allowing only perturbations from outside that are necessarily transformed from noise into meaning and thus made understandable and valid in terms of the operations of the system itself (Cilliers 2001: 140). There is an absolute enclosure around the system that prevents any interpenetration between complex systems. If this model of the complex system is extended to human beings then operational closure would guard against any form of inter-subjectivity. If they are social subsystems such as the legal and economic systems as Luhmann (1989) intended, then operational closure would prevent any penetration between these systems. In other words, operations, conclusions or truths generated within each system or subsystem would be established only with reference to the enclosed system itself (138). The system cannot refer beyond itself.[147] This line of thought appears to lead toward a path of relativism in which meaningful engagement of 'truths' appears impossible and irrelevant.

This position, however, is clearly not maintained within the conceptualisation of the complex system as an open system within either critical complexity theory or deconstruction. Luhmann's (1989: 136-150) operational closure does not assume that boundaries are natural. They are the result of social interactions and observation, the system observing itself. The suggestion appears to be that the boundary is what the system says it is. The only reason that it would change would be if the operation of the system required change in order to maintain itself. However, because of freeplay, the boundary is always problematic.

The implication of observation in the constitution of the boundary does not clear up the ambiguity and heterogeneity instated by *différance*.[148] The boundary thought of as that which constitutes the system as "a global unity" is an emergent property (Morin 1992: 103). It emerges out of the interactions within the system, between

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[147] Luhmann (1989: 139) explains how a complex system, in this case the legal system, can participate in its environment and maintain absolute autopoietic autonomy by virtue of its operational closure:

> Thus, like every autopoietic system, [the law] is and remains to a high degree dependent on its environment, and the artificiality of the functional differentiation of the social system as a whole only increases this dependency. And yet, as a closed system, the law is completely autonomous at the level of its own operations. Only the law can say what is lawful and what is unlawful, and in deciding this question it must always refer to the results of its own operations and to the consequences for the system's future operations.

[148] In trying to work out how the system works internally, it is useful to recall the treatment of the boundary as if it is in fact closed, keeping the inside in and outside out:

> When dealing with complex systems in an 'operational' way, there is nothing wrong with this approach. One should be careful, however, not to overemphasise the closure of the boundary. The boundary of a complex system is not clearly defined once it has 'emerged'. Boundaries are simultaneously a function of the activity of the system itself, and a product of the strategy of description involved. In other words, we frame the system by describing it in a certain way (for a certain reason), but we are constrained in where the frame can be drawn. The boundary of the system is therefore neither purely a function of our description, nor is it a purely natural thing (Cilliers 2000c: 24).

The convenience of this simplification neither justifies nor removes the error of reifying the emergent boundary.

the system and its environment and with the observer. Cilliers (2000c: 24) situates emergence within complex organisation:

> Since the interactions are rich, dynamic, fed back, and, above all, nonlinear, the behaviour of the system as a whole cannot be predicted from an inspection of its components. The notion of 'emergence' is used to describe this aspect. The presence of emergent properties does not provide an argument against causality, only against deterministic forms of prediction.

Emergent properties of complex organisations present as something new or different in relation to the local relations between components in the system (Morin 1992: 105). The boundary as an emergent property is an event that must be reinstated as the system organises itself (105). Added to the properties of exclusion of what is non-system, inclusion of what is properly part of the system, and stabilising and constituting structure within the system, the boundary must also be irreducible to the system and vice versa (106). This last point means that the boundary neither determines the system, nor is it fully determined by the system. The emergent boundary does not circumvent the problem of how to articulate the function of closure with the announcement of systemically sanctioned ambiguity. The description of any emergent property cannot treat it as an emergent property. In order to do this, the activity of the system would need to be captured in its total complexity. The recognition of the emergence of the boundary out of the interaction of order and disorder, however, is a guard against the imposition of rigid closure onto organisation that remains open.

We cannot accurately determine the boundaries of the system because it is open (28). In order to say anything about the locus and character of the boundary, one has to make a selection. This selection is informed by the internal organisation of the system as much as it is by the context, which is also a selection (Cilliers 2001; Derrida 1979a: 81; Juarrero 2002). This limited selection is what enables understanding. The selection of a boundary – understood as the inside/outside distinction with respect to specific systems – is itself enabled by another understanding of the boundary as a frame.

c. The Boundary as a Frame: Bounding as Understanding

The idea of the boundary as a frame was introduced in chapter 2 as an instantiation of the critique of boundary judgements. Think of the boundary as a frame adds a new aspect to the boundary. The frame makes a certain space intelligible. The frame can be thought of as the collection of assumptions and structures that allow boundaries to emerge as such. The frame limits what can be seen in a constituted space. This limited and limiting character of the frame is itself the absolute limit to mastery of the system as a unit to which epistemology strives and sometimes imagines itself having achieved (Derrida 1982: ix-xi). The description of the boundary is always the imposition of closure within a system that cannot be closed. The observation of a boundary is a judgement rather than a discovery. Three aspects of the frame or parergon are pertinent to the argument here. Whereas it is

clear from considering the boundary in general that it has an undecidable character, the frame emphasises the need of still deciding where the boundary is in order to enable understanding. A frame enables understanding separating the inside from the outside and, in so doing, it allows the inside to become meaningful (Derrida 1979b: 3, 20). Without repeating what has been said about the frame, the process of framing can be explicated by turning to an analogous structure: the preface.

Derrida (1981a: 1-60) argues, in his preface to *Dissemination*, that the preface in outlining the general theory of a text, pre-empts what can be read or understood in a text. It legitimates certain meanings and already marginalises others by creating a telos whose function is to promise what the text is obliged to fulfil. It decides the meaning and imposes closure onto the possibilities of freeplay once that play has already begun. It thus orientates the play or dissemination of meaning in the system towards the fulfilment of a telos or intention (Derrida 1981a: 9, 10). The outside determines what is inside (Derrida 1988b: 152). This is only possible because of its purported exteriority. It announces its authority of the text from the outside in order to participate inside the text (Johnson in Derrida 1981a: xxxii). By remaining exterior, its certainty is shielded from questions and ambiguities in the text itself. However, the preface of the text, like the frame, is undecidable. Its effect on the text from the outside, while it professes an exteriority or marginality in relation to the actual text, pervades the interior space of the text by supplementing and moulding its meaning. It adds to the text and fulfils a lack within the text itself. By this gesture it supplants the centrality of the text itself, exposing its own interiority or textuality. The logic of the preface and parergonality applies to all explanatory frameworks (Derrida 1979b: 37). Like the frame, the book, and any structure that creates unity such as a state or an ideology, the function of the preface is to create closure. In order to do this, it must negate its own complex character.

A frame is necessitated in every possible description of the system. The meaning it makes legible or describable is not natural. Like the trace, the frame is an artificial institution (Derrida 1979b: 39; 1997: 42, 44, 46). A pure and natural frame is a "fiction" (Derrida 1979b: 39). Derrida's (34) analysis of parergonality makes this clear:

> A frame is in essence constructed and therefore fragile, this is the essence or the truth of the frame. If such a thing exists. But this 'truth' can no longer be a 'truth', it defines neither the transcendent nor the contingent character of the frame, only its character as parergon.

The frame remains necessary and constitutive and it implies a necessary but ultimately unjustifiable "violence" because in its institution because it is arbitrary (30). The frame cannot be derived from a natural foundation. The violence of the frame – and of all knowledge and understanding – is the ultimately ungrounded or arbitrary exclusion of certain elements, the suppression of complexity in terms of the distribution of the system in time and space, the privileging of some relations and structures and the marginalisation of others, and its distortion

that feeds back into the system.[149] No meaning is possible without exclusion of information in time and space; and no meaning arises that is without structure that differentiates the margins from the centre (Cilliers, van Uden & Richardson 2001: 65).

Error is built into the frame and into the meaning it enables and constrains. Nietzsche (2006: 225), in *The Gay Science*, boldly states that truth is merely a multitude of errors that have not yet been refuted. Meanings enabled by a frame that seems to be beyond question are, in a sense, already wrong and already anticipate the succession of one frame by another. The frame is therefore provisional because what is included always constituted by information it excludes. This exclusion is always already erroneous. The frame is constructed, provisionally, with the possibility of deconstruction included within its structure.

The epistemological violence of the frame, as Morin (1992: 397; 2007: 2-6) points out when discussing the mutilating effect of violence on the world, has serious consequences.[150] It is not only critical complexity thinking that theorises this connection between meanings and actions. Amartya Sen (2006: 9), in a work on identity, develops the theme of rigid socio-political or cultural identities leading to empirical violence and social inequality and exploitation that is premised on and justified by these ossified categories:

> Traditional inequalities, such as unequal treatment of women in sexist societies (and even violence against them), or discrimination against members of other racial groups, survive by unquestioning acceptance of received beliefs.[151]

In this instance, it is clear that an instituted difference – or reified boundary – around collective identity prevents the arche-violence from distributing itself because this institution is believed to be natural. "The *application* of a fiction always runs the risk of believing in it, or in creating belief in it" (Derrida 1979b: 39-40). This instituted order as an instance of framing is itself violence and it produces violence. It legitimates violence and in so doing

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[149] Of the frame within aesthetics, reading Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Derrida (1979b: 30) writes:

> The violence of framing proliferates. It confines the theory of aesthetics within a theory of the beautiful, the theory of the beautiful within a theory of taste, and the theory of taste within a theory of judgment. These decisions might be called external: the delimitation has far-reaching consequences, but even at this cost a certain internal coherence may be retained. Another act of framing which, by the introduction of the border, violated the interior of the system and distorted its proper articulations, would not have the same effect.

[150] Morin's *Blind Intelligence* (2007: 5) sounds the demand from complexity for new ways of knowing because of the violence at work in those theories that are not sensitive to the complexity of the system. He (1992: 6) writes that "mutilating thought necessarily leads to mutilating actions". Furthermore, this mutilation will not cease so long as reason as rationalisation "encloses reality in a system of ideas that are coherent but partial and unilateral and do not know that a part of reality is unrationalizable" (Morin 1992: 6).

[151] Sen (2006: 174), in remarkable resonance with Morin's general anti-reductionism, formulates the relationship between empirical violence and identities as one that depends on the reduction of multidimensional and developing – one could say complex – meanings to monadic, inert classifications. Such an essentialist approach to identification both produces and shapes violent confrontation between opposed groups. It also serves as a justification after the fact, legitimating violence by framing it as the rational outcome of differences of identity.

makes that violence invisible to those for whom its naturalness renders it beyond question (Grosz 1999: 12). This example also draws attention again to the necessity of the process of bounding and framing as something which exceeds the visual metaphor. A law frames society in that it structures society and in so doing makes it understandable. A theory of economics frames the system of exchange. Language as an instituted system of meaning frames all experience. Ideology frames political engagement. A relationship between two people could frame their sexual experience of one another. In each case, the logic of parergon is reincarnated.

d. THE BOUNDARY AS A HYMEN: BOUNDING AND PENETRATION

The preface, read above as a frame that enables understanding, can also be thought of as a point of entry. Having mastered a preface, one has traversed a line, moved inside a text toward its central meaning. One could think oneself as having penetrated the boundary. Derrida (1979a: 76) connects understanding with penetration when he proposes that the reading of any text begins with the location of its edge or border. However, another metaphor that can be used to elucidate the undecidability of the boundary of the text is that of invagination, which involves both the hymen and the fold. The hymen is commonly thought as a fixed barrier between a pure inside and a pure outside that must be broken to allow penetration (Derrida 1981a: 212). It protects the inside from the violence of intrusion of the other; however, within this operation, its only purpose is still to be broken (Derrida 1992a: 213, 216). The hymen is idolised for its preservation of purity; and yet it is equally urgent that this function be subverted. The hymen is only a hymen insofar as it executes both of these seemingly contradictory operations at once (Derrida 1981a: 213; 1992a: 216). Its meaning cannot be reduced to either. Its meaning remains undecidable (Derrida 1988b: 75). Yet, it is precisely the idea of a boundary as something meant to be crossed – with some violence – and that allows the outside inside that must be thought to separate the text and the context, two parallel texts and oppositions inside a text.

The breaking of the hymen is not to be conflated with penetration to the centre of a text. The fold is the second element of invagination. In order to think the fold, one needs to imagine approaching a text by tracing its edge, the title, or the first line, the first point of contact. Then one reads further and further, consuming more of the text, thinking oneself penetrating to its core or its innermost meaning or its centre. However, says Derrida (1979a: 97; 1979b: 31; 1992a: 236-237), when you think you have penetrated to the inside, you are still only tracing the edge and will have gotten no deeper than the surface of play. The fold creates a pocket that gives an impression of being inside or having reached the centre (Derrida 1979b: 31).[152] The play of meaning in fact has no centre. Once you have decided the centre, it can be challenged by shifting the context or shifting your own situation in the context (Derrida 1979a: 78). The logic of the trace confuses the penetration of a text by resisting

[152] "Invagination is the inward refolding of *la gaine* [sheath, girdle], the inverted reapplication of the outer edge to the inside of a form where the outside then opens a pocket. Such an invagination is possible from the first trace on. This is why there is no 'first' trace" (Derrida 1979a: 97).

any halt required by the constitution of a final meaning. Even when the boundary has been specified, we do not have unmediated access to the interior space (Derrida 1992a: 189). The boundary resists penetration (200). We are always outside, before the boundary. The inside remains: "inaccessible to contact, impregnable and ultimately ungraspable, incomprehensible – but also that wish we have not the *right* to touch" (211, author's emphasis).

The same logic also applies if one approaches the edge from the inside: the boundary, the edge, or the border of a text and the context has two sides. The fold does not confuse the inside and the outside by blurring or mixing these two areas. It confuses the inside and the outside by allowing one to be simultaneously inside and outside the text, and by displacing both the 'here' and the 'there' (81). If you delimit the inside of the text, the trace may force the inclusion of more information on the inside in the perpetuation of its continued journey of distributed reference (84). What was outside is drawn into the inside by the structure of the text and textuality. Thinking of a boundary as a hymen emphasises the aspect of knowledge that is fictional. The myth of penetration requires that the structural ambiguity of the hymen be erased. It is this dynamic structure as a process in a non-linear time-space that makes the boundary undecidable (Derrida 1979a: 92).[153] It does not dissolve the boundary or avoid the problem of bounding by identifying the boundary with the limit of all understanding. The boundary is ambiguous, undecidable, porous and complex, but it cannot be employed in this way. When we use the boundary it must be decided. Its fictional character must be denied. The violence of the boundary is the violence of all language and also meaning in general (Derrida 2001: 117).

IV. The Second Level of Violence: The Violence of the Boundary

a. Violence as the Suppression of Heterogeneity

It is clear from the analysis of the frame and the hymen that the construction of closure is violent because, like arche-violence, it is arbitrary. However, the form this violence takes requires further exposition. If the second level of violence must counter the first, and the first level of violence is associated with *différance*, then the second level of violence must erase the effects of *différance*. It must erase the mark of the other in space and in time. It must erase the imprint of absence in structure and reinstitute presence (Derrida 1997: 59, 86). Derrida's concern with violence and meaning is a concern with this process and its effects in the world. This is the ethical

[153] The interruption of the border does not produce an undifferentiated sludge:

> Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (nor submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying Strokes and lines) all the limits, everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what nor, every field of reference - to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth) (Derrida 1979a: 84).

impulse that runs along with Derrida's (1987: 183) insistence on the difference between opposition and *différance*. The second level of violence operates in the service of purification:

> For the phenomena that interest me are precisely those that blur these boundaries, cross them, and make their historical artifice appear, also their violence, meaning the relations of force that are concentrated there and actually capitalize themselves there interminably. Those who are sensitive to all the stakes of "creolization", for example, assess this better than others (Derrida 1998: 9).

The second level of violence, called counter-violence, counters the anti-metaphysical or counter-foundational violence of the lowest level of complex organisation (Hanssen 2000: 14). The second level of violence is the violence of the metaphysics of presence or what has been called modernist thinking. To naturalise the frame, rendering it present and thereby rendering the interior field it constitutes present too "is metaphysics, onto-theology itself" (Derrida 1979b: 39). The frame transforms the field frames. It instates its artifice by "force" (Derrida 1998: 9).

Différance generates difference in space (Derrida 1997: 66). The system is heterogeneous (Cilliers 2001: 143). Even the components of the system, because they are defined in terms of other components, are never enclosed in perfect self-identity. The associated activities of bounding, framing and penetrating are the reduction of difference and plurality to the same (Critchley 1992: 29). The violence of the boundary is the violence of erasing difference within the same. This difference is both the difference of the other within the system and it is the difference of the other-than-system.[154] That is pure exteriority or openness itself. It was postulated that the first level of violence destroys singularity. This is not denied, if the basis of singularity is a unique, clearly defined, neatly bounded entity. However, it can also be argued that the system produces a new form of singularity. Singularity is reformulated in terms of incalculability (Derrida 1992a: 228, 230; 2005b: 150). It is not an impervious line that separates one thing from another and creates irreducible difference. It is arche-violence instating a play of infinite difference through relation to others within the system that produces irreducible difference (Derrida 1992a: 230, 1997: 60; Gasché 1994: 45). By distributing the name in space and time, the first level of violence allows its repetition; however, it also allows each repetition of a name to remain differentiated. In order to purge the system of this violence, the boundary must prevent this differentiation and intervene wherever there is impurity, hybridity and contamination, which on this account of organisation, is the general case (Derrida 1981b: 40, 64). Singular instances must be gathered under a collective identity with no room for difference. The boundary must be enforced so that it is not overrun by the text, a risk that is constantly present (Derrida 1979a: 83).

[154] "What is also at the same time at stake – and marked by this same word in *différance* – is *différance* as reference or referral [*renvoi*] to the other, that is, as the undeniable, and I underscore *undeniable*, experience of the alterity of the other, of heterogeneity, of the singular, the not-same, the different, the dissymmetric. The heteronemous" (Derrida 2005b: 38, author's emphasis).

This form of violence need not be explored in the abstract. Derrida (2005b: 73) discusses it as the political violence of the performativity of language. To impose a unified meaning, whether by consensus or a more authoritarian strategy, is violent in this sense, whether this meaning is proliferated in rhetoric or law (Grosz 1999: 12). More obvious examples of this violence are totalitarianism, nationalism and egocentrism (Derrida 1993b: 14). In each case, the internal differences and the mark of the other within the state, the nation and the self, respectively, are denied. The violence necessary to confirm the self-identity of a cultural identity clearly is another example that can be invoked in this context. If cultural identity is thought of as grounded in the idea of sameness, then a culture must always be internally consistent.[155] There cannot be any deviance or impurity within its boundary. In this process, a complex dynamic system is reduced to a thing, an object (Morin 1992: 92).

Boundary is related to the notion of hierarchy (Cilliers 2001: 142). Like the boundary, hierarchy is an emergent property of complex interaction. Hierarchies that are no longer suited to the system can change, whether or not they become exploitative, when a certain overt violence is demonstrated, but that change is enabled by the frame which has replaced another. Asymmetrical structure – which is dynamic because it is relationally constituted within complex organisation – must be bounded in order to become meaningful and visible (Derrida 1993b: 143). In order to make a judgement on whether the asymmetrical relations between components in the system are good or bad, you need to already assume certain boundaries. We cannot understand the structure of complex interaction without a frame. However, this framing is also a freezing of relations.

An ideology of the sovereignty of human rights must deny the violence of the origin in order to function (154). It is clear that the constitutive violence at work within this ideology cannot be dismissed as bad. Its interpretive violence renders certain acts visible as empirical violence that once could not be legitimately interpreted as such were a different frame employed. A hyperbolic example of this problem is the legal definition of genocide. By naming events in the system 'genocide', we violate the singularity of those events. We make them recognisable and, in at least a provisional way, they become understandable in this process because they are pulled into the system of signification (Praeg 2008: 194). Naming genocide calls up comparisons with other like and different

[155] The case of a culture as a complex system provides an illustration of the clear tension between the differences or rather *différance* between individuals within that system, and the sameness that sustains identification between them. Derrida(1993c: 90) elaborates on this idea:

> This can be said, inversely or reciprocally, of all identity or all identification: there is no self-relation, no relation to oneself, no identification with oneself, without culture, but a culture of oneself as a culture of the other, a culture of the double genitive and of the difference to oneself. The grammar of the double genitive also signals that a culture never has a single origin. Monogenealogy would always be a mystification in the history of culture. Will the Europe of yesterday, of tomorrow, or of today have been merely an example of this law? One example among others? Or will it have been the exemplary possibility of this law? Is one more faithful to the heritage of a culture by cultivating the difference-to-oneself (with oneself) that constitutes identity or by confining oneself to an identity wherein this difference remains gathered?

The second level of violence is the resolution of this tension by institutionalising sameness and erasing difference.

forms of violence locally and far away, it calls up contextual information, other information and ambiguities. However, to deal with genocide, these references must be gathered up. Some must be disallowed while others are prioritised. Certain interests are marginalised and others are made central. This is done so that genocide can be dealt with within the system. It is done so that the violence of genocide may be recognised as an intolerable violence and so that an appropriate remedy might become possible. The arche-violence of the moral and legal frameworks that allow this interpretation must be denied:

> The violence of human rights rhetoric must be understood in this light – as actively involved in concealing the violence of its origins in order that the international law regime may aspire to its necessary and, eventually, self-evident legitimacy (Praeg 2008: 204).[156]

It is clear that stopping the operation of arche-violence in its tracks can be necessitated. The second level of violence can be employed to mediate empirical violence as in the case of genocide (Gasché 1994: 16). It can be demanded by the fact of suffering of fellow human beings, or non-human beings for that matter. While this is not denied, the violence that enables this process is still ultimately ungrounded. An argument against genocide that is grounded in human rights must assume a certain idea of what it is to be human 'here' and 'now', and some specific idea of a right 'here' and 'now'. Such assumptions do not only reduce difference in space. The law as a complex system can anticipate the future by creating a model of the future based on information in the model now. This model can incorporate future changes. However, because it cannot be based on anything other than the system as it is, the model cannot allow for radical change in any way other than building a core of provisionality into itself. In the face of such hyperbolic empirical violence as genocide, it is plainly problematic to assume only a provisional stand. This is a problem facing any ethics that begins with the acknowledgement of complexity.

b. Violence as reducing Past and Neutralising the Future

Différance produces space and time that are inseparable (Derrida 1997: 68). Arche-trace and consequently also arche-violence is the opening of all temporisation (Gasché 1994: 46). The violence of the boundary is enforced in space and time. The reduction of difference in the system reduces the range of possibilities of the system's interpretation of the past and the meaning that the future has for the system. The complex system is constituted

[156] Praeg (2008: 204) continues:

> All juridical orders – including the regime of International Law of concern here – are founded on violence, on the violent manipulation of the right to violence. Of course it will become just in retrospect, that is, in terms of the juridical order premised on that founding act of violence. This is why regimes are most violent at, or shortly after their inception; why dictators can plausibly claim to act as midwives to democracy. Shortly after its founding the violence of the founding is still there for everyone to see, the question of legitimacy wide open and hence the violence of its enforcement all the more necessary. Any new regime needs time to establish and 'naturalise' the rule to be enforced through the violence of law, through law-enforcing violence.

by its history. Memory, which is the retention and interpretation of this history, is constitutive of organisation of the present insofar as a present can be abstracted from the perpetual organisation of the system.

The trace is related to memory (Derrida 1997: 71). The non-linear movement of trace carries past organisations of the system into the present. The system's mediation of its inheritance is significant in how it can interpret the present and future (Derrida 1994: 23). However, it also works in the opposite direction. The way the future is anticipated works back on how the present and history of the system can be interpreted. Totalisation or the violence of closure is the violence of reducing the heterogeneity of the past in order to justify the present and extend the present into the future, reducing the heterogeneity of possibility that lies beyond the horizon of presence (xx). The imposition of temporal closure need not be the denial of past or future, but a linearisation of both which denies both any force.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida (14-16) reflects on the possibility that, as Fukuyama predicted, we have reached the end of history. That is, that the socio-political-economic differences that sustained a dialectical antagonism in the history of the world had been resolved with the dawn of an ideological higher synthesis. In this narrative, history proceeds by an oppositional logic. A thesis calls up its antithesis and this tension is resolved in a synthesis. The end of history is its telos (14). The present is directed towards it. Derrida (15) proposes that we have not reached history's end, but that this dialectical and eschatological version of history which is shaped by its anticipation of a closed vision of the future is what has come to an end. Instead, we must re-imagine history, memory and inheritance in terms of heterogeneity (16).[157] The present is always already contaminated with traces of the future and the past (21). The process of interpreting both past and future involves a process of selection and reduction within a network of differences. This reduction feeds back into the system and limits the range of possibilities within what we frame as the present. The responsibility of inheritance is not merely to repeat, but also to engage with the histories of the system and to find something new in this engagement. However, whenever a history is invoked, whether as an explanation or merely a description, the structure of history as the structure of the trace must be whittled down. Disparate memories of the past must be set against one another in a contest that only allows one victor. A heterogeneous history undermines the attempt to plot a course of progression towards a telos.

Hayles (2000: 137-162) proposes the narrative as an antidote to the totalising violence of the system in its construction of a pervasive presence. However, if the violence of closure is taken seriously, then the narrative

[157] Derrida (1994: 16) argues that the process of understanding inheritance is necessarily one of exclusion and distortion:

> An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*. 'One must' means *one must* filter, sift, criticise, one must sort out several different possible that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion around a secret. If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause – natural or genetic (author's emphasis).

certainly does not escape the violence of closure. In the construction of a narrative, one constructs a line, follows only one or a few stories and one can only take so many perspectives and tangents into account before the narrative loses its force, which is precisely its unfolding in time and into the future. In other words, at any point in the narrative, in order to justify the 'present', only one past is allowed, and only one future is anticipated. Reducing a heterogeneous history – one not entirely extricable from the present – to a determinate origin, in order to posit a past that is outside the system, and thus challenges its closure, always undermines itself. The history implicated in narrative structure it is stripped of its opposition to teleological thinking (Derrida 2001: 367).[158] In can only oppose one telos with another. The construction of narrative is usually a delimitation of a unity, even if that unity unfolds in time in a sense, if it becomes rather than is (367-368).

This is not an argument against narrative. Its risks must be accounted alongside the risks of describing so heterogeneous a history that its effects are utterly distributed and unaccountable. The effective result of such a position would be an ahistorical or synchronic analysis. It is clear, however, that narratives contain no simple tonic to the problem of totalisation or systemic violence. However, developing this line of thinking, the idea of history as containing several antagonistic histories, can be proposed (Derrida 2005b: 120). Each intellectual paradigm or indeed human experience has its own historicity, which is a challenge to every other. Any attempt to resolve this antagonism by the establishment of a frame which claims universality will reduce the complexity of the past.[159] Derrida offers examples of this teleological violence: Kuhn's paradigms; Foucault's epistemes; and scientific discovery. A goal projected back onto the past makes the past intelligible and reduces that ability of the past to be interpreted anew. The history of a complex system is not dormant. The system's interpretation and reinterpretation is marked with a trace of the event – something new – and of the non-event (Derrida 1994: 10). This is why one perhaps could say that the movement of any archaeology, like that of any eschatology, is an accomplice of this reduction of the structurality of structure and always attempts to conceive of structure on the basis of a full presence which is beyond play (Derrida 2001: 353). To reduce the past and posit this reduction as an origin is part of the operation of the second level of violence.

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[158] Hayles (2000: 137-162) is not the first to attribute an anti-totalitarian force to historical analysis. By tracing the history of a system, its contingency as a product of successive and distinct events which could have been otherwise is demonstrated. Derrida (2001: 367) argues that a reduced history is:

> ...in complicity with a teleological and eschatological metaphysics, in other words, paradoxically, in complicity with that philosophy of presence to which it was believed history could be opposed. The thematic of history, although it seems to be a somewhat late arrival in philosophy, has always been required by the determination of Being as presence.

Nietzsche's genealogy harnesses this anti-metaphysical force of historicity (van Tongeren 2000: 193). However, its success follows from the rhetorical devices harnessed within the genealogy that undermine its own authority.

[159] "Whenever a telos or teleology comes to orient, order, and make possible a historicity, it annuls that historicity by the same token and neutralises the unforeseeable, the incalculable interruption, the singular and exceptional alterity of *what* [*ce qui*] comes, or indeed *who* [*qui*] comes, that without which, or the one without whom, nothing happens or arrives (Derrida 2005b: 128).

Similarly, the projection of a telos posits the future as an origin (Derrida 1988b: 130). The future presents a similar but different problem within the movement of totalisation. Like the past, the future of a complex system is heterogeneous. Like the past, the future must be interpreted. The future of a complex system can and is anticipated by the system itself in order to be robust and resilient. Like the past, this anticipation is framed and thus suppresses most of the heterogeneity of the future and reduces the range of possibilities open to the system. There is, however, another understanding of the future as an event, which is not an extension or projection of the present or of the past. Rather, it is an interruption of structure by the appearance of the new. In order that the boundary preserves its integrity, it can incorporate the future in the first limited sense outlined. However, it cannot tolerate radical change. Thus the violence of the metaphysics of presence neutralises the future as an event. This violence extends to "dogmas, all conversions, all articles of faith or philosophy" (Derrida 2001: 119). Reason itself, science, progress and all other attempts to systematise and unify are teleological insofar as they cannot be sustained on the basis of a plurality (Derrida 2005b: 120).

The theory of alterity within deconstruction has an ambiguous relationship with Emmanuel Levinas' Other (Derrida 2001: 97-192). The other, marked within the system of signification, cannot maintain a position of pure exteriority. However, radical alterity thought of as unmarked space within the system does maintain this position. Thus, the association of radical alterity with a pure future developed by Levinas (1989: 42-44) in *Time and the Other* is still relevant to this discussion. In contrast with the attempt to purify the interior, which involves the emphatic differentiation of a field, a pure outside is unmarked. Therefore it is meaningless. However, the future can be rethought so that it is possible to make room for an encounter with what is totally unforeseeable within the present configuration of what has been rendered present by the entrenched fiction of the frame (Derrida 1994: 28; 2001: 118).

Levinas (1989: 43) describes the arrival of the Other as coming from the future. The exteriority of the Other is not a result of mere spatial differentiation between the self and the Other. If the Other were simply differentiated in space, then the Other would, in principle, remain absolutely knowable even if this principle could not be achieved in practice. However, the relationship with the Other is not one of knowledge or mastery (42, 45). It is the confrontation with a mystery. The Other is incalculable. The other within deconstruction retains this association with the future because of the structure of the trace. This is not the future in terms of anticipated possibility within the system or self:

> The future is what is in no ways grasped. The exteriority of the future is totally different from spatial exteriority precisely through the fact that the future is absolutely surprising. Anticipation of the future, sanctioned as essential to time by all theories from Bergson to Sartre, are but the present of the future and not the authentic future; the future is what is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us. The other is the future (Levinas 1989: 43-44).

The structure of the trace is a relationship with absence (Levinas 1986: 351; 1989: 43). The erasure of the event is simultaneously the erasure of the singularity of the other in time. Any ideal horizon will tend to neutralise the event because it anticipates it in a particular form in advance and thus destroys its novelty (Derrida 2005b: 143). The frame does not merely totalise, it totalises in advance (Derrida 1994: 37). It pre-empts the possibility of change and thereby closes it altogether. The future resists this unification but this resistance is erased in the second level of violence (Derrida 2005b: 128).[160]

Derrida (1994: 3) seeks to maintain a here and now without the conjunction of past, present and future. The challenge lies in the attempt to think the present as disjunction (18). Even if the arrow of time is broken or splinters into a million possible and impossible lines, the past, present and future are only understandable if their complexity is reduced (25). In order for the first time to be an event, it also needs to be the last time. The event always recedes from the present towards the future and the past (Derrida 1994: 14). Once an event has been interpreted by the system and becomes part of the range of future possibilities, it ceases to function as pure future. The future is not what is possible. It is precisely that which is impossible within the present organisation of the system (35). What is impossible cannot be articulated within the system. Therefore, every frame that invokes a vision of the future neutralises the future as an event.

V. Consequences for Language and the Law

a. Poststructuralism Turns to Linguistic Violence

Critical systems theory asserts that all concepts, including violence, are anthropomorphic insofar as they are embedded in epistemological and linguistic systems.[161] In other words, describing the reproductive system of a tree frog is not itself natural. The first and second levels of violence will be implicated in this description. It does not follow that all concepts apply equally to the social and natural world because all concepts are anthropomorphic. It can still be acknowledged, without making too many grandiose claims about what separates human beings from other living systems, that to speak of a human social phenomenon is different to describing the organisation of a cell, a lion or an eco-system. In fact, the statement of irreducible difference between different systems follows from the anteriority of difference within the complex system. Cilliers (2000c: 24; 2001: 137) argues that the description of complexity must be completed or rather supplemented with the

[160] "Moreover, the teleology or teleologism that so powerfully governs the transcendental idealisms and rationalisms of Kant and Husserl is also that which limits or neutralises the event. Teleologism seems always to inhibit, suspend, or even contradict the eventfulness of what comes, beginning with the scientific event..." (Derrida 2005b: 128).

[161] "All knowledge, whatever it may be, supposes a knowing mind, whose possibilities and limits are those of the human brain, and whose logical, linguistic, and informational support comes from a culture, therefore from a society, *hic et nunc*" (Morin 1992: 85).

description of the particularities of any one complex system in order to say something interesting about that system. Every complex system has both general and singular characteristics.[162] Whereas the conceptualisation of the first and second levels of violence can be incorporated into a general description of complex systems, violence has a particular meaning in the context of human social systems such as cultures, political systems and languages.

The particular case of language, through which we order society, in which identities are formed and through which we structure society with categories, classes, narratives, norms, politics and laws, demands attention. Because there is no social system that evades it, whether or not language is considered violent determines whether violence lies inside or outside a range of social systems. The work of the first and second levels of violence in the constitution of all meaning is what determines that this complex, 'deconstructive' or indeed poststructuralist understanding of violence is opposed to the liberal tradition that seeks to keep language and violence separate (Hanssen 2000: 160). This separation is not consistently maintained. For example, within this tradition, the concept of "hate speech", which is words that can harm, undermines its absoluteness (160).

Returning to Arendt's (1970: 43-45) theory of violence as an example of this tradition for a moment, it is apparent that within the clear typology that distinguishes and defines power, violence and their associates, power is associated with the collective, with consensus. This consensus, the very converse of violence, is made possible through language. Language is the vehicle through which we may realise an alternative to violence. It is no surprise then that in *On Revolution* (1963: 9), she places violence outside language:

> Where violence rules absolutely, as for instance in the concentration camps of totalitarian regimes, not only the laws – *les lois se taisent*, as the French Revolution phrased it – but everything and everybody must fall silent. It is because of this silence that violence is a marginal phenomenon in the political realm; for man, to the extent that he is a political being, is endowed with the power of speech...

Arendt goes on to say that violence itself is "incapable of speech" (9). Accordingly, theories of violence that articulate violence only deal with its justifications and legitimacy (10). It must be emphasised that the artificial engagement between Arendt and Derrida here acknowledges that the violence at stake in the opposition of violence and speech falls under what Derrida (1997: 112) calls "empirical". More than that, it is brute physical violence. It cannot be achieved by words and it cannot be articulated with words. The juxtaposition of these two positions must be mindful of the fact that violence does not mean the same thing in each. However, what is at stake is not merely a semantic confusion. The definition of violence delimits its relation to language.

[162] "Certain systems may display some of these [ten general] characteristics more prominently than others. These characteristics are...a general, low-level, qualitative *description*. If we accept this description (which from the literature on complexity theory appears to be reasonable), we can investigate the implications it would have for social or organisational systems" (Cilliers 2000c: 24, author's emphasis).

Within liberalism, power, politics and speech supplement each other (Hanssen 2000: 163). This position cannot be summarily dismissed by deconstruction. It creates a real possibility that ideas about government and law might mediate that human tendency to settle the matter of which idea is better with war and physical force (Arendt 1963: 87). To purge speech of violence is to create a space in which legitimate rule is not merely for the strongest. Arendt (86) does not argue that a political consensus is easy to achieve. She (86-87) indeed argues that social and economic asymmetry produce conditions that could well make political power impossible and leave only violence as an option for changing the system. However, this violence is only a means to an end that it itself cannot achieve. Violence – here what is being spoken of is empirical violence – is still "pre-political" (86). What is needed to achieve power and enter into a political space is an "egalitarian" space in which speech is the means of deciding the best possible ideas to be embodied in nonviolent laws and political institutions (Hanssen 2000:160).

In line with this, Arendt (1963: 87) associates power with structure and violence with chaos and decomposition of order. While it can interrupt a given order, violence does not produce anything positive in its place. This position assumes that violence and peace are ontologically prior to speech, which can be employed as a neutral arbiter between the two (Hanssen 2000: 161). This view is challenged from several angles. In *Black Skin White Mask*, Fanon (2008: 8-27) discusses the ways in which language is a means – like violence – of forcing the 'Negro' to behave in a certain way. It has material effects, causing psychological harm. Language, the very word 'Negro' subordinated some people to others in a legitimate ways, at least in a certain historical context (19). It was not the breaking of laws and norms, but their enforcement and their legitimacy within a culture and a language that brought about violence. French itself, the language which Derrida, an Algerian Jew, was forced to use, was utilised as a weapon forcing people to rid themselves of difference in order to legitimately belong within the French linguistic community. Not only the French – properly speaking – but also the "Negros" of the colony who had managed by artifice to bring themselves closer to the French norm used language in this way (10-13). They denied the fact of their creolisation and their home within spoken Creole in order to purify themselves of that cultural ambiguity that excluded them from the civilised world. And yet, among the French, in this case, in this moment in history, the fact of their blackness was a difference whose mark could not be erased and which guaranteed exteriority with respect to the French community.

Not only the words of a language, but also the language as a whole insofar as it imposes a boundary of absolute difference, is violent (9, 15). It is violent in the sense that it cannot tolerate internal differences that it does not itself sanctify. And, in a more colloquial sense, it is violent because this constitutive violence has material effects. Its violence is inscribed in the world and on the body. Similar arguments are presented in those marginal philosophical and political discourses such as feminism or queer theory or postcolonial theory (Hanssen 2000: 161, 173). Each raises objections to empirical conditions, but on related terms, with the constitution of meaning that produces and legitimates these conditions through the reification of complex and dynamic *différance*.

This type of analysis is enabled by the inversion of the ontological priority of reality over the world that characterised theory during and after the linguistic turn (161). This manner of priority is impossible within a philosophy that is premised on the alienation of language from the world. Language has the capacity to produce consensus, but this consensus does not reflect any purer truth that escapes the conflictual constitution of language itself (Derrida 2005b: 73). Saussure and Levi-Strauss, both having made this turn, seek again to purge the language of violence by opposing natural speech to artificial writing, and in doing so still associate violence with all forms of political institution (Derrida 1997: 36). In contrast with the liberal tradition, violence still enters the realm of politics, despite their mutual opposition of speech and violence. The personal is free of violence when it is free of political structures that go against natural organisation. Derrida's (40, 44) reading of the structuralist paradigm extends the violence of writing to all language through the extension of writing – the imposition of unnatural hierarchy – each disdains. It is clear that the containment of violence is not pursued in the name of violence. It is done rather in the name of nonviolence. It is done so that nonviolence is not merely an abstraction, but an achievable reality.

Whether nonviolence is ostensibly achieved through the creation of political structures or by avoiding political structure, the desire to maintain this real possibility is repeated. However, the problems with the enforcement of this desire are clear. For example, democracy, which is commonly held up as a nonviolent alternative to tyranny or lawlessness, is argued by Derrida (2005b: 63) to depend on the same destruction or exclusion of difference that characterises all structure, definition and law:

> …democracy has always wanted by turns and at the same time two incompatible things: it has wanted, on the one hand, to welcome only men, and on the condition that they be citizens, brothers, and compeers [*semblables*], excluding all the others, in particular bad citizens, rogues, noncitizens, and all sorts of unlike and unrecognizable others….

It is not only language that is violent, but also politics, identities, institutions, and laws whose operation is mediated through meaning but that are not strictly linguistic. A politics that is not violent would not be meaningful. Any political ideal such as consensus or democracy would have to be deliberately positioned beyond meaning in order to be nonviolent (Derrida 2005b: 37; Hanssen 2000: 169). What is lost in this position is a nonviolent system as a real achievable political goal, not only in the sense implied by the lowest level of complex organisation, but in also in the establishment of institutions meant to ameliorate this lowest level.

b. Law and Peace: a Complex Challenge to Kant

In line with critical complexity theory and deconstruction, Nietzsche (2000: 56) associates language with truth and the construction of truth with the institution of order in the world. Hierarchy, subordination and law are built on the boundaries instituted within language. This institution is intended to mediate the relations between people

that would otherwise be violent. In fact, the state of nature – human existence prior to society – for Nietzsche is "the most flagrant *bellum omni contra omnes*" (54). Law structures society so that only violence legitimated within language is allowed. However, in anticipation of the poststructuralist association of language, law and violence, Nietzsche (55) protests the application of general concepts to singular things. Nietzsche's thought can be read as a "critique of philosophy as an active indifference to difference, as the system of adiaphoristic reduction or repression" (Derrida 1982: 17). This proto-grammatologist, in forsaking the centre, also appears seduced away from the peacefulness that the centre legislates (Nietzsche 2000: 54).

In accordance with this understanding of language, truth and law, and taking the will to power into account, it is clear that this theoretical position is in tension with law as such. Nietzsche (2006: 340) criticises Immanual Kant, first, for his attempt to find a foundation that would ground all morality, and secondly for failing to acknowledge that moral codes are not justified. Instead, they justify what would otherwise be arbitrary actions, characters and institutions.[163] Nietzsche, in his polemic against all established moral norms and Kant at the mast of this way of thinking, criticises the claim that any law could be categorical. More importantly, like linguistic categories deny the singularity of individuals, so moral and legal categorical imperatives deny the singularity of individuals (van Tongeren 2000: 195). Instead, the law addresses: "peoples, races, epochs, classes, and above all to the whole animal 'human', to human being *in general*" (Nietzsche 2006: 342, author's emphasis). The law addresses "the herd" (van Tongeren 2000: 195). A law – as a boundary or a frame – must instate a higher, more important and forceful level of difference in order to justify the erasure of the individual. It cannot tolerate its own contradiction or internal struggle. A law is always a law for many and not for one. A law must hold for all over which it has jurisdiction. In its most emphatic expression, this extends to "all human wills" (Kant 1898: 43).

Kant, on the other side of the polemic, endeavours in *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (3) to work backwards from "everything empirical" and common sense moral reasoning to locate precisely those laws or that law that is of "absolute necessity". Kant (4) seeks morality that is grounded a priori, before the particular situation in which it is followed. Furthermore, to follow the law must be done for the sake of the law itself in order to be moral (5). Morality is law, and not contingent situated decisions that happen to coincide with the law. Kant (38) therefore arrives at the categorical imperative: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal one". Moral laws are not found in interactions between people, but arrived at by a process of deduction that begins with this single absolute foundation (38). Kant (39) reformulates this law in terms of nature: "Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a

[163] In *Beyond Good and Evil* § 187, Nietzsche emphasises the arbitrary nature of moral law that claims universality:

> One sort of moralist would like to exercise his power and creative whims upon mankind; a different sort, and perhaps Kant himself, uses his moral code to announce: 'What is honourable in me is that I can obey – and it should be no different for you than for me!'

Universal Law of Nature". Kant illustrates the application of this imperative with an anecdote about a man who wishes to take his own life. The man reasons with himself that, based on "self-love", it is right that he should shorten his life which in the course of time will bring about greater suffering than satisfaction (39). To the question of whether this self-love could become a principle that is universal within nature, Kant (39) answers that a sentiment to improve life by destroying it is contradictory and therefore could not exist within nature, which must by this reasoning be non-contradictory or internally consistent. Three more such anecdotes are offered, reinforcing the message that what matters in matters of morality is not individual circumstance but the general principle at stake.

The moral thing to do challenges the individual's experience of him or herself. The moral thing is certainly not the expedient thing. What is clearly marginalised in this type of analysis is the internal difference that challenges general classifications, demarcations and rules. Kant writes:

> Some actions are of such a character that their maxim cannot without contradiction be even conceived as a universal law of nature, far from being that we should will that it should be so (41).

The property of universality is intrinsic. It is the origin of morality in the world. Evil, Kant (331) argues elsewhere[164] – and perhaps one could add violence here – cannot have the same origin as morality. It cannot originate with the categorical imperative.

This question of origins is looked on quite differently in *On the Genealogy of Morals, Second Essay*, in which Nietzsche (2006: 413) makes bold accusations against Kant. The categorical imperative or indeed any categorical imperative is not only wrong in the sense of taking important differences as irrelevant. This mistake is itself immoral:

> In *this* sphere of legal obligations then, we find the breeding-ground of the moral conceptual world of 'guilt', 'conscience', 'duty', 'sacred duty', – all began with a thorough and prolonged blood-letting, like the beginning of all great things on earth. And may we not add that this world has never quite lost a certain odour of blood and torture? (not even Kant: the categorical imperative smells of cruelty...) (413, author's emphasis).

In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche (489) calls the categorical imperative "harmful" and "*mortally dangerous*" (author's emphasis). The reduction of difference called violent from the shared perspective of deconstruction and critical complexity theory is analogous to the gesture within a categorical morality recognised by Nietzsche. Having already likened arche-violence to the clash of the wills to power, it can be inferred from this discussion that the tripartite structure of complex violence must produce an understanding of the law that shares Nietzsche's

[164] Kant (1898: 331) explores the origin of evil mankind in the first part of *The Philosophical Theory of Religion*.

concerns about its violence. This being the case, the discussion of complex violence must also share a suspicion of Kant's (1898: 3) aim to ground all moral action and his conclusion that the metaphysical foundation of all morality has its origin in a unitary principle free of any contradiction or internal difference.

If the law in this abstract and lean sense cannot be thought to bring about a state of non-violence, then the possibility of non-violence on the level of actual pragmatic legal law is also, like democracy, perpetually violent. Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1939: 2), built on the foundation of metaphysically grounded morality, sets out a clear and specific pathway towards international peace. That is, international relations without the possibility of war (2-3). Like Nietzsche, Kant (10) argues that "the state of nature is not a state of peace, but of war". However, through a programme of implementable strategies, this war can be superseded by the institution of law (11). What stands in the way of achieving good laws that bring about peacefulness is only the passage of time (67). This type of achievable programmable nonviolent law is not possible within the framework of violence developed from a complexity informed position, no matter how sophisticated it may be. In practical terms, it is unclear where this leaves politics, social systems or the law.

It is important to note that violence is never identified except with reference to a moral judgement, a boundary and a frame. To kick a soccer ball is not violent. But to kick a human being is violent. A whole network of definitions and assumptions underpin this seemingly simple distinction. Violence requires recognition. Even Nietzsche, who so plainly disdains the law of morality, instates a morality of his own, even if this is by definition a morality that resists generalisation, in other words, a morality that is sensitive to individuals and not standardised for the group (van Tongeren 2000: 197-202). It might overrun common conceptions of lawfulness but it is not without its own laws. The violence of a genocide can only be determined with reference to a moral law that tells us that human life cannot be taken, and certainly not taken en masse justified by characteristics that are deemed contingent in relation with the fact of humanness. The law may not bring about peace, but it brings about a provisional answer to suffering and an attempt, however flawed, at ending that suffering. Without it, not even the attempt is possible. Without the law, violence in any form is invisible (Gasché 1994: 16, 18). All law is violence, but violence that can be argued to be tolerable within a specific context and for a specific time, chiefly if this violence is in service of putting an end to another intolerable atrocity (Derrida & Roudinesco 2004: 31). The distinction between tolerable and intolerable violence may involve privileging one form of suffering over another.

VI. NEGOTIATING THE SECOND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE

a. THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF RAPE IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN ILLUSTRATION OF VIOLENCE ON THE SECOND LEVEL

The second level of violence in the system is linked to all forms of normalisation of which the law, as a system of norms, rules and conventions is a paradigmatic instance and so draws Derrida's focused attention in several texts: *Before the Law* (1992: 181-220); *The Law of Genre* (1992: 221-252); *The Laws of Reflection* (1987a: 13-42); *The Force of Law* (2002a: 230-259); *Spectres of Marx* (1994); and in other texts in which the law in general or specific laws are invoked and critiqued and criticised. One distinguishes between tolerable violence and intolerable violence by means of the employment of a frame (Derrida & Roudinesco 2004: 31). This frame can be positioned in many ways. Or perhaps it is better to say that there are several frames or boundaries at work. It is impossible to account for them all but it is possible to understand some and to identify their effects. If the question as to where the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate forms of empirical violence lies is asked, it does not resound into a silent abyss (32). Many would readily answer that they knew. The boundaries in society do not always appear to be ambiguous. Laws, for example, only function because they claim clarity and predictability (Phelps & Kazee 2007: 349). Where there is ambiguity, it can be exploited only to instate an ostensibly clearer, most consistent and more correct alternative. It seems unconscionable to propose a law that is wittingly vague or even open to contradictory interpretations. An ambiguous law is no law at all. Many boundaries and frames are accepted, unquestioned and continually affirmed. The general effects of law, reducing the heterogeneity of the complex system, reducing history to a linear past and reducing the future to a telos, have been elaborated in general. However, an argument that begins with difference cannot be tested only in general. For this reason, the violence of the law must be explicated at the hand of an example.

The legal definition of rape in South Africa provides a clear example of a specific frame that was applied in the past in order to recognise a specific violence; a challenge to that frame based on the differences it denies within the categories it enforces; and the supersession of that violence by another. The problem of this definition is examined through a consideration of diametric arguments for particular legal definitions of rape (Phelps 2008; Phelps & Kazee 2007; Snyman 2007). In 2007, the Constitutional Court of South Africa undertook to extend the definition of rape from non-consensual penile-vaginal penetration to include non-consensual penile-anal penetration of a woman, citing women's rights to dignity, equality and security as justification for this extension (Snyman 2007: 677). CR Snyman (679) argues that the Court extended this definition by establishing an analogy between anal and vaginal sexual penetration and in so doing neglected an important difference between these two distinct things. This conflation of difference is seen as establishing a "dangerous precedent" in which the equivocation of two unlike things is used to extend the law in an unjustified way (677). This extension creates uncertainty about the integrity of the law and its ability to withstand several varying contexts in which it is

applied (680). By conflating the difference between non-consensual vaginal and anal penetration, respectively, the court effectively creates a new crime (681).

Snyman (681) predicts (correctly) that the new Bill on Sexual Offences will extend the definition of rape even further to include the non-consensual anal penetration of a male. A precedent was indeed set. Whether it was dangerous depends on which differences are central to the analysis and which are marginalised. Snyman (683) invokes the biological differences between men and women in order to argue that rape is uniquely a violation of women's physiological form:

> *Penile penetration of the vagina may result in the woman's becoming pregnant.* This results in the woman's vagina playing a privileged role in her biological makeup (author's emphasis).

It is the risk of pregnancy that makes rape particularly more of a violation, more violent that sexual assault, even if sexual assault is abhorrent and unacceptable and has shared consequences such as emotional scars and the risk of HIV (683). It is easy to imagine a case where the non-consensual penile-vaginal penetration of a woman has little or no risk of pregnancy: if contraception is used or if the woman or man is infertile, for example. Snyman (684) argues for the recognition and privilege of this difference and the consequent maintenance of the law in its traditional form.

The Constitutional Court did not agree (Phelps 2008: 648-649). The definition of rape was changed to include non-consensual anal penetration of women, which did initiate the extension of the law in order to then recognise male rape as being of the same order. The decision actively deconstructed the hierarchical relation between heterosexual penile-vaginal intercourse and other expressions of sexuality that underpinned the previous definition. It also undermined the reduction of sexual difference to a biological difference and the consequent casting of man as an active perpetrator of crimes and woman as an impotent victim (655). Although this may often be the case, to codify this relation in a law both recognises it as an empirical fact that demands redress and also entrenches it as a norm (Phelps & Kazee 2007: 344). The definition of rape does not prioritise the interests of women without also marginalising the interests of vulnerable boys and men and reifying the meanings of sexual difference and sex respectively (345). It is not the difference between vaginal and anal sex or the difference between women and men that underpins this new decision. Rather, it is the acknowledgement of the internal differences within gender and within forms of sexual intercourse that are concealed by the emphasis on accepted gender boundaries. In order to unearth this level of heterogeneity, it is not difference but sameness between men and women and between different sexual acts that must be emphasised. A new crime is indeed created herewith, and with it new definitions of gender and of sex are also constituted because of the imposition of a new legal frame. Neutralising gender difference in order to acknowledge other difference has allowed the court to recognise institutional violence against gay and lesbian citizens analogous to the violence the law

inflicted on victims of anal rape. Phelps & Kazee (354) argue that to develop the law in this way is as important as enforcing the law as it stands.

The motivation of the law must always be to recognise and redress violence. While the decision to extend the scope of rape to include anal rape is strongly motivated, it cannot be denied that in a country like South Africa, the particular risk of falling pregnant without access to proper healthcare or abortion facilities adds a concern that does not pertain to anal rape. However, it must be decided which difference is more important in a particular social, cultural and historical context. This example does not only illustrate the violence of framing and bounding as prioritising certain differences over others, it also demonstrates the necessity of having to enforce that violence in answer to another empirical violence. It must be acknowledged that a position such as Kant's or indeed Arendt's allows for moral certainty, which is certainly problematic but not without merit. Neither a definition of rape that protects the reproductive integrity of women nor one that protects the dignity, equality and security of both genders with respect to all sexual activity can be ultimately grounded or justified given the dynamics of complex organisation.[165] The fate of the law in this discourse is this fundamental uncertainty.

b. Derrida on Mandela: to Challenge Laws in the Name of Lawfulness

It can be argued that a position informed by complexity need not disparage the law because it is critical of it. Derrida (1994: xix) argues that the question of law is not reducible to particular laws or rights. He (1987a: 13-42) writes of his admiration of the law reflected in his admiration of Nelson Mandela. It is not Mandela's admiration of particular laws or even particular systems of law that is admirable, but his admiration and invocation of lawfulness above the particular, contingent law that govern society (20, 38). It is jurisprudence, the philosophical engagement with law as the institution of right and wrong, that demands our respect. This position can be situated within a poststructuralist tradition that theorises violence as the source of harm and the source of positive transformation in society (Hanssen 2000: 173).

Mandela is the first name of a legal conundrum. How to use the law to undermine a law or an entire legal system without questioning for a moment the law itself? This is not only Mandela's problem but the general problem confronted within complexity, and by Derrida. How does one undermine a boundary without undermining

[165] Spivak (1987: 103) schematises this movement of deconstructive criticism in her discussion of marginality in academic and political discourse. To proceed by inverting a hierarchical opposition involves a double movement in which the inversion is itself challenged by the logic – the recognition of arche-violence – that enabled its genesis. She (103) argues that oppositions are therefore never "merely reversed". There is always displacement that reminds us of the deep insecurity at the foundation of any political or legal or intellectual assertion:

> The peculiarity of deconstructive practice must be reiterated here. Displacing the opposition that it initially apparently questions, it is always different from itself, always defers itself. It is neither a constitutive nor, of course, a regulative norm (103).

boundaries as such? If critical complexity theory is not to be equated with relativism, then this problem must be addressed. Derrida (1987a: 20-21) reads Mandela as exposing the fiction upon which the apartheid legal system was founded in order to achieve an initial destabilisation of the authority of the particular laws under which he was convicted as a political prisoner. In his speech at the Rivonia Trial, Mandela demands reform in the name of "we the people" (21). He demands it in the name of all people in South Africa under the law. He juxtaposes the definition of South African 'people' protected under the law with the 'people' that must be excluded in order that the former group is maintained as *the* people. He destabilises the legal recognition of people and so demands that the law correct itself by correcting its recognition and by reframing the population. The authority of law as such – as an abstract hypothetical judgement of what is permissible in society – is never questioned. It is not the frame but its form, its position and its content that had to be transformed.[166]

The abstract principle of law, a law without content, might be thought an impotent thing. However, on Derrida's (23) analysis of Mandela's struggle, this abstract principle made concrete in the particular demands laid out in the Freedom Charter enforces the law. Law as such, made visible in the challenge of particular laws, is forceful. However, the appearance of the law in general is only enabled by the transgression of a law (33, 39). This transgression is itself violent even if it is necessitated. In this case, the process of democracy had to be interrupted with violence in order to instate a more democratic state (Derrida 2005b: 34-35). Arendt (1970: 30) would acknowledge the perceived need for this violent interruption and also accept that the apartheid laws were unjust. Violence would still be a means to political power. This admission would not call the democratic legal system that replaced apartheid inherently unjust and certainly not violent. Transgression, the initial violence, is without content and without the rule. Therefore as a political-legal response, it is a non-response. What is required in the end is a new rule to replace the old (Derrida 2005b: 40). Transgression, which necessarily opposes the law to itself, is argued by Derrida (1987a: 38) to be the cornerstone of "exemplary" political activism. However, neither transgression nor legality is nonviolent. As with the particular case of the legal definition of rape, so it is with the more general case of the definition of the system of law in South Africa.

VII. CONCLUSION

The boundary is never obliterated. It is only ever reconstructed or replaced. However, particular frames such as the racist ideology that legitimated a racist state and legal system in South Africa or even the less overtly

[166] Derrida (1987a: 26) argues:

> In all sense of this term, Mandela remains, then, a *man of the law*. He has always appealed to the law even if, in appearance, he has to oppose himself to such-and-such specific legality, and even if judges have made of him, an outlaw.

problematic one that purports to redress gender inequality by the creation of a separate legal definition for sexual crimes particular to the female anatomy are always vulnerable to deconstruction:

> ...the limit of the frame or the border of the context always entails a clause of nonclosure. The outside penetrates and thus determines the inside. This is what I have analysed so often, and so long, under the words 'supplement', 'parergon', and each time that I have said of the trait of writing or of inscription...(Derrida 1988b: 152-153).[167]

As long as specific frames are seen as legitimate, they will tend to erase this non-closure (Derrida & Roudinesco 2004: 28). Critical complexity theory need not insist on the dissolution of every boundary. We need the constitutive violence of the discourse on human rights in order to understand empirical violence as violence (Praeg 2008: 215). If things cannot be named, contextualised and understood, there can be no intervention. Deconstruction presupposes a structure with which to engage. To place something outside the system of meaning as it were, to spare it the violence of equivocation, internal division and the counter-violence of the boundary, is not necessarily good (Gasché 1994: 16). What is advocated is not silence. Violence is an inescapable aspect of human interaction insofar as that interaction is meaningful. The boundary constrains and enables complex organisation. The second level of violence is instated by deciding the boundary so that complex organisation can be understood. However, the arche-violence can always be used to challenge this understanding.[168] To mobilise the arche-violence or *différance* against the closure of boundaries and the accepted order of things is, for Derrida (2005b: 39), political action.

It is clear that this position implies that intervening in the second level of violence always eventually involves the institution of a different violent frame. The consequences for ethics will be explored in chapter 5. However, some initial remarks can be made at this point. If ethics involves meaning, then ethics will be violent no matter how sensitive any particular position is to the singularity of the event to which it responds. If the frame is considered to be violent, then that analysis can be turned on the position from which it is espoused. What violence, for example, does a theory which sees violence everywhere do to the world? It can be argued, as it was in relation to arche-violence, that a theory that allows no reprieve from violence and no place in the system that

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[167] Derrida (2005b: 151) also discusses this non-closure in the context of the relation between human beings and animals:

> ...None of the conventionally accepted limits between the so-called human living being and the so-called animal one, none of the oppositions, none of the supposedly linear and indivisible boundaries, resist a rational deconstruction – whether we are talking about language, culture, social symbolic networks, technicity or work, even the relationship to death and to mourning, and even the prohibition against the avoidance of incest – so many 'capacities' of which the 'animal' (a general singular noun!) is so dogmatically to be bereft, impoverished" (151).

[168]"…we have to draw on the understanding that the force of a bellicose identity can be challenged by the power of *competing* identities. These can, of course, include the broad commonality of our shared humanity, but also many other identities that everyone simultaneously has" (Sen 2006: 4, author's emphasis).

escapes it is complicit in the constitution of a world that is more violent than it needs to be. Without making a metaphysical commitment to a nonviolent ontological reality, it must at least be acknowledged that the possibility exists that this position sees more violence than there is. This point cannot ever finally be dismissed. However, another can be posited to counter it.

One must ask what is sacrificed in order to reach a point that can be considered nonviolent or peaceful. One must ask who legitimates this condition. What is taken into account in deciding whether there is violence or not. The mistake has been made often enough to demonstrate that finitude of understanding does result in concrete empirical suffering when that understanding in enforced upon the world. As with the wretched criminal with whom this chapter opened, the violence of limited and transitory frames through which the world is legitimately understood at different times and places is written on the bodies of those who suffer the consequences of this bounded understanding. This generalisation of violence is done in the name of those whose violence goes unseen because of the boundaries instituted in the system. This is why deconstruction demands attention to the margins in order to understand the way in which what is considered the demarcation of an interior and exterior space determines how something is understood (Critchley 1992 87; Culler 1983: 215-216). Deconstruction, or a deconstructive attitude, involves the cultivation of sensitivity towards the centre as a source of repression (Spivak 1987: 104). Perhaps this can be extended to all non-foundational or post-metaphysical positions insofar as these positions make room for an analysis of violence.

The redress of violence in the case of the extension of the institution of marriage to same-sex couples was briefly mentioned under the discussion of legal definitions above. While this extension was argued to recognise violence in a manner analogous to the redefinition of rape, there is a significant difference. In both cases, marginal phenomena displaced the central meanings that underpinned the respective laws as they stood. It appears that to have rape not go unseen is an obviously better state of affairs. Without discrediting individuals' desires to wed, it is not immediately clear that extending the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples is better than, for example, to problematise the definition of marriage as such with recourse to its exclusion or marginalisation of same-sex couples. It must at least be acknowledged that from this perspective, although lawfulness is not dismissed, the price – being made to suffer the violence a second time of the boundary in the name of social freedom – of inclusion in the centre for those once at the margin may be too high.[169] The employment of a new frame always produces a new centre on which it is hinged and a new margin (Spivak 1987: 107).

[169] Spivak's deconstructive feminist position (1987: 107) is sensitive to this price:

> The putative centre welcomes selective inhabitants of the margin in order better to exclude the margin. And it is the centre that offers the official explanation; or, the center is defined and reproduced by the explanation that it can express.

It is clear that the law can be understood as violent in itself if a certain theoretical perspective is adopted. That is to say, the law is violent because it reduces difference in space and time. This is the sense in which Morin (2007: 3) describes knowledge as “mutilating”. However, the mutilation of the second level of complex organisation is not merely epistemological. In a system of racial classification, for example, where categories employed never give rise to overt and empirical violence such as rape, the categories themselves can be experienced as harmful. When Derrida (1998: 9) argues that the Creole is most sensitive to the stakes of violence, he suggests that violence need not take the form of rape and murder to be material or to be felt. This insight speaks to the matter at hand. The violence of the boundary always has the potential to produce empirical violence. Empirical violence, though related to the boundary, is distinct from its general operation. It is to this final level of violence that attention is now turned. Empirical violence, non-violence and ethics are the related subjects of chapter 5. Each of these three concerns is coupled to the conception of exteriority. It therefore the system’s outside to which the argument must be directed.

CHAPTER 5

OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM: EMPIRICAL VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter moves on to the crux of the problem of violence or to violence *as* a problem in the complex system. It is empirical violence, violence that harms, violence that produces suffering, to which this entire project has been progressing. The problem of this empirical violence and the possibility of its eradication – nonviolence – can finally be addressed head on. At this point in the argument, it is clear that intervention in the violence of closure in the complex system requires the use of violence against itself (Spivak 1997: lxxvii). The continuous autopoiesis of the system produces and is produced by the first and second levels of violence. In opposing this system of meaning, one cannot transcend its violent operations. This follows from the exposition of the boundary in the previous chapter. That being said, an entirely totalising description of the violence in the complex system would depend upon a description of the system that subsumes every singularity, action, word and sign produced in it without reserve.

This is not the case. The problem of what becomes of exteriority in a philosophical paradigm that permits no unmediated access – access that transcends arche-violence and the boundary – to anything outside meaning itself must be addressed. The outside of the system is significant both as unmarked space inside the system and as pure unmediated reality which cannot be rendered fully present within the system. It should be reemphasised that the absence of full presence is not full absence. Morin (2007: 100) argues that critical complexity theory is not absolutely alienated from the material by its insistence upon the mediation of meaning. However, its understanding of the material "has enriched itself in its dereification" (100). In other words, dynamic and complex reality is not entirely revealed in our models, but our models are still oriented by reality. The real, singular or material exceed but do not escape the system.

A discussion of empirical violence is compelled to go beyond a concern with the ways in which violence is implicated in understanding, to consider whether a theory of critical complexity allows for an understanding of violence as an empirical event outside the structures of understanding. This discussion attempts to articulate real and concrete violence. The concrete, empirical suffering of victims of empirical violence motivates this attempt. The task of this chapter is to sketch a conceptual framework for a discussion of violence that is sensitive to the ambiguities and limitations of such a general undertaking and endeavours to breach the closure of a linguistic – in the broad sense that has been attributed to writing as making meaning – analysis. Examples of empirical violence can be offered in order to contextualise this chapter's subject matter: war; rape; murder; assault; and torture. The previous chapter suggested that the material effects or experienced consequences of the second level

of violence supplement this list of physical violations. The turn to empirical violence completes the navigation of this project from the inside, to the boundary, to the outside of the complex system, which are all interrelated but distinct sites of violence. The third site is the most critical.

A discussion of exteriority does not only pertain to empirical violence. Nonviolence could not be addressed within a discussion of either the internal dynamics of the system or in relation to the boundary. Empirical violence and nonviolence appear to be diametrically opposed. However, their mutual relation to the outside brings empirical violence and nonviolence into the same 'level' of analysis. This chapter therefore develops a general understanding of exteriority and examines empirical violence and nonviolence, respectively, in light of this understanding. Singularity, alterity and spacing are iterations of exteriority within complexity thinking that are relevant to this discussion. Each remains irreducibly distinct. The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas,[170] another philosopher to whom deconstruction can be traced, is used to situate this discussion of the outside within a broader discourse on ethics and exteriority (Derrida 2001: 97-192). The mutual exteriority of empirical violence and nonviolence is not presented in order to suggest an identity between these distinct concepts.

This chapter navigates problematic terrain. As with all descriptions, the violence of the boundary is implicated in this exposition of empirical violence. Empirical violence exceeds the opening and closure of meaning the same way that all singularity or any possible pure and unmediated reality exceeds the system. The attempt to articulate singularity by means of the imposition of a frame will always be imperfect. It is itself a violent act. Having explicated the distorting effects of the frame, it is apparent that that claim that one's description is valid or important cannot be absolute. The implication of violence within meaning and language is a source of great difficulty in this context.

It is clear that deconstruction is preoccupied with violence, but it is not entirely clear that it can theorise the second level of violence that rejoins language and violence, and claim at the same time to be able to talk about empirical violence in the way that one might hope to speak about violence. That is, to identify empirical violence beyond linguistic structures, to be certain of one's identification with reference to the extra-linguistic object of observation, and to give it a full description and to successfully intervene and halt its proliferation. When Arendt (1963: 9) argues for the opposition of language and violence, she only contradicts the position within

[170] Levinas' (1986) writing on alterity was used in the exposition of the outside of the complex system in chapter 2. The purpose of this inclusion was to contextualise deconstruction as a philosophy that is concerned with irreducible difference, in contrast to a history of philosophy in which difference always defers to the same. Both Levinas (1986) and Derrida (1982: xx) attempt to cast aside the philosophical will to mastery that is expressed as hierarchy and envelopment within philosophical thought. Levinas' concept of the other was also presented as a foil to deconstruction, in order to characterise the nuance of deconstruction that posits a relationship of dynamic asymmetry between the same and the other (Cornell 1992: 69). Reference to Levinas' (1989: 43) writing on alterity and the future as a pure unmarked event illustrated, again, the debt owed by deconstruction in terms of its discourse on difference. This relationship between alterity and the future relates to the discussion of nonviolence further on in this chapter. The primary text engaged in this chapter is *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority* (1979).

deconstruction on one level. The opposition of language and violence within liberalism allows for language to be used to makes sense of and to mediate empirical violence. By reincorporating violence within speech, deconstruction, conversely, alienates speech from empirical violence. The result is that one's ability to intervene where empirical violence proliferates is drastically compromised.

The alienation of language from empirical violence is discussed in this chapter, with reference to insights from Nietzsche and Levinas, respectively, which are incorporated in the body of deconstruction. It is suggested that a philosophical position that insists on a gap between what is and knowledge of what is risks reducing the discussion of violence to a *merely* aesthetic matter. What would be at stake in a discussion on violence would, as a consequence of this reduction, no longer be violence, but only its representation in the system of meaning. A discussion of the risk of 'aesthetification' must turn its attention to the opposition of art and truth that underpins the characterisation of this risk of aesthetification as a danger. This opposition is challenged and by the deconstruction of the opposition of aesthetic concerns and matters of knowledge and morality that Derrida performs in *Parergon* (1979b) *Before the Law* (1992: 181-220) and *The Law of Genre* (1992: 221-252). The exposition of the dangers of aesthetification, together with the general exposition of exteriority, are used to enable a close reading of Derrida's (1985b) attempt to articulate the empirical violence of apartheid in *Racism's Last Word*.

The notion of exteriority as spacing has been used throughout the discussions of critical complexity theory, deconstruction and their intersection in chapters 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Derrida (1997: 68) defines spacing as both the time in which space is opened and the space in which time is opened. Spacing enables signification but it does not itself signify anything more than an indeterminate absence of saturated meaning. Singularity is that which exceeds our attempts to give it a complete description within a general system of meaning. Phrased differently, it is that which remains unique despite the dissolution of self-identity engendered by its iterability. The concept of singularity situated outside sense motivates an exploration of non-sense, of spacing. Spacing is unmarked (Derrida 1981b: 43). It prevents the enclosure of the singular in the system. It also prevents the closure of the system to singular phenomena. Accordingly, the problem of singularity cannot be resolved by the system reverting to a self-referential and relativistic description thereof. The effect of the system's dynamic organisation of space and structure is that spacing is always the space in which the singular may appear and become meaningful. Spacing is the possibility that the singular might be included in the system. It is also possibility of the appearance of nonviolence in the system.

Nonviolence is excluded from the system by the marking of arche-violence and the boundary. Spacing, however, undermines the boundary and its violence. The characterisation of nonviolence in this chapter is developed in conversation with the concept of justice. This is motivated by the analogous relationship between nonviolence and space, and justice and space. The exposition of nonviolence steers the discussion toward the ethics of

complexity thinking. This project has gestured towards this notion at several points. A fuller description is offered in light of the preceding descriptions of violence in the system and of empirical violence and nonviolence outside it. Before this can be attempted the third level of violence must be elucidated.

II. THE THIRD LEVEL OF VIOLENCE: THE COMPLEX STRUCTURE OF EMPIRICAL VIOLENCE

Derrida's (1997: 112) analysis of violence in the system distributed over three levels is extended in this chapter. The strategic use of the separation of violence into levels has led to the description of the third level of violence as empirical violence. It is violence in its "colloquial sense" (112). Empirical violence, however, undermines the clarity of the distinction between the three levels of violence because its complex structure always involves all three levels. The ordering of Derrida's analysis of violence appears to prioritise the arch-violence and the violence of the boundary over empirical violence. This apparent privilege begs an explanation.

It was suggested in chapter 3 that Nietzsche, Derrida, and by extension also the critical complexity theorists, fall prey to the inevitable naturalisation and even valorisation of violence because of the respective iterations of arche-violence as a violent aetiological explanations of the system of meaning. Nietzsche (see for example 2006: 488) cannot finally slip this accusation. Particular affirmations of the vitality of a warlike attitude and empirical war appear throughout his texts (van Tongeren 2000: 163). Where this literal affirmation is not the case, Nietzsche's works are a performance of his doctrine of the will to power (Spivak 1997: xliv; van Tongeren, 2000; 16). His polemical style, his philosophical hammer and his warring words instantiate force (van Tongeren 2000: 16, 99). The war of wills is the alternative to law and conformity. Nietzsche's (2006: 488) valorisation of actual empirical violence, however, is not universally applicable to his corpus of writings. His philosophy does not give us any indication that it should be. He (413) also argues against the empirical violence at the foundation of any order of things. Indeed, when he (413) laments the cruelty of the categorical imperative, he does not only lament the suppression of individual difference. It is the empirical force, the instruments of torture and terror that are used in the service of the imperative, the instruments that are responsible for its imperativeness, which he criticises too. Nietzsche thus criticises the use of violence as an instrument of legitimisation, and also celebrates violence and struggle as a means of achieving a new, dynamic and vital way of being.

Derrida's (1997: 112) analysis certainly overlaps with this theory in many ways. It also differs significantly. Instead of violence producing order, it is the order of things that is the origin of empirical violence.[171] It should

[171] Referring back to Levi-Strauss's refusal to attribute violence to the Nambikwara, a people ostensibly without a written order of things, Derrida (1997: 111) writes:

be noted that although the first and second levels of violence are more original than the first, they are still "inferior" to it (112). Derrida (112) privileges the meaning of violence as an empirical event. His positioning of empirical violence as a tertiary event is an act of resistance against positions that posit empirical violence as original, natural and inevitable (Grosz 1999: 12). If empirical violence is to be thought at this tertiary level, then it can no longer be thought of as natural, for its origin – arche-violence – is artifice itself (112, 149). Its tertiary character also prevents an understanding of violence as purely random outbursts of force. That is not to say that particular manifestations of empirical violence are the determinate outcomes of particular epistemological configurations. However, particular events are largely enabled and constrained by these frames. As Sen (2006: 9) argues, empirical violence cannot be thought of outside of its relation with ideas, norms, laws and identities.

The third level of violence in the system is complex because it is it several things at once (Derrida 1997: 112). It is material and singular, it is meaningful because it produces generally understandable meaning and it is an interruption of that meaning and meaning in general.[172] Empirical violence interrupts the closure of the second level violence by revealing "the first nomination", the arche-violence (112). The instance of the second level of violence in the directive 'do not murder', depends upon its general applicability in order to function as a law. The empirical event of a murder is a first challenge to the authority of the law. This authority can be reinstated with violence through the apparatus of the legal system, perhaps also with the "cruelty" that Nietzsche (2006: 413) identifies as its means of enforcement. However, it is not the fact of transgression that really interrupts the law. The transgression of a law still affirms the law as long as that law is still an adequate frame for its understanding. It is the occurrence of an event whose ambiguity disrupts the certainty of its definition of murder, such as murder to protect oneself, murder by the state or murder during a war, which draws attention to the validity of the category murder and its legal status. In the case of the forgoing examples, it is clear that their ambiguity is resolved to an extent with the creation of subcategories: self-defence; capital punishment; and casualty of war. Nonetheless, as long as a manifestation of empirical violence remains a unique occurrence, it possesses the potential to rupture the closure of meaning.

Another example of the interruption of the self-maintenance of the system is violent political revolution. Without ever justifying violence in any form, Arendt (1970: 20-21) does acknowledge that under conditions of extreme

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> Anterior to the possibility of violence in the current and derivative sense, the sense used in "A Writing Lesson," there is, as the space of its possibility, the violence of the arche-writing, the violence of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations.

Empirical violence is derivative.

[172] Grosz (1999: 11) explains that empirical violence always gestures back towards the law that is implicated in its origin. It disrupts this law by exposing the arbitrary distortion on which it is founded as well as its material violence.

deprivation of freedom, violent revolutions may be an inevitable recourse of the powerless. Indeed, the significance of these events as a source of change is not to be underestimated (20). However, Arendt (21) maintains that violence never achieves a positive change, nor does it establish a more just political order. The imminent discussion of nonviolence in the system reaches the same conclusion. Violence is never just (Derrida 2002: 235). It should be added that empirical violence, insofar as it becomes meaningful, does reinforce or establish order. Rape, for example, although the horror of experiencing or perpetrating this act may astound speech, still manages to confer a relationship of hierarchy and identity on the rapist and the victim. It still generates meaning because it offers itself to interpretation, whether the full presence of violence is communicable or not. It is not claimed that this is a just order, but simply that it is an order. Empirical violence offers itself to understanding by means of both the first and second levels of violence. However, provisionality and partiality are the conditions of this understanding. The impossibility of presence of meaning returns this discussion to the outside.

III. BEYOND THE LIMIT: TWO ITERATIONS OF EXTERIORITY

a. SINGULARITY OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

There are two definitions of exteriority that are employed in the model of the complex system developed in this work. The first is the environment or context outside the system's boundary. The notion of the boundary necessarily invokes the idea that there is something inside and outside. Every boundary has two sides. What is excluded by a boundary need not be unintelligible. In order to understand a word in a particular language, one must determine the boundaries of this language and in so doing one also determines things that do not belong inside that language. However, one does not assume that what is outside English, for example, is without meaning determined within a different system of relations. It is only without a determined meaning within that narrowly defined system. The boundary is juxtaposed to a limit of which only one side, only the inside, is visible. Meaning has boundaries and limits (Culler 1983: 123; Derrida 1993: 47, 67). The second sense of exteriority is the outside that lies beyond the limit of possible meaning. Both these understandings of exteriority are important within deconstruction and critical complexity theory.[173] However, it is the latter and more radical exteriority to which attention is turned. To this end, attention also returns, as Derrida (2001: 78-96) does, to the thought of Emmanuel Levinas.

[173] Spivak argues that (1997: lxxvii) deconstruction is precisely that which offers a way out of the closure of knowledge and sense. The idea of the outside is a way of introducing the possibility of radical change and transformation in the system and can therefore be understood as liberating. It is also a rejection of the security of anchoring our knowledge and morals in a fixed system that excludes nothing.

It is in relation to the distinction between limits and boundaries that Levinas' 'Other'[174] (1986; 1989: 42-44) has been contrasted with Derrida's 'others'[175] in order to make the argument that absolute difference resists meaning and tends towards a metaphysical understanding of difference (Cornell 1992: 69).[176] The other is not completely excluded from the system by a limit. Absolute absence of the other, like absolute presence of the other, is not possible in the play of meaning generated by the movement of *différance* (Derrida 1982: 19). There is always an excess of difference that overflows the closure of a boundary. Derrida (in Caputo 1997: 14, 18) insists in the *Villa Nova Roundtable* that there is an excess of difference that exceeds the economy of *différance*. This is the singularity, the unique thing in itself that the arche-violence cannot subsume in the system. Excess does not shield the other from the system's relations of dynamic asymmetry (Derrida 1992b: 68, 228; 2001: 157). However, the possibility of signification, in producing this excess, destroys the possibility of experiencing "the purity of 'reality,' 'unicity,' 'singularity'" (Derrida 1997: 91).

Levinas' (1979; 1986; 1989) philosophy of alterity is relevant to the conceptualisation of the outside of the system that exceeds the arche-violence and the boundary. The Other – other than the self and the system – does not stand in a relationship of dynamic asymmetry with the self or same or system. Alterity, in this case, is that which escapes the tendency of the system to interiorise the outside in order to make it understandable. This tendency is thwarted by the dissimilarity of the outside with categorisation inside the system. The dissimilarity between the inside which generates understanding and the outside that presents itself to be understood without submitting itself to acceptable categories of understanding creates an irrepressible space between all descriptions of the Other and the Other itself. Without embarking on a full exposition of the Other in *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority* (Levinas 1979), it is necessary to look to the text for its notion of exteriority that sheds light on the discussion of empirical violence.

Levinas' (1979: 21) preface to *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority* begins with a description of the impact of war on the relation between the self and the Other. War reduces morality to a set of instrumental imperatives (21). It systematises everything and in so doing, transforms complex beings into objects to be manipulated towards an end that is independent of the objects themselves. War cannot, therefore, function with the idea of exteriority that resists complete incorporation within the system. In this sense, because nothing but objects determined inside the system are tolerated, war is understood to be totality itself. War cannot allow the

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[174] When it is referred to the Other in relation with Levinas' (1979) text, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, this Other will be capitalised in line with the convention of the text that indicates the asymmetry of the relation of the other outside and above the self. However, because the absolute asymmetry of the other is not maintainable within complex organisation, this convention is not continued where it is not referred to this text.

[175] "...each of the terms must appear as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same..." (Derrida 1982: 17)

[176]See chapter 2.

Other to appear as a singular and complex being (21). The Other becomes meaningful within the network of differentiations within the system in a process that involves only the internal logic of the system. In its thoroughly self-referential organisation, the possibility of the appearance of an unmarked, unmediated Other – an Other distinguished only by its fundamental difference from the system itself – is closed.[177] There can be no consideration of singularity that would challenge the general framework that is applied to it in order to render it intelligible as an object (22). War is thus a hyperbolic manifestation of a system of meaning that maintains itself by marginalising and excluding differences that threaten its rigid order. War is not unique in this way. This self-maintenance is related to the general operation of the second level of violence that operates by homogenisation, marginalisation and exclusion.

In opposition with the objectifying movement of war, Levinas (25) proposes eschatology as a relationship with the Other that breaches the totalising organisation of the system. Eschatology is a relationship with the Other that extends beyond the present toward an open future. Although it also concerns the future, eschatology must be distinguished from teleology because it does not concern the conceptualisation and pursuit of a predetermined end. An eschatological engagement is distinct from all epistemological strategies that categorise and stratify objects. Eschatology is an attempt to resuscitate the excess of difference that respects the alterity of the Other (22-23). Derrida (1994: 14, 15) affirms this attempt when he argues that despite the movement of the system that tends towards totalisation, the system cannot totally consume all alterity and singularity within the system.

Levinas (1979: 42) positions the ethical encounter between self and other as prior to ontology. In this context, ontology is understood to render ~~Being~~ and beings present and exposed in a consummate description within the system of meaning (Heidegger 1962: 21, 23; Derrida, 1982: 47; 1981a: 352). To 'ontologise' the Other, reality or singularity would be to render it present within a fixed order of meaning (Derrida 1981a: 4). Contrastingly, Levinas (1979:28) seeks to restore the eventfulness of being. This gesture is repeated in Morin's (1992: 14) shift from thinking of beings as objects to thinking of being as complex systems. It is an attempt to rethink the object as a dynamic unity with an excess of meaning rather than an impoverished form in need of fulfilment by a thinking subject (Levinas, 1979: 26).

The alterity of the Other must not be thought of in relation with a visual boundary. Even more forcefully, Derrida (2001: 141) argues that to use these terms 'inside' and 'outside' to speak about the Other is merely an extension of the system, the self or the same. Alterity as singularity is different to the differences – distinctions such as inside/outside – that mark the system. The Other is thus not merely the simple negation of the inside (Levinas 1979: 41). To recognise the appearance of the Other within the same is to run up against the limits of

[177] The Other in its singularity depends on a general system of meaning in order to be meaningful. However, if this system is closed to the alterity of the other, then the meaning attributed to the other within the system can only be derived from the system itself. If the other were to remain unmarked, it would also be invisible (Levinas 1979: 22).

sense and meaning as generated in the system (Derrida 2001: 141). According to Levinas (1979: 23), a relation with the Other is a relation to infinity. As a relation to infinity, it is an interruption of the closure of the system as a totality. In order for the outside to interrupt the closure of the system, it must still engage meaning in some sense and it does so by means of the trace. The face of the Other is the trace of the Other appearing within the same (Levinas 1986: 351). The face interrupts the closure of the logic of law and war (Levinas 1979: 26). However, this trace of the Other is not co-opted into the system of meaning.[178] It challenges all knowledge and common sense (194). As Derrida (2001: 125) explains, "For reasons now familiar to us, the face-to-face eludes every category...The unity if the face precedes, in its signification, the dispersion of senses and organs of sensibility".

There is no experience of singularity that is immediate (Derrida 1997: 211). The first two levels of violence are implicated in this mediation. While the first level of violence opens a space between meaning and being, the second proposes to erase this space. It allows being to appear as if it can be fully disclosed. Both space and the boundary are required to deliver being to the level of representation (Grosz 1999: 10). Rephrased in terms of complexity, the representation of a particular aspect of reality always exceeds any single attempt to grasp it with a sign or a concept or even a lengthy dissertation. However, reality does not exceed the system as a whole. The transcendence of a trace is not pure. The trace of a particular instance of singularity becomes meaningful in its differences from all other traces. Meaning is a property of the system as a whole. The trace inhabits the system and is marked by its violence; however, the violence of the system is also challenged by the trace of the other that resists both the absence indicated by the arche-violence and the appearance of full presence fabricated by the boundary (Levinas 1979: 24).[179]

The relation of a general system of meaning to the Other as a manifestation of singularity is structured by the space between meaning and being (38). This distance is not absolute. Levinas (60) argues that the same and the Other can "rejoin" one another within the pursuit of truth. The idea of truth as it is used here is only relevant in a system in which being is not present without any form of mediation (60). The separation meaning and being requires a description of the condition in which the two are reconciled. Without this separation there would be nothing but being. The disjuncture between meaning and being produces the possibility of the distinction between truth and untruth or "ignorance, illusion and error" (60). There is no possible way of erasing the risk of

[178] "A trace is never present, fully present, by definition; it inscribes in itself the reference to the spectre of something else. The remainder is not present either, any more than a trace as such" (Derrida 2005a: 151).

[179] In Levinas' (1989: 45) own words:

> The relationship with the Other, the face-to-face with the Other, the encounter with a face that at once gives and conceals the Other, is the situation in which an event happens to a subject who does not assume it, who is utterly unable in its regard, but where none the less in a certain way it is in front of the subject. The other 'assumed' is the Other.

error. The process of knowing cannot be one of unity because it is conditioned by this risk. A disjunction between what is and what is known persists because there is no foundation for its restoration (61).[180]

The trace of singularity calls us to respond without the comfort of laws, norms or even categories that could certify or justify that response (Derrida 1993b: 364). Derrida (361-364) elaborates on this idea in his discussion of the *Politics of Friendship*. In order to love the other, the otherness of the other cannot be consumed within my understanding (361). From the perspective of the self, it is the call to respond that creates an asymmetry between the self and the other in which the other stands above and beyond the self (365, 377). This asymmetry is experienced in its inverted form from the perspective of the other, who is also a self in relation to me (Derrida 2001: 157). Asymmetry, as it was argued in chapter 3, does not constitute hierarchy or inequality by itself (Derrida 1993b: 366). This is because hierarchy requires stability. The other, the singular, or indeed the friend is not a fixed entity but develops over time. Responding to what is not present, or to one whose presence is the presence of the absence of full meaning, opens the self or same to a relationship with the future (368, 369).

This response must be premised on some form of recognition. The face as a trace must be recognisable in order to be meaningful at all. If the face does not signify as a sign does within a system of meaning and within a context, it is unclear how it comes to mean anything at all (Derrida 2001: 126).[181] In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1997: 62) equates the trace with *différance*. From this, it can be inferred that it is not fully present within the system. However, in the context of this discussion of singularity, it could be argued instead that neither the trace nor *différance* is radically other if radical otherness is taken to exceed meaning entirely. The Other whose transcendence is marked with a capital O must thus be renamed 'other'. The trace of other without a capital O sacrifices its exteriority by allowing a trace of singularity, whose singularity is only protected by its deferred completion and not by its absolute closure in relation to the same, to enter the system (Derrida 1992: 68). The

[180] The dream of stabilising truth, first by separating knowing and being and then permanently reconciling the two, is the impetus of a metaphysics:

> All dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar, are the unique theme of a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace. The subordination of the trace to the full presence summed up in the logos, the humbling of writing beneath a speech dreaming its plenitude, such are the gestures required by an onto-theology determining the archaeological and eschatological meaning of being as presence, as parousia, as life without *différance*: another name for death, historical metonymy where God's name holds death in check (Derrida 1997: 71).

[181] There is a difference between the appearance of the other in the face to face encounter and the revelation of knowledge through language and theory. The other appears but is not known:

> In the face, the other is given over in person as other, that is, as that which does not reveal itself, as that which cannot be made thematic. I could not possibly speak of the Other, make of the other a theme, pronounce the Other as object, in the accusative (Derrida 2001: 125).

The revelation of the other is the revelation of an overabundance of difference and presence of the absence of categorised meaning (128, 129).

trace thus feeds into the sign but it is not identical to it. Another way of conceptualising the trace is to say what it is not; and what it is not is an anchor for a one to one reference between a sign and its reference.

Despite the resistance of the other as singularity to a general system of meaning, language remains the condition for interaction with the other (Levinas 1979: 39).[182] It is an inter-subjective medium. Yet, language and concepts bring the singular in tension with general categories, which are generated within language itself (Levinas 1979: 73; Morin 2007: 103). Signatures, for example – the most singular of marks attributed to the subject who is the most singular of objects – simultaneously preserve a trace of originality and suffer the erosion of singularity in order to enable appearance (Derrida 1988b: 20). The signature as an event must appear on the condition of the loss of its "rigorous purity" (20). However, because a sign cannot retain a singularity that is non-relational and unmarked by violence, signs cannot ever capture more than a trace of singularity (Derrida 1992: 62; 1997: 91; Gasché 1994: 16). This impossibility of the pure presence of singularity is the only possibility of its appearance. The other or the singular always appears by way of the law, of convention, categories and language (Derrida 1993b: 384). The violence of the frame or boundary enables this appearance while constraining how it may appear (Cilliers 2005b: 611).

The possibility of a language without violence or with less violence can be hypothesised. Derrida (2001: 184) proposes that a language that could incorporate the other without violence would be a language without a predicate. The verb 'to be' reduces the other to the present. To understand the singular as dynamic and changing means that nothing is ever merely what it is. Its identity is extended to what it will and could become in the future (Morin 2007: 100). Morin (1992: 81) suggests that the distance between the subject and what it understands that is opened by the recognition of complexity already reduces the violence or mutilation of understanding. The refusal to allow the distance between the knower and what is known requires that the world is emptied of all singularity so that our general frames of understanding may go unperturbed by what they suppress and exclude (81). A world of objects that conforms to epistemological categories can never surprise. It cannot allow events and it is always determined. This insight from complexity is clearly opposed to Dillon's (2000: 10) estimation of complexity theory that was discussed in chapter 3 that evaluates it as theory that engages alterity in order to facilitate its mastery.

[182] To reduce the Other to meaning in the sense of categorising the Other and placing the Other within a network of categories, is the violence of philosophical discourse and all theoretical discourses that make an object of the Other (Derrida 2001: 145). The form of this argument is very close to Derrida's (1979b) analysis of the violence of the frame. Derrida (2001: 184) outlines the requirements of a nonviolent language in line with Levinas' exposition:

> ...nonviolent language would be a language which would do without the verb to be, that is, without predication. Predication is that first violence. Since the verb to be and the predicative act are implied in every other verb, and in every common noun, nonviolent language, in the last analysis, would be a language of pure invocation, pure adoration, proffering only proper nouns in order to call to the other from afar.

The alterity of the other that exceeds meaning is unstructured and therefore also "undeconstructible" (Caputo 1997: 128). What the other means within the system of meaning can and does deconstruct. However, the singularity of the other as such does not. Thus singularity itself or the singularity of a subject or a system or a being is always outside economy. The singular in this sense is not a stagnant point somewhere outside language; tts appearance is an event (Derrida 1992: 68). It should be stressed that an event is not an arrival (Derrida 2002b: 96). The event of singularity is not the inclusion of singularity within the system. We cannot reach and rehabilitate the event in any programmed way in order to correct the violence of the system. Once an event arrives within the system, it ceases to be an event. Derrida (96) provides an apt illustration:

> It may rain this evening, or it may not, but this will not be an absolute event because I know what rain is, at least insofar as, and to the extent that, I know; and what is more, it is not an absolutely other singularity.

Exteriority as singularity and as an event depends on exteriority as spacing. The exposition of this mutual implication follows.

b. Spacing and the Future Outside the System

Spacing has been variably referred to as space, time-space, space-time and *espacement* (Derrida 1988b: 9; 1997: 68). It is associated with *différance*, for which, like trace and violence, it is a supplement (Caputo 1997: 97-99; Derrida 1981b: 40). It has been suggested to be both a quasi-origin and product of arche-violence (Derrida 1997: 111-112). However, the relation between space and singularity, which both exceed the system, still begs clarification. The alterity of singularity is not spatial (Derrida 2001: 116). Its excess is hyperbolic. However, despite this hyperbole, the movement of *différance* still allows for singularity in the system. Derrida is not consistent on how singularity relates to meaning. In places, such as in *Of Grammatology* (1997) generally, and, more specifically, in the discussion of speech and writing (91) and in the analysis of proper names (107-112), the singular, if it still exists, only exists outside the system. In other places, the system reverberates with singularity. Singularity within the system, "differs from itself, it is deferred [...] so as to be what it is and to be repeated in its very singularity" (Derrida 1992: 68). In order for this to be possible, singularity must be meaningful as part of the system and not only outside the system. Space, however, is never meaningful.

The arch-violence produces space in the system (Derrida 1997: 109). This space is what prevents alterity or singularity from simply being present. Given the inherent error or artifice involved in the process of understanding the singular or attaining its truth, the meaningful appearance of singularity can never coincide with its full presence. However, meaning that is structured by the trace always remains open to the possibility of change and development and therefore cannot completely erase the possibility of the future presence of the singular (Derrida 1997: 63; 1982: 19; 2005a: 150). Spacing is the opening in which it is possible that the other will appear in the system (Derrida 1997: 68; 2005a: 150). The space within the sign produces a polysemy that

opens the sign to more difference within itself and more room for the difference of the other to manifest (Derrida 1981b: 43). There is a qualification in respect of this possibility. Its realisation would depend on the complex organisation of the system coming to rest. Given this openness to the possibility of the full presence of singularity generated by space or rather by its closing, and the concomitant impossibility of closing space because of its structural necessity in the system, the possibility of the full presence of singularity is a possibility that has the structure of impossibility. It is, in a sense, a pure possibility, never to be realised. Nevertheless, this possibility is of ethical significance. If one is to respond to the other, then one does not merely allow space in the system so that the system can continue to reproduce itself in time. Rather, one makes space for the singular to appear in response to its difference for which we know the system is an inadequate measure (Derrida 2001: 321; Gasché 1994: 21).

The definition of rape can be used to illustrate this point. The need to revisit the definition of rape in South African law arises because the law not a perfect description of the world in which it intervenes. It must be accepted that the law attempts to describe events whose ambiguity and singularity test its requirement for generality and stability. In order to change the definition of rape in South African law, the first level of violence had to be used to disrupt the second level of violence of the law. The space within the text, which is exposed by rehabilitating the differences that were deemed to be unimportant, disrupts the closure of the boundary. The space opened in this deconstructions allow for difference that had been excluded to be included in the system. This is done in the name of the singular or other that suffers empirical violence, which remains invisible without more – and different – violence on the second level.

Derrida (1981a: 36) sees a kind of tyranny in pure interiority because it does not allow for change and development. The "airtight inside" that must be understood in terms of the violence it produces in erasing the possibility of internal heterogeneity and an open future, must make room for an outside inside the text (36). Space resists meaning. Particular spaces can be closed in order that singularity becomes meaningful, but space itself is unmarked in the process. The space within complex organisation is the possibility of a different future contained within the structure of the system (Clark 2005: 179). Space thus opens the system to the possibility of the event of singularity (Derrida 2002b: 94). The event interrupts the organisation of the system and opens space within it. Clark (2005: 181) argues that the expositions of exteriority by Derrida and Levinas, respectively, are important supplements to critical complexity thinking. If it is argued that empirical violence exceeds the system, then the form and consequence of this excess and exteriority must be placed in relation to singularity and space in order to clarify it.

IV. Outside the System: Empirical Violence as Singularity

a. Empirical Violence Exceeds the Organisation of Meaning

Hanssen (2000: 9) contends that to claim that an account of violence does more than to offer a limited, contextualised and perspectival description, one would need to amalgamate all documentations of the almost infinite list of all atrocities ever committed by human beings with every use of the word and with every theoretical perspective, anthropological, psychological, criminological and all others. Even if this were achievable, the generalisations made and theories developed would "exert an interpretive force over its object/ field of analysis", making distortions that are hidden by its claim to universality. This argument is supported the insights developed within critical complexity theory and deconstruction. There is more happening in the system than one can account for in any one description. This is an empirical quandary (Derrida 2001: 365). However, what this insight fails to convey is the second sense in which the system exceeds description. This is the barrier to totalising descriptions posed by complex organisation, by play, and by arche-violence (365). Hanssen's (2000: 9) argument can be supplemented by the discussion of singularity.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that arche-violence inhibits the totalisation of singularity inside the complex system because, in the first place, singularity is always differing and deferred. Singularity unfolds in time. In the second place, singularity that becomes meaningful inside the system is not identical with singularity that exceeds it. This is another way of saying that the violence of the frame necessarily reduces the complexity of what it allows to be understood. There is a surplus of singularity within the system and a surplus that exceeds the system. To wit, when we describe something concrete, something of the world and not language, we cannot say everything about it. An act of violence, to return to the empirical matter at hand, will always retain its singularity that is never quite exposed within the system itself. Returning to the definition of rape, it can be said that the concrete experience of rape is always structured in terms of the second level of violence – it is, in line with the exposition of the three levels of violence, produced within a world of accepted meaning – but not consumed by it. Something of this terrible event remains not quite understandable. What is not mediated by the system as it, like the other, passes through language and the law, cannot make sense (Derrida 1993b: 384). As the analysis of rape in the previous chapter demonstrates, how something is understood can change and expand. Expansion is not, however, completion. This problem does not need to remain abstract. Arendt (1950) confronts the problem of violence that exceeds explanation or meaning in a discussion of the violence of the Nazi concentration camps in *Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps*.

Arendt (1963: 9) endorses the separation of language and violence within liberalism when she observes the silence of extreme expressions of violence. The muteness of the violence is not simple or absolute. It does not preclude the possibility that it can be endeavoured to use language to understand violence. However, the ability

of language to make something understandable that is itself without words demands that language or more specifically, theory, is able to change in order to reconcile itself with new, concrete events. How we understand the world tends to sediment into stable and even seemingly immutable categories until these categories, explanatory frameworks and assumptions collapse or "explode" in the face of phenomena that exceed both present categories and our anticipation of what will become possible in the future (Arendt 1950: 49). Language and theory must have the capability to adapt to new appearances of singularity.

Arendt (1950: 49) attributes the unintelligibility of the Nazi concentration camps, at least in part, to subjective and perhaps disjunctive nature of accounts of the horrors of the camps. However, the violence of the camps, even if all possible accounts could be accounted for and corroborated, still exceeds what Arendt (50) identifies as the available lenses for the analysis of violence. Neither a utilitarian means-ends analysis nor an explanation that posits the camps as the most extreme logical expression of racism provides an adequate description (50). The camps presented an authentic *event* in the history of violence because they were "unprecedented" (50). This description must be qualified. It was not the mass slaughter of human beings, or the use of cruelty or forced labour, or the murder of innocent parties, or the violent expression of racism, or even the concentration camp as a means of controlling and inflicting harm upon a largely civilian population that was without precedent (51, 55). Arendt (55) argues that despite these precedents, the Nazi concentration camps were unique. The first concentration camps, those used by the British during the Boer War in South Africa and to control civilians in India, were not a central mechanism of government. What further distinguishes the Nazi camps from the British examples and makes the Nazi camps inexplicable, is that fact that the means – violence – in the case of all seemingly similar events had a clear benefit or end (51). The perpetrators of violence benefitted "as an ordinary burglary benefits the burglar".[183]

In order to clarify the difference between these manifestations of empirical violence that can be understood as instruments for the achievement of an end on the one hand, and the inexplicable violence of the camps on the other, Arendt provides an historical account[184] of the events that led to and maintained the Nazi camps. To begin

[183] The fact that the Nazi death camps do not fall within the definition of violence in which violence is merely an instrument for the achievement of a goal that can itself be articulated, challenges the description of violence as an instrument in *On Violence* (Arendt 1970: 48, 51).

[184] Arendt (1950: 51) begins by identifying those elements of the Nazi camps that merely repeat what has gone before, not only once but many times:

> Antisemitism by itself has such as long and bloody history that the very fact that the death factories were chiefly fed with Jewish 'material' has somewhat obliterated the uniqueness of this 'operation'. Nazi-antisemitism moreover, showed an almost striking lack of originality...

In fact, everything up to the death camps themselves were, on Arendt's (53) account, predictable and predicted by Jewish and non-Jewish people during the war.

with, the particular historical contingencies, context, individuals and experiences are not identical to any other particular event in history. Additionally, there are several puzzling actions of both the oppressors and the oppressed that distinguishes this event of violence in the history of violence in the world (59-60). However, the most distinct of these differences, according to Arendt (54-55), is that the Nazi concentration camps were independent of any economic or even military benefit. It is this fact that requires that the social sciences depart from conventional modes of analysis when dealing with this particular event. Arendt (64) warns that, "[the] greatest danger for a proper understanding of our most recent history is the only too comprehensible tendency of the historian to draw analogies". No comparison, no general frame or assumptions, and no present knowledge can capture its singularity.

When this article was written, the Holocaust was recent history. However, events in contemporary, recent history have provoked analogies with the Nazi genocide of Jewish people (Praeg 2008: 209). The singularity of the event of this shocking empirical violence has not been protected. First, in order for the perpetrators of violence in the camps to be held to account, the singularity of events had to be violated in a confrontation with general laws, legal norms, accepted punishments and with a generalised account drawn from several unique experiences of what happened (Arendt 1950: 63-64). For a court to have made sense of the violence of the Nazi concentration camps, this violence had to be made to conform to recognisable and therefore understandable definitions and descriptions. In a second gesture of generalisation, the word 'genocide' was not only a standard name for the heterogeneous event of the Holocaust, but also now includes the particular and singular events of the Hutu genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda have been drawn into an analogy with the Nazi genocide of Jewish people (Praeg 2008: 209).[185]

To name acts of violence, and to conceptualise these singular acts in order to allow for understanding and intervention, collectivises singular events and erases the heterogeneity and excess of singularity that makes the event an event in the first place (194). This is necessary if we are to extend our understanding of empirical violence and to prevent it (195).

To name an event 'genocide' makes that event recognisable by implicitly invoking all genocides that have already occurred and the possibility of its repetition (194). Even its first inscription is repeatable or iterable (Derrida 1988b: 9). However, the interpretive violence – a material effect of the first and second levels of organisation – of identifying the horrors of either the Holocaust or the Rwandan Genocide with any other events is immediately apparent in its callousness and vulgarity. Empirical violence appears, at least in this sense, to announce its singularity more emphatically than, for example, a leaf. This emphatic singularity does not only

[185] Leonhard Praeg's (2008: 193-223) attempt to render the Rwandan genocide thinkable frames it with Benjamin's, Derrida's and Girard's respective philosophies in order to describe it and other genocides as instances of failed or deferred foundational violence.

apply to genocide, but to all forms of empirical violence for which we have names, and for those forms of empirical violence that will be named in the future.

The use of names, context and analogy to understand empirical violence is politically expedient, but fails to address the singularity of the event of empirical violence (Zizek 2006: 231, 234).[186] Zizek (230) makes an argument about the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in *A Plea for a Return to Différance (with a Minor Pro Domo Sua)* that is pertinent to this discussion. He (230) criticises those who indulged in what he calls "leftist Schadenfreude" because they sought to contextualise 9/11 within a historical and political situation in order to relativise its scale, significance and intensity of violence in light of other empirical violence that goes unseen and unvalued. This relativistic approach is premised on an assumption that comparison and measuring of empirical violence is unproblematic and appropriate. Whereas postmodernists and poststructuralists – here, Derrida and Zizek are included – are often accused of providing the backdrop for legitimisations of violence by espousing such relativist worldviews, Zizek (229, 330) points to the emphatic insistence on singularity within many of these perspectives that counteracts relativistic understanding. He (330) argues that there is no place for calculation in the face of the suffering of others. And, further, that there is something unethical about making a comparison between such singular tragedies as the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide and the war in Democratic Republic of Congo. It is unethical because it fails to relate to the singular in its singularity.

The singularity of an event does not protect it from the law. It is not obviously ethical to simply allow singularity to be unmarked and to say nothing about it simply because one cannot say everything. The example of the Rwandan genocide can be used to make a few critical points. This particular singular event of empirical violence occurred within a particular political, cultural and historical context. To argue that, for example, many more people died in the Rwandan genocide than died in 9/11 is not necessarily motivated by the desire to reduce the significance of the events of 9/11, but perhaps to redress the imbalance of significance attributed to either event. Furthermore, the wordlessness experienced in the face of empirical violence must not negate similarities with previous events of violence in order to announce its singularity (Praeg 2008: 205). The violence we call unthinkable or shocking is remarkably recurrent in many ways. The severe and horrific violence of the Rwandan genocide is not indicative of something peculiarly Rwandan or African (196, 105).[187] Singularity should not be emphasised to the extent that it undermines concrete and significant similarities between empirically violent events.

[186] Zizek (2006: 243) draws a direct analogy between *différance* and parallax, his "own master signifier for the 'minimal difference'" between the object and an observation or experience thereof.

[187] As Cilliers (1998b) says of apartheid, the emphasis on singularity must be tempered by a caution against externalising the cruelty of violence so that it has a very specific locus and identifiable agents who bear responsibility for the violence. In other words, the emphasis on singularity must not be a means of protecting oneself from complicity in the structures in which violence is perpetrated.

Returning to the example of rape, it can be argued that there are enough events of the sought we characterise as rape in order to give good reason for its generalisation, and in order to intervene in its perpetration. Although empirical violence may present a seemingly impossible barrier to all theoretical attempts to understand it, it is not for want of examples that the endeavours in this direction fail. Further, it is not always a matter of ethical response to the singular that comparisons between violent events are avoided. It is also often because certain violent events are privileged over others, either because the victims are privileged or because some events have more conspicuous victims who suffer more easily perceptible harm. Another point that can be raised as a criticism of the overemphasis of singularity is that allotting the same immeasurable singularity to each event of empirical violence can have the result of rendering all violence equal in its infinite unintelligibility. The danger of relativism is reintroduced by this gesture. There is a practical but also an ethical need to compare violent acts and to make judgements as to which are worse and even which are acceptable.

The immediacy of an event of empirical violence, with regard to which we feel a moral imperative to intervene, not only in order to stop the event from repeating itself but also in order to bear testimony to the suffering of the victims of empirical violence and to hold the agents of violence accountable, is lost in the space opened by the arche-violence. The violence of the frame and its continual revision are always necessary. Different descriptions will reproduce a different excess because what is marginalised and excluded changes. However, the excess as such does not disappear. Arendt's (1950) discussion of the Nazi concentration camps shows that the excess of an event of empirical violence can open space within accepted structures of meaning.

b. Speaking About Empirical Violence: An Aesthetic Problem

The problem of the inadequacy of language and theory in relation to empirical violence is a general problem that permeates complexity thinking. It is not only violence, but all empirical singularity that exceeds language and theory; and not sometimes, but always. It is an error to assume that a material phenomenon is reducible to human knowledge or experience of it, even if this phenomenon occurs within human interaction (Morin 2007: 107). The event of violence merely calls attention to a more general problem. However, in considering the particular case of violence, the relationship between meaning and being is instantiated in a specific way with its own specific complications. In order to specify the fate of empirical violence, understood from a complexity informed perspective, it is necessary to restate the problem. Meaning arises within a system of dynamic differences in which there is no origin that can, "orient, balance, and organise" meaning (Derrida 2001: 352). It is not anchored in reality. The link between reality and understanding is indirect and mediated (Derrida 1997: 91). Derrida does not explain exactly how reality enters representation, although it is implied that it does indeed enter, since the text is not a closed, fully autopoietic system.

Nietzsche, whose philosophy also announces the event of structure without origins, is more explicit about the nature of the relationship between language and the world (Derrida 2001: 369). Reality does not enter language.

Rather, language and reality are fundamentally estranged. The reconciliation of language and reality does not occur on its own. It must be made and reinforced through linguistic conventions that function as frames through which the world becomes manageable (van Tongeren 2000: 71).[188] A vivid depiction of the schism between meaning and being is offered in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (Nietzsche 2000). This essay begins with "Once upon a time," as would a fable, and with the very first sentence, a first blow to the wall separating fact and fiction is delivered. The fable about the "clever beasts" that discover the art of knowing ends with knowing withering away as the beasts perish (53). Consequently, knowledge fades away, leaving no perfect remnant in its wake. The link between knowledge and the world is transient because knowledge itself is transient and so, for that matter, is reality.

There is a relationship between knowledge and the world. There is truth; however, this truth does not correspond with an unmediated presence or "thing in itself" (55). Truth is an aesthetic relation between knowledge and reality. It is:

> A moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished... (56)

This aesthetic link between reality and knowledge is the creation of human beings for whom the creation of metaphors is a fundamental drive. In order to conceal the properly aesthetic origin of meaning, human beings only recognise creativity in narrowly defined creative acts within art, which is opposed to truth and reason (59, 60). Nietzsche (61) does not deny the usefulness of concepts and categories. However, he (61) intimates that concept-driven reason alone does not foster wisdom. Concepts must be retained insofar they are useful, but their pragmatic value must not be mistaken for metaphysical certainty. Perhaps what is suggested is the necessity of an aesthetic sensibility or at least a bold sense of the aesthetics of truth.[189]

This understanding of language pervades Nietzsche's persistent engagement with truth and meaning in his texts (van Tongeren 2000: 72). No text escapes the moment in which this underlying uncertainty undermines the unity and mastery its content might propose. The grammatological structure of writing serves a similar function with regard to the whole body of works that can be collected under the banner of deconstruction. Like the extension of metaphor – an arbitrary analogy between two unlike things – creates space within Nietzsche's epistemology;

[188] "These frames are established through the rules of grammar, but, even before that, through the most elementary material of language: words. Words do not connect us with reality: they are but 'illusive bridges,' 'rainbows...between things which are eternally apart'..." (van Tongeren 2000: 71).

[189] J.M. Bernstein (1992: 1) argues that Nietzsche is part of a long philosophical tradition that sees art and the aesthetic as being "somehow more truthful that empirical truth". Aesthetic truth is at odds with the kind of truth produced by categories and laws. This idea sets art apart from a strategy of understanding that erodes the internal *différance* of the system or event being described.

so the supplemental relation of one sign to another creates space that separates the sign from its origin (Derrida 1982: 227, 229). The metaphorical character of the sign is extended even to the proper name:

> Thus the name, especially the so-called proper name, is always caught in a chain or a system of differences... the proper-ness of the name does not escape spacing. Metaphor shapes and undermines the proper name (Derrida 1997: 89).

In the case of empirical violence, even the names of such singular and horrific violent events such as apartheid or the Rwandan Genocide are 'metaphorical'. If empirical violence always exceeds its names and the system in general, and Derrida and Nietzsche are taken seriously when asserting the aesthetic character of meaning, then the aesthetification of meaning must necessarily be extended to include every attempt to produce a description of any empirical violence. In a more emphatic formulation, one could say that the description of violence is the creative production of a pragmatic fiction.

This is not a notion that can be tolerated within the law or within a political discourse or movement that seeks to produce and justify a certain course of action, or indeed in any sphere in which the ethical recognition of violence is usually understood to be founded upon certainty. When Derrida (2002a: 235) argues that he never endorses any form of empirical violence, he suggests, unlike the first two levels of violence, that it is always to be rejected. This uncompromising rejection implies that empirical violence can be distinguished from our processes of understanding in a final way. It is, however, complicated by the relation of singularity to arche-violence and to the law. Critics of deconstruction disparage its positive reception in the legal and political sphere because of what is perceived as an overemphasis on singularity, marginalia or exceptions in cases where general laws are applicable and effective (McCormick 2001: 396).[190] In her defence of deconstruction as an appropriate discourse about violence, Elizabeth Grosz (1999: 13) makes the bold statement that she "[does] not believe that Derrida abandons the moral and ethical dilemmas raised by very concrete and disturbing explosions of violence in the 'real world'". Despite the deconstruction of morality within the dynamics of the second level of violence, empirical violence must be opposed absolutely (11). Accordingly, Robert Bernasconi (2007: 81) situates Derrida in the company of Levinas, reading them both as providing a space for political engagement post the crisis invoked by the loss of metaphysical certainties.

The problem of aesthetics and violence within complexity thinking can be approached from another angle. The problem of 'aesthetification' is a problem because of the underlying opposition between aesthetic judgements on

[190]McCormick (2001: 396), who reads deconstruction as a literary theory, argues:

> According to critics, Derrida and deconstruction undermine the possibility of rational justification or interaction and aesthetically celebrate moments of groundless decision in dangerous ways, Consequently deconstruction threatens to subvert the rationalism of the 'West' or the Enlightenment tradition in ways reminiscent of the two most famous intellectual spokesmen for Nazism...

the one hand and truth claims on the other; or meaning on the one hand and reality on the other (Bernstein 1992: 2). This opposition of truth and art allows us to reduce aesthetic objects and the critique of aesthetics to a lesser status, as "merely aesthetic", which means to say that the proper concern of this area of human endeavour is related to beauty and non-cognitive processes that are alienated from cognitive processes that engage in truth and morality (2-3). Ethical judgements that involve aesthetic elements are thus considered a reduction of ethics to irrational premises. Aesthetic objects fall outside the sphere of truth and goodness. This is what J.M. Bernstein (4) terms, "aesthetic alienation". He (3) traces this type of thinking back to Kant (3). Kant's Critique of Judgement, however, attempts to reconcile truth and art by specifying those elements of critique that are particular to art in order to determine aesthetic truth in opposition with a wholly irrational or counter-rational engagement with art.

Derrida (1992: 34) challenges the opposition between aesthetics and philosophy – the science of truth and morality – in several places in his writing. In particular, the diametric opposition between literature and philosophy is called into question and deliberately disrupted. The disruption of this opposition is not only the disruption of one or both traditions in which specific forms and conventions have become entrenched over time, but also a question of the opposition of truth and fiction (37). The deconstruction of this opposition, argues Derrida (37), sets a chain of similar deconstruction in motion, "between nature and institution, nature and conventional law, nature and history." Literature and art in general allow one a certain licence to creativity, to say whatever one wants. This is understood as undermining its critical potential (38). However, while this is true, literature also has critical potential. Literature can be used to engage with questions of truth and morality.

Derrida (1979b: 17) performs a deconstruction of the boundary enclosing the aesthetic field in *Parergon*, in which the closure around that which Kant deemed to be properly within the ambit of aesthetic judgements of taste is disturbed. The broader problem of inside/outside distinctions and the general conditions of understanding are explored through a discussion of a merely aesthetic object, the frame (30, 39). In this analysis, what is demonstrated is the gesture of the particular beyond itself. Furthermore, the problem of the closure of the aesthetic realm repeats the problem of closure contained in the frame. All forms of closure are always enclosed within a wider explanatory framework: "the theory of aesthetics within a theory of the beautiful, the theory of the beautiful within a theory of taste, and the theory of taste within a theory of judgment" (30). The frame is used to sketch out the general conditions of all judgements.

Derrida (1994) frames his reading of Karl Marx and his analysis of temporality, particularly the relationship of history and the future to the present and to presence, with a literary text. Hamlet announces the central argument: "The time is out of joint" (1, 3, 18, 49). The ghost of the dead king becomes the spectral vision of the past approaching from the future (11). Hamlet is not treated as a mere fiction. Rather, fiction is treated, despite its fictionality, as if it is the singular incarnation of a serious or nonfictional philosophical problem of presence.

Similarly, Kafka's *Before the Law* is used in an identically named essay, in the first place, to question the position of literature in relation with philosophy (Derrida 1992: 186). The fiction is used to question the definition of literature (191). The story of literature is linked with a story of the law. It is used to gesture towards the fictionality of the law in all its seriousness (212). The law is also addressed in another literary exposition in *The Law of Genre*, the scope of which extends beyond the, "aesthetic, poetic and literary corpus" (230). An analysis of genre slides into an analysis of gender and of difference and boundaries, more generally (243-245).

Each of these analyses suggests the same thing. That is that it is not only general conceptual frameworks that impose themselves onto singular texts. The text – aesthetic, fictional, idiosyncratic – also informs the general way in which we understand important aspects of our existence. The general system can be altered by an aesthetic object that manages to encapsulate an instance of singularity. To read an artwork within a general system of meaning is different to reading the world as if it were a unified text. The same event, a sunrise, for example, read in a description in a newspaper and read in a novel should be read differently. Reading the world as a text, drawing connections as one might in a novel in which the product is directed at creating meaning in a specific way, should be questioned.

Derrida's deconstructions of the truth/aesthetic opposition, suggests that aesthetic objects have the ability to produce meaning where conventional conceptual expositions fail. Levinas (1989: 130) makes a similar point in his essay on aesthetics, *Reality and its Shadow*, in which he asserts:

> Where common language abdicates, a poem or a painting speaks. Thus an artwork is more real than reality and attests to the dignity of the artistic imagination, which sets itself up as knowledge of the absolute.

Bernstein (1992: 14) suggests that there is a link between politics and aesthetics. Aesthetics opens up an alternative politics and perhaps also a way of intervening in violence that the system cannot comprehend in terms of conceptual classification. In light of the discussion on singularity, drawing on both Derrida and Levinas, it can be deduced that the ability of the aesthetic object to speak where concepts fail is related to the appearance of alterity. The problem of addressing the singular in a nonviolent language without the predicate is obviously solved in one sense with wordless art in particular, but also in poetry insofar as it has the ability to bend concepts to their limit in order to open and transform meaning, or in other words, to create space for alterity. This space is the point of departure for a difference-centred politics as proposed by Bernasconi (2007: 85). The appearance of the other throws the self into question. The other thus comes as an interruption to the same and provokes change in the system. It provokes political engagement without providing a programme for politics (85).

To rupture the boundary alienating art from philosophy or art from politics does not have to result in a collapse of one term into the other (Bernstein 1992: 261). In terms of this discussion, to allow a space for art to mediate in the understanding of violence does not have to result in the pure aesthetification of violence. However, aesthetic

objects afford an opportunity in which attention is returned to the moment of interruption of our categories and conceptual schemes that an event of violence creates. This is not only in the case with extreme violence such as the Holocaust that is characterised as a challenge to the contemporary conceptualisation of violence by Arendt (1950). It is the case for every instance of empirical violence. Art does not define what has happened when an empirical violence has been experienced as much as question what has already been defined in terms of that empirical violence (Bernstein 1992: 261). The confrontation of art and philosophy is a reiteration of the tension between particularity and generality (261). This tension cannot be resolved. The ability of the aesthetic to engage singularity in a way that philosophy or another theoretical and conceptual discourse cannot, is employed by Derrida (1985b) in a controversial essay on apartheid in which he attempts to articulate the singularity of apartheid as an event unlike any other. The analysis navigates the ambiguous terrain between a political action, a philosophical exposition and an aesthetic analysis of the word 'apartheid' as a textual or aesthetic artefact.

c. Responding to Empirical Violence: Derrida on Apartheid

In order to speak to the singularity of empirically violent events, one must find a way of singularising one's analysis. In other words, one must extricate one's analysis from the possibilities of analogy or equivocation. Derrida (1985b: 290-299) attempts to do exactly this in his analysis of, and ethical stand against, apartheid in *Racism's Last Word*. This article provides an illustration of the difficulties that a three tiered understanding of violence produces with respect to the criticism of concrete violence that one wishes to oppose. In order illustrate the strategy of this analysis, it is necessary to quote directly from the text. Derrida (291) begins, not with a description of atrocities or even with a legal analysis, but with the word 'apartheid', defined as "the unique appellation for the ultimate racism in the world, the last of many".

Apartheid is described as "the last", or, "the worst" racism (291). It is the last because it is the worst and the newest. But the article – or presentation or political intervention, for it was initially used to open an art exhibition on apartheid – meant to characterise apartheid as the most extreme instantiation of racist logic ever to occur, "the most racist of racisms" (291). The context in which Derrida (293) delivered his address was an effort to respond to the singular event, apartheid, with another event. Significantly, in terms of the foregoing discussion, the eventful response is aesthetic. The exhibition of artworks is boldly touted as an attempt to "speak the other's language" (294). It appears that the unconditional and abstract silence of a painting is the only appropriate way of dealing with empirical violence. This is because the works do not "represent" anything, but are, instead, an address, an appeal (299). The language of otherness in which the address is made is non-language. The other is thus shrouded in mystery, which in the context of an abstract confrontation between self and other is perhaps acceptable, but is quite different in a political context in which the other needs words in order to engage with and in the system. To deny the other words in this context of a political engagement is not useful. It can also have the ironic effect of reducing the other's complexity, rather than emphasising it.

Apartheid is called, "the archival record of the unnameable" (291). It is argued that it resists representation because of the extremity of its violence. It resists presentation. Its violence exceeds the system of meaning or representation because of its utter atrocity (293). However, if the foregoing discussion of singularity and the analysis of the complex structure of violence are to be followed, it is not its extremity but its singularity that resists presentation. Derrida (1985b) wants to take a moral stand against apartheid because it is violent and not because it is singular. However, the horror of empirical violence does not guard against representation. Apartheid is not, in fact, unnameable or indescribable. It is named and its violence was codified and often well documented. This presentation of racist violence in the law is proposed to be the most flagrant vulgarity. Derrida's resistance to the representation of apartheid is not a logical necessity, but a morally motivated resistance to understanding apartheid. The article is a performance of deliberate misunderstanding. Its insistence on the name and the significance of the name, repeated in Derrida's (1986) response to his critics,[191] appears to announce that making something understandable makes it acceptable. The first reaction to an empirical violence must not seek to make it meaningful but should reject it completely.

Derrida (292) argues that there is something inherent to the name 'apartheid' that resists the play of signification. Its empirical violence does not successfully become meaningful within the opening of the first two levels of violence:

> Apartheid: by itself the word occupies the terrain like a concentration camp. System of partition, barbed wire, crowds of mapped out solitudes. Within the limits of this untranslatable idiom, a violent arrest of the mark, the glaring harshness of abstract essence (*heid*) seems to speculate in another regime of abstraction, that of confined separation (292).

This argument, although it can be understood by contextualising Derrida's (292) strategy as an ethical performance, cannot be maintained within a system structured by *différance*. Meaning is always relationally constituted. For apartheid to resist relations within the system of meaning, it must be void of any meaning. However, this is not the case, for if it were, then the analysis in *Racism's Last Word* would have been over before it had begun. The eventfulness of apartheid is immediately eroded by the articulation of its name. The iterability of apartheid means that its originality is compromised from the beginning. It is, as Derrida (291, 292, 293) acknowledges, in some aspects, merely a reiteration of an old racism. Insisting upon the singularity of apartheid prevents one from making useful and important general observations about race, racism and violence. It also risks emphasising the significance of this violence to the detriment of other empirical violence, which are

[191] Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon (1986: 140) are extremely critical of Derrida's style and content:

> Certainly the essay is tendered as a call to action, an urgent injunction to "save humanity from this evil" *apartheid*; besides exposing the "truth" of *apartheid*, its purpose is to "fling back an answer" (*riposter*). If, then, Derrida seeks not merely to prize open certain covert metaphysical assumptions but also to point to something beyond the text, in this case the abolition of a regime, then the strategic value of his method has to be considered seriously. This entails, in particular, pondering the political implications of both his extended reflection on the word *apartheid* and his diffuse historical comments. (author's emphasis)

somehow necessarily lesser. This risk is an inevitable result of the recognition of the uniqueness of this event and of the properness of its name.

Apartheid is untranslated and is argued to be untranslatable (292). A brief general analysis of translation within deconstruction serves to contextualise this assertion. A pure translation is not possible with a complex self-organising system of meaning.[192] Derrida's (2002a: 104) analysis of this theme in *Des Tour de Babel*,[193] in which the biblical narrative about the Tower of Babel is read, makes this point. This reading focuses on the disintegration of a single unified language into a multiplicity of languages that cannot be reconciled to one another once they have emerged (104-105). Derrida (104) understands Babel as a testament of the irreducibility of different things to a single unified whole. It is an illustration of the inevitable decomposition of the unit into the multiplicity. Derrida's (107) analysis of Babel strongly suggests that all cohesive meaning will tend towards its own deconstruction, regardless of the unity of the event from which it can be said to originate. In other words, where there is difference, there is also always disjunction (Derrida 1994: 19).

The word 'Babel' is a proper noun, which, like 'apartheid', attaches itself to a specific event. The properness of its name appears to have preserved its integrity over time. Its inability to be translated follows from the natural and unmediated relation between signifier and signified (105). As such, the attachment between signifier and signified is unbreakable (104). Babel refers to only one event; and the event can only bear the name of Babel. For a pure translation to become possible, a referent would have to be able to bear several names without the referent itself differing with its changing names. The relation between signifier and signified could not be fixed. In a system in which the requirement that signifiers and signifieds are interchangeable were met, something would also be required to stabilise the system to the extent that secure equivalence between translatable signifiers could be established. Meaning could not only be the result of difference in the system, but also of a master signifier that could guarantee the translation.[194] Derrida (1985b: 292; 1986: 162) reads a relentless properness and a literal essence of 'apart-ness' in the word apartheid that further entrenches its untranslatability. Apartheid resists the economy of arche-violence and the boundary.

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[192]*Différance* makes translation possible only by disrupting its purity. Pure translation:

> ...is possible only if a permanent code allows a substitution or transformation of signifiers while retaining the same signified, always present, despite the absence of any specific signifier. This fundamental possibility of substitution would thus be implied by the coupled concepts signified/signifier, and would consequently be implied by the concept of the sign itself. Even if, along with Saussure, we envisage the distinction between signified and signifier only as the two sides of a sheet of paper, nothing is changed" (Derrida 2001: 263).

[193] Derrida (2002a: 111) describes Babel as, "This singular example, at once archetypical and allegorical...an introduction to all the so-called theoretical problems of translation."

[194] This analysis encounters the general problem of meaning in the complex system that was addressed in Derrida's (1997: 3-94) deconstruction of Saussure's structuralist project in Part I of *Of Grammatology*.

A first point of criticism against Derrida's (1985b) analysis must be raised with respect to the aesthetic style of engagement in which apartheid is regarded as a large, coherent text. Apartheid was not a unified text. Although this criticism must be qualified with a corrected understanding of text as anything that has meaning, an awareness of empirical power or terror can be lost in a discussion on words and general structures. Moreover, as much as Derrida would seek to preserve the properness of the name of 'apartheid', this preservation is impossible. The proper name is always severed from its origin as soon as it appears within a system of meaning (Derrida 1997: 112). The proper name is always also a common noun.[195] Even in an original text, meaning is always already dissimilar with itself and dispersed within a network of relations. Derrida (2002a: 109) argues that "intralinguistic translation operates immediately".

Inscription within a language requires interpretation because meaning is not present. Every interpretation changes the meaning slightly, adjusts its idiom, or it could be said, translates it (109). There is no original. Even the original is already a translation (115). It must be emphasised that translation is not a copy in the conventional sense. Or, formulated differently, a copy is already dissimilar with itself (Derrida 1988b: 20). The space within meaning must be closed with every interpretation. It is space within the system that allows translation as interpretation without guaranteeing it. Pure translation is impossible if names are thoroughly proper or if meaning arises in a dynamic system of pure differences. However, a form of – impure – translation, understood widely, as interpretation that involves the closure of boundary in a dynamic system of differences, is possible. In the hierarchical opposition of the original and the translation, following that general pedagogical structure of a deconstruction, the master term – the original – is deposed and translation is displaced in order to allow for a more general understanding of the term. The inevitability of translation is also the impossibility of a last word on any matter, including violence and apartheid (Cilliers 1998b: 84)

McClintock and Nixon (1985: 154) criticise *Racism's Last Word* for failing to be an historical analysis of the mechanics of the racist social and political discourse in South African. They (141) accuse Derrida of blatantly ignoring the factual history of the word, which the name obscures, in order to cauterise apartheid and prevent it from bleeding into other understandings and making sense within its appropriate context. McClintock and Nixon's article attempts to re-contextualise apartheid by tracing the contingent historical development of South African racism. It displays a notable lack of understanding of deconstruction and executes an overzealous dismissal of Derrida's (1985b) strategy without recognising its aim at all. Its deepest fault is that it leaves no room for the type of absolute ethical rejection that *Racism's Last Word* allows. It reads as an attempt to explain away the violence of apartheid, as if this could ever be done. McClintock and Nixon (1985: 154) accuse Derrida

[195] In regard to apartheid in particular, the word has come to stand for a centralised and codified form of racial segregation that is codified in the laws of a state. See, for example, Edward Said's (1985) critical examination in *An Ideology of Difference*. Cilliers (1998b: 75-88) makes the argument that Derrida's (1985b) absolute rejection and singularisation of apartheid risks externalising its racist violence to the effect that it renders other – especially European – racist violence invisible. In other words, it makes a scapegoat of South Africa.

of being too particular by limiting his discussion to a name, and too general by linking this name to a general logic of racism and other forms of marginalisation and exclusion. A valid analysis of "racial representation" is deemed unattainable within a poststructuralist discourse because of its reliance on such general structures as "logocentrism" and "Western metaphysics" (154).

In response to this sweeping criticism of poststructuralist critique, Derrida (1986: 163) argues, first, that all historical concepts have names. The name, 'apartheid', belongs to South African – now past – politics. Violence must be addressed by its name. McClintock and Nixon (1985: 153, 154) are correct in pointing to the relevance of economic and class factors in an explanation of apartheid. However, Derrida (1985b; 1986) is not engaged in this type of project. It is, as it was suggested earlier, an ethical-political performance. It is an attempt to *not* understand apartheid by constructing its social or economic narrative and in resisting this construction, to respond to the singular suffering of singular individuals that exceeds that socio-economic frame. Additionally, Derrida's corpus of work as dealt with within this project's analysis of the tripartite structure of complex violence, struggles with the tension between singular events and general systems, laws, norms, conventions and other bounding structures. This tension is too hastily passed over by those who dismiss the possibility of general structures that enable particular events. The mode of engagement in *Racism's Last Word* cannot stand on its own as a consummate description or analysis. Heeding Hanssen (2000: 9) again, if this is its ambition, then it fails before it has begun. However, there is a place for this type of ethical intervention. Its uncompromising rejection of empirical violence cannot be achieved without concomitant risks associated with the recognition of singularity. However, its place, perhaps as our first response to violence, or the last word to an explanation of violence, is to guard against these explanations functioning as justifications.

V. THE OTHERS OUTSIDE: NONVIOLENCE, JUSTICE AND SPACE

a. NONVIOLENCE AND SPACE

The identification and rejection of violence is not only complicated by the relation of empirical violence to its meaning and the moral ambiguity of the second level of violence. The rejection of violence in the system implies a movement towards a condition without violence, however fleeting this condition might be. Therefore, an understanding of nonviolence is as necessary in understanding and intervening in violence as violence itself. If violence is inevitable, to the effect that the possibility of nonviolence is precluded, then the absolute rejection of violence is of no strategic value. To intervene in violence because it is unethical without any idea of nonviolence is futile. Certainly, without an idea of nonviolence, the value of deconstruction for political action is rendered moot.

There is nonviolence. It is captured in the notions of, "gift, hospitality, donation, generosity, or ethics" (Grosz 1999: 14-15). Like empirical violence, it not simply inside the system. It cannot be made present in the system.

Nonviolence is outside the system in three distinct senses that correspond to the three levels of violence. The first level, arche-violence, is the possibility of the second and third levels of violence. However, arche-violence also undermines all boundaries and allows nomination, thereby enabling empirical violence to become meaningful so that it can be addressed. The arche-violence is thus also the possibility of nonviolence (Derrida 1997: 140). The arche-violence opens the possibility of nonviolence, but it cannot establish a nonviolent order (110).

Order or structure that emerges out of organisation involves the violence of the boundary. Nonviolence on this level depends upon a complete lack of structure. Yet, because the arche-violence continues to undermine the boundary, the violence of the boundary is not absolute. The impossibility of nonviolence or peace with respect to the second level of violence, does not prevent Derrida (2002a: 302) from utilising the second level of violence in *Taking a Stand for Algeria*.[196] A programme for peace is developed in this text in spite of the dual conditions of its impossibility – arch-violence and closure – in the system. Nonviolence is impossible inside the system; however, this impossibility is qualified.[197] Like the arche-violence, the violence of the boundary enables the interpretation of empirical violence and thus simultaneously empowers its amelioration. The possibility of nonviolence is strangely preserved *as* impossibility. In this regard, nonviolence can be inserted into a chain of supplementary concepts: *différance*, trace, gift, forgiveness, justice. Each of these impossible possibilities exceeds the movement of the system (Derrida 1994: 23). Justice has particular bearing on this discussion because of its relationship with the law and thus also with violence. A few introductory remarks frame this parallel exposition of justice and nonviolence.

Nonviolence, like justice, functions as a quasi-transcendental in the play of meaning (Caputo 1997: 41). By refusing to give nonviolence an absolute description within the system – because it is impossible – it also exceeds the system, and thus also partially escapes the play of meaning. As a result of its partial transcendence, it cannot function as a foundation or absolute explanation, hence its *quasi*-transcendental status. Levinas (1979: 24) argues that, "[of] peace there can be only an eschatology". In other words, peace is not produced within the present. It is always outside the designation of a *here* and *now*. It is outside structure and therefore also beyond

[196] Derrida (2002a: 302) still takes a stand for "*civil* peace" (author's emphasis). This peace is not demanded as an abstract possibility of a future possibility. Rather, like Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1939), it is set out in a list of programmable criteria:

1. for a new international solidarity;
2. for an electoral agreement;
3. for a dissociation of the theological and the political; and
4. for what I would more or less properly call a new Third Estate (Derrida, 2002a: 303).

[197] The structure of the possible impossible finds its iteration in the notions of the gift, hospitality and forgiveness (Derrida 2005a: 79, 81). The conditions of possibility within deconstruction are separated from any extrapolation of the present (79-80). The conditions of possibility are thus bound up with conditions of impossibility within the present organisation of the system. Possibility is thus associated with novelty and the event. The possibility is thus reframed as the, "perhaps" (Derrida 2002b: 344).

deconstruction. It is "undeconstructable" (Caputo 1997: 128). This formulation presents an immediate danger of falling back into the metaphysics of presence, erasing the 'quasi' in favour of absolute transcendence. This would shield nonviolence from the system and ensure its security, for which there is no foundation.

b. VIOLENCE AND JUSTICE: WALTER BENJAMIN'S CRITIQUE OF VIOLENCE

Derrida's essay on the *Force of Law*, in which an understanding of justice is developed in relation to the law and to violence, is a critique of and expansion on Walter Benjamin's *Critique of Violence*[198] (Zacharias 2007: 103). Benjamin's essay, to which the twin questions of justice and violence are addressed, begins with two proposals: the first is that the violence of the law and the state are not necessarily just; and the second is that there is a possibility that there is a form of violence that is just (Zacharias 2007: 105).

Benjamin (1978: 277-278) asserts that the legal philosophy of natural law – most prevalent at the time of this article's authorship – proposes no contradiction between justice and violence if violence is used to pursue just ends. This philosophy provides a justification for such bloody events as the French Revolution. Offering a different perspective, the philosophy of positive law deems violence to be just only if it can be assessed to be an appropriate and legal means to the achievement of any end (278). In other words, positive law proposes that legitimate and illegitimate violence can be distinguished in terms of the nature of the violence itself and not the goal at which it is directed (279). Benjamin (281) proposes that justified violence on this account is violence that is directed at sustaining lawfulness. Neither understanding, however, satisfactorily justifies violence.

A typology of violence is sketched with the aid of two examples (282). The first is a factory strike in which workers resort to violence in order to escape the exploitative violence of their employer. In some cases, this type of strike would be endorsed by the state. It is the state and its law that guarantees workers the right to strike. However, in other cases, violent strikes are suppressed with state counter-violence because the violence of the strike somehow is intolerable to the state. The violence that the state finds so threatening is the focus of Benjamin's (282) interrogation. It is contrasted to a second example of violence that the state finds threatening. This is the violence of prolific criminals, which Benjamin (283) finds less conceptually challenging that the illegal strike. Its threat to the state is that it challenges state law with contradictory norms or law (283). The violence of the criminal and the violence of the state in the first example are "law-making" and "law-preserving" violence, respectively (284). Law-making violence is the origin of order and law-preserving violence maintains the hegemony of that order (Buonamano 1998: 174). In both cases the law itself is affirmed (Benjamin 1978: 286). Both forms of violence are means for which a specific law and order is the end (287).

[198] Benjamin's (1978: 277-300) essay was juxtaposed to the liberal disavowal of all forms of violence in chapter 3. This argument is maintained and elaborated here.

Benjamin (291) goes on to specify a third type of violence by returning to the example of the workers' strike. Following Sorel, Benjamin (291) distinguishes a political strike from a proletarian strike. In a political strike, the state and the law are not undermined. Those who rise up do so with the aim of transferring power from one group of privileged agents to another within present hierarchical power structures. This strike presents no real challenge to the system. However, Benjamin (291) argues:

> In contrast to this political general strike (which incidentally seems to have been summed up by the abortive German revolution), the proletarian general strike sets itself the sole task of destroying state power...While the first form of interruption of work is violent since it causes only an external modification of labour conditions, the second, as a pure means, is nonviolent.

Pure means – violence as the pure interruption of the closure of relations within the system without the perversion of a systemised goal – is understood to be mysteriously voided of its violence. Both law-making and law-preserving violence are forms of mythic violence (294). This violence is contrasted to the violence of pure means or, "divine violence" (297).

Mythic violence is always contestable, or as Buonamano (1998: 176) puts it, it is "undecidable" and subject to interpretation. Unlike mythic violence, which is concerned with transgressions and retribution in relation to the law, divine violence is external to the law. Another point on which divine violence can be contrasted to mythic violence is that the former does not spill any blood. It is messianic; it "only expiates" (Benjamin 1979: 297). Its expiation is premised on the fact that it does not spill blood. Educative power can be an example of divine violence if it is not co-opted by the structures of mythic violence and maintains its ability to transform without bloodshed (Buonamano 1998: 176). Divine violence explodes the structures of the system (Benjamin 1978: 300). It cannot be absorbed into either law-making or law-preserving violence. Divine violence is not determined by the judgement that recognises it. It is decidable (Buonamano 1998: 176; Derrida 2002b: 291). Even though it is not inherently ambiguous, divine violence is not obvious because its reparatory power is not, "visible to men" (300). Divine violence offers a religious style salvation that rescues the world from outside and that is independent of any individual actions therein.

c. Justice is Outside Violence: Derrida Reading Benjamin

It follows from the sketch of deconstruction read through the lens of complexity theory in chapter 2, that complex justice, like Benjamin's (1978: 297) divine violence, must come from beyond the system's present organisation. Unlike Benjamin's (297) divine violence, it has been argued that justice always remains

'undecidable'.[199] By implication, justice cannot appear in the system and still maintain its justness. It offers no utopian consolation. An attempt to understand justice is, therefore, a confrontation with aporia (Derrida 2002a: 230-259). *Force of Law* (231) begins with a question that should be contextualised within this much broader treatment of violence and nonviolence within deconstruction. This question asks whether or not justice is required or even permitted within deconstruction. The question is motivated by a suspicion that it does not. Derrida's (230-259) argument begins by separating violence and the law and insisting that this separation does not produce an absolute alienation:

> I want to insist at once to reserve the possibility of a justice, indeed of a law [*loi*] that not only exceeds or contradicts law but also, perhaps, has no relation to law, or maintains such a strange relation to it that it may just as well demand law as exclude it (233).

This extrication of justice from the law coincides with its general exteriority in relation to the organisation of the system of meaning. The tension between the law – not only the law, but all forms of form, all forms of structure and closure and decision – and the singularity that exceeds moral and juridical calculation instigates a deconstruction of the authority of the law. It begins to rupture the legal frame through which violence is thought to be appropriately understood. It perturbs the foundation of the law.

The passing of a law brings about a certain order which exerts an interpretive violence on its object (241). This violence can be judged to be legal or illegal. It can be tested against preceding laws, norms and assumptions in order to assess its conformity within the boundary of the legal system itself. It can also be judged to be good or bad against social or economic standards. Yet, the assurance of a precedent which secures its legality, or of a social norm, which secures its popularity, is not a foundation from which justice can be assessed. The foundation of the law is separated from justice by its violence (242). Justice is not defined as the maintenance, health or robustness of the system. Justice exists as a possibility that there might be nonviolence that is sustained by the fact that the economy of the system is open to something other than itself. The law can be deconstructed because it is constructed. Justice, on the other hand, is not structured and does not structure the system. Like space and singularity, it cannot be reduced, nor can it be deconstructed. It is therefore outside deconstruction. Derrida (243) argues that given the exteriority of justice and the fact that deconstruction involves both space and closure; one must deduce that justice is only possible between the openness or undecidability of space and the closure or decidability of the law. The occurrence of justice is not space; nor is it closure that can it be enforced by the law. The closure of space closes the possibility of justice. Deconstruction therefore addresses itself to what is excluded by the closure of the system – heterogeneity, singularity, the event – in order to open space and the possibility of justice. Justice depends on deconstruction. From the opposite direction, it can also be said that the

[199] 'Undecidableness', the 'undecidable' and 'undecidability' are not forms of indecision. It is not the oscillation between clear alternative that can be overcome, but rather a condition in which the ambiguity of a phenomenon or experience or argument is irreducible (Derrida 1993a: 21). This point was made in chapter 2.

possibility of justice sustains the movement of deconstruction. The possibility of justice creates a responsibility to work towards it.

Justice calls one to respond (244). The responsibility generated by the possibility of justice is experienced as aporia (144). This experience is a confrontation with the undecidability of the condition of knowing and of knowing what to do. One might be tempted to assume that because we may judge the outcome of an event to be good or bad, that this judgement authorises a secondary assessment of whether it is just or unjust. However, justice cannot be determined inside the system because the system itself is violent and produces the possibility of empirical violence and because the pronouncement of justice requires absolute certainty (245). The singularity of an event or a person would need to be allowed to inhabit the system without any adulteration or containment in order to guarantee nonviolence. In *Force of Law*, Derrida (245) is explicit about the limits to the attempt to address the other in this way. He (Derrida 2002a: 245) asserts, "I cannot speak the language of the other except to the extent that I appropriate it and assimilate it according to the law". This is true of all attempts to address the other or an event as a singularity in his or her or its own idiom (107). The exhibition at which *Racism's Last Word* (1985b) was delivered, attempted to negotiate this difficulty by reverting to the extra-linguistic artistic medium of art. However, this does not succeed in escaping interpretive violence or in making justice or the other any more clearly understood. It is impossible to assess whether or not this type of gesture addresses the suffering other. What is more likely is that the artists only addressed themselves and articulated their own otherness, their own extra-linguistic excess that was provoked by an encounter with an external singularity and with a singular violence.

The question of language pertains to meaning in the broadest sense – as inscription – and language in its narrow sense. Derrida (2002a: 230-232) frames his essay on violence with the practical ethical dilemma in which he finds himself having to speak another's language. The problem of speaking the other's language also has practical relevance in the context of the growing homogenisation and hegemony of European languages as the lingua franca of official exchanges in the legal and political arena (McCormick 2001: 402). Although disjunction pervades all communicative exchanges, the problem of marginalised languages and marginalised others is relevant, especially in South Africa in which those who stand before the law and before society must often represent themselves in a language that is not their own. The attempt to reverse the demand on the other so that it falls instead on the self, the system or indeed the courts to inhabit an unfamiliar tongue does, in a concrete way, begin to redress the system's total denial or assimilation of the alterity of the other.

The problem of justice alerts one to the tension between generality and singularity that leads us to look outside the present economy of meaning for solutions (Derrida 2002a: 245). In order to maintain the possibility of justice, there must be space within the structure of the law in which singularity can appear. However, the law cannot be constituted only of space. It requires structure and closure in order to function. It can also not tolerate

too much singularity because needs to be general in order to function as a law that is consistent and fair (245). It needs to be stable and predictable in order that it does not create a condition of fear and insecurity by its disorderliness (Snyman 2007: 679). Despite these general conditions, the law must respond to different situations in a way in which the differences that distinguish one case from another and one person from another are taken into account. The law is thus required to be general and stable and particular and transformative at the same time, lest it locks itself into a rationalised process of violent self-maintenance (Phelps & Kazee 2007: 354). Put another way, the law is not about the law. The law is *about* justice even though it is not justice. The violence of the law has been elaborated at length. However, before this theme is left, it is significant to note that Derrida (250) invokes Levinas' other in his discussion of justice. This other – the singular – and the violence the other is made to endure can indeed be read as orienting the entire discussion of justice. The resistance of the other to the verb 'to be' can also be read as analogous to the resistance of justice to description (Derrida 2001: 157).

d. Confronting the Aporia of Justice and Nonviolence

Derrida (2002a: 237) argues that it is impossible to know that an action or an event has been just, or that a person is just. Unlike with Benjamin's (1978: 291) non-violent divine violence, there is no violence within the system that can be called nonviolent and, subsequently, there is no violence that can bring about justice. For this reason, the association of transformation with violence in the system must not be mistaken for a position that advocates violent revolution (Buonamano 1998: 177). It is not the case that a revolution is the institution or practice of justice (Derrida 2002a: 178). Revolution never escapes the reach of law. Phrased in Benjamin's (1978: 285) terminology, it is always a form of law-making violence. Even though Derrida (2002a: 298) reads the *Critique of Violence* as placing divine violence beyond the functioning of the system of law, it is still too clearly determined, "too messianico-Marxist or archeo-eschatological".[200] The exteriority of divine violence preserves its integrity even once it has arrived inside the system. Its violence retains a purity that is not possible within a complex system. Justice, contrastingly, only preserves its exteriority insofar as it does not appear in the system. The paradox created by the arche-violence – nonviolence is impossible, nonviolence is always possible – is experienced as aporia.[201]

The confrontation with aporia is the experience of not knowing which way to go (Derrida 1993a: 12). It is an impasse, "before a door, a threshold, a border, a line, or simply the edge or the approach of the other as such" (12). Aporia permeates the boundary in all its modalities – "ethics, law, politics" – in its undecidableness (15). It

[200] Derrida's (2002a: 295) reading of Benjamin's *Nazism and the 'Final Solution': Probing the Limits of Representation* resists the aesthetic closure of Benjamin's typology of violence. Neither divine violence nor mythic violence, and not even both together can be used to explain the Holocaust without reducing a singular and complex expression of violence to a simple theoretical frame (McCormick 2001: 414).

[201] The notion of aporia was introduced in chapter 2; however, this introduction requires expansion in this context.

is an experience of the groundlessness of the boundary that is characterised by a paradox. The first aspect of this paradox is that the confrontation with aporia is transient. It is always possible to navigate beyond an aporia (Derrida 2002a: 244). However, aporia is precisely that which does not all one to pass. The second aspect of aporia is the experience of being confronted with the impossibility of passage (244, 245). Like the infrastructures, aporia is simultaneously possibility and impossibility (Derrida 2005a: 79). It is experienced as a "double bind" (Derrida 2000c: 300). As the impossibility of a decision as calculation, aporia opens up the possibility of a decision as a decision. The impossibility of the decision is therefore not negative (357). A degree of freedom with respect to the rule is implied in order for a decision to take place. The decision, understood in this way, creates an indissoluble responsibility that falls squarely on the shoulders of the one who decides. Responsibility for the decision is responsibility for the other. In the paradigmatic instance of a judge making a judgement in a court of law, the second level of violence produced within the law is confronted with its own lack of grounds – dissolved by the first level of violence – so that singularity can be addressed.

The experience of aporia can be restated as the aporia of experience (Derrida 1993a: 15). All experience including the experience of the other and of justice must always pass through the law (Derrida 1993b: 384). The other does not merely pass through the law uneventfully. The trace of singularity also disrupts the law by calling attention to its arbitrariness and thus also its violence. This disruption unveils the arche-violence and necessitates a second reparatory violence, a firm decision, the affirmation of a frame through which the experience of singularity becomes meaningful despite its excess. Aporia disrupts the illusion that the decision or the frame follows seamlessly from logic, reason, truth. Following this argument, it cannot be denied that the insistence on aporia does problematise the value of the frame and its status.

The insistence on the distinction between modernist epistemological strategies and complexity thinking with its definitive shift from object to system, may create the impression that complexity thinking is able to comprehend complex phenomena in their complexity without reverting to reductionist strategies (Morin 2005: 10, 12; 2007: 101). In other words, it could appear that complexity is able to comprehend aporia without using the second level of violence. This is not accurate. Complexity and complex emergences are irreducible. The complex system as a model is an attempt to articulate this irreducibility without disallowing all forms of knowledge (Morin 2005 12). Access to complexity is always interrupted by the aporia of experience and enabled by inevitable mediation. In order to understand complex phenomena, to interpret and to know, one must always reduce the complexity of the phenomenon (Cilliers 2000a: 12). This is the paradox of understanding.[202] In terms of justice and the law, law is

[202] The impossibility of a complete understanding does not eliminate the possibility of understanding altogether. It does, however, introduce the second level of violence – of bounding – into all understanding:

> To fully understand a complex system, we need to understand it in all its complexity. Furthermore, because complex systems are open systems, we need to understand the system's complete environment before we can understand the system, and, of course, the environment is complex in itself. There is no human way of doing this. The knowledge we

the calculation necessary for the pursuit of justice; however, it is not a sufficient condition for the achievement thereof (Derrida 2002a: 244).

The notion of aporia is addressed to singularity and as such it is not a unified notion. There is not one experience of aporia, but '*aporias*' in the plural (Derrida 1993a: 20). The three aporias associated with the law are the suspension of the law, the undecidability of justice and the urgency of the decision (Derrida 2002a: 251, 252, 255). Derrida's (255) three aporias of the law – introduced in chapter 2 in order to conceptualise the 'outside' of the system of meaning – can now be restated in terms of the discussion of violence and nonviolence developed hitherto.

The first aporia is the experience of the inadequacy of the law to the pursuit of justice and the requirement that the law is suspended in order to maintain the possibility of justice. While the law is ultimately arbitrary, it is not trivial. The judge is obliged to apply the law and to act in accordance with the rule. In fact, the judge is responsible for this application. However, the judge bears a second responsibility to the event that has occurred and the singular individuals that do not demand the application of the law, but demand that justice is delivered. The application of the law defers to the demand for justice, and yet, the judge must enforce the law (252). The judge seeks to redress violence (pursue justice) by enforcing violence. According to Derrida (251), the application of the law in answer to empirical violence is an affirmation of the law. Each time the law is affirmed it is effectively reconstituted *as* law. A judge cannot escape the moment of violence in applying the law, but this violence must pass through a suspension, a moment in which the judge must address herself or himself to the singularity of the event.

The second aporia is the experience of the permanence of undecidability (252). The undecidable, argues Derrida (252), "is not merely the oscillation between two significations or two contradictory and very determinate rules". It is also the situation in which a system of general meanings and general laws are called to respond to that which remains in excess of the markings of the system and the process of calculation. In its excess and without marking, its excess remains heterogeneous. The application of the law that seeks to do justice is marked by the moment of undecidability. The decision to apply the law cannot address itself to singularity without an acknowledgement of the impossibility of deciding as calculation (253). This moment ensures that it is the judge and not the law that bears the responsibility for the decision. In other words, justice does not regulate the decision because its content is indeterminate. It is this spectral – indeterminate and yet somehow present in its absence – quality of undecidability that allows a decision to be redressed and remade in response to the intolerable violence it may itself produce.

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have of complex systems is based on the models we make of these systems, but in order to function as models – and not merely as a repetition of the system – they have to reduce the complexity of the system" (Cilliers 2005a: 258).

Despite the persistence of the undecidable or the absence of perfect calculation, the third aporia places a constraint on the infinite demand of the other for justice. The third and final aporia is the urgency of the response to violence (255). Justice does not wait for the arrival of perfect knowledge. It is argued below that justice is always attached to the future. However, the demand for justice is still now. There is an "irreducible urgency" to respond to the violence to which one addresses oneself immediately (255). These aporias are the conditions of the possibility of justice. In order that justice could appear, aporia must not be denied. However, aporia also reiterates the impossibility of justice and thus also its exteriority. It is the characterisation of this exteriority that now requires more direct exposition.

e. NONVIOLENCE IS OUTSIDE AND IN THE FUTURE

The problem of justice cannot be extricated from the either singularity or space within complex organisation. Derrida (1994: 23) invokes Levinas' definition of justice as relating to others without violence in his discussion in *Spectres of Marx*. A judgement must attempt to address singularity in its own tongue, as it were. However, despite Derrida's (for example, 1985b) occasional trust in the power of the aesthetic object to address the other, there is still an irreducible space between addressor and addressee opened by the arche-violence (245). A judgement is thus always violent in the sense that it cannot be performed without the arche-violence and the boundary. A judgement as a performative – as a performance of force – is an enactment of violence on at least the first two levels and also possibly the third. The event of a judgement must arrive at some point. It cannot remain outside sense and calculation forever. A judgement must be reasonable and find its validation in reasons:

> ...a performative cannot be just, in the sense of justice, except by grounding itself [*en se fondant*] in on conventions and so on other performatives, buried or not, it always maintains within itself some irruptive violence. It no longer responds to the demands of theoretical rationality...
>
> Justice remains to come, it remains *by coming*... (Derrida 2002a: 256)

A judgement must ultimately submit itself to the limits of sense. A judgement must explain itself as soon as it has taken place. A judge must account for a judgement. However, Derrida (256) argues that the judgement is not merely an instance of violence on the second level of organisation. In creating space within sense, there is a possibility that the system will be transformed by the appearance of the other within this space. There is no way of guaranteeing that this will happen and no way of being assured that it has happened. This is because justice itself never arrives (McCormick 2001: 417). Unlike divine violence, justice is always conditioned by the subjunctive. If the singularity of an event *could* be presented within a judgement, then justice *could* arrive. Justice, like nonviolence, is not here and not now (Derrida 1994: 27). It is the possibility that violence will be overcome in the system (Derrida 1994: 27). Nonviolence on the first two levels is a necessary condition for the arrival of justice. While the occurrence of empirical nonviolence is not denied outright within complex

organisation, it is argued that its identification relies upon a frame and thus also upon the interpretive violence of closure.

Justice and nonviolence are linked to a chain of supplemental concepts that are inside meaning insofar as they can be articulated, but still retain a measure of exteriority. Justice, nonviolence, forgiveness, the gift [203]and singularity are impossible within complex organisation; but this impossibility or exteriority is not a simple negation (Derrida 1994: 23). The gift can be used to shed light on the possible (interior) impossibility (exteriority) of nonviolence.

The impossibility of the gift is explained from different angles and within different contexts in *Given Time*: *I. Counterfeit Money* (Derrida 1992b). Its exposition in *The Time of the King* (1-33) crystallises the paradox of the gift as the possible impossible. The gift, like justice, involves a relation of the self to another (11). The self must give something other than herself or himself to the other (12). Another condition of the gift is that there is, "no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt" (12). If the gift is met with a gift in return then the first gift is annulled by the exchange. It is taken up within an economy of exchange and is transformed from a gift into a commodity. This debt immediately undermines the gift as a gift. A gift that remains a gift must interrupt the economy of exchange (13). The giving of a gift does not only depend on the giver to give freely and without a counterclaim, but also on the person to whom the gift is given to accept the gift and resist the economy that is established with the acceptance of the gift. The gift, argues Derrida (1994: 23) is an "an-economic ex-position to others".

Forgiveness is another concept that is possible within complex organisation only as impossibility (Derrida 2005b: 81). If one forgives in accordance with a duty or a law then one does not really forgive. For one to forgive what is legislated as forgivable is merely to follow a law. Forgiveness cannot be prescribed. For it to take place, one must forgive what the laws say is unforgivable. It is not conditioned by the debt raised with an apology. It is also not the logical outcome of a reparative process. Just as the eventfulness of empirical violence demands a hyperbolic rejection of violence that resists conceptualisation, so forgiveness exceeds the law and demands its own hyperbolic formulation. The gift, forgiveness, justice and nonviolence are only possible if their possibility is perpetually placed beyond the present organisation the complex system. Their respective arrivals are marked with the difference and deferral set in motion by *différance*. If the event of nonviolence is to remain an event, then it can never really become more than a possibility. The plenitude of meaning that would characterise a utopian vision cannot therefore bring about nonviolence. In fact, a utopian ideal, rather, guarantees

[203] Justice is explicitly with the logic of the gift in *Force of Law* (Derrida 2002a: 235):

> It goes without saying that discourses on double affirmation, the gift beyond exchange and distribution, the undecidable, the incommensurable or the incalculable, on singularity, difference and heterogeneity are also, through and through, at least oblique discourses on justice.

violence. When one attempts to bring about justice or nonviolence, one is always assimilated to the chain of frames such as law, right and morality. The arrival of nonviolence is still always, "the coming of the impossible, where a "perhaps" deprives us of all assurance and leaves the future to the future" (Derrida 2002b: 344).

The argument that nonviolence lies outside the system, both in the sense that it exceeds the system's organisation in space – it cannot be subsumed within that organisation and structure – and in that it remains in the future, requires a clarification of what is meant by the future. The future that is suppressed by the second level of violence is separated from the present by a disjunction (Derrida 1994: 25). This disjunction is what prevents the absolute closure of the second level of organisation. The future as an event is never present within organisation. To say that nonviolence coincides with the future is not to say that nonviolence cannot exist here and now. This conclusion would undermine the development of any ethical or political position. There is nonviolence but it is not fully determined by either our actions or descriptions. To call a certain organisation nonviolent is to incorrectly assume perfect knowledge of that organisation. The future as an event is not necessarily good (Derrida 2002b:105). In fact, to open the system to an undefined future is to take a risk (Derrida 1997: 5). It is not because the future is necessarily nonviolent that the present must be interrogated. It is because the present is violent (5). Like Levinas (1979: 24), Derrida (1994: 37) develops a position in which any discourse on peace and nonviolence is always a discussion that involves the future. However, in doing so the future as an "eschaton" must be distinguished from the future as a telos (37). Teleology, as it was argued in chapter 4, is a frame that perpetuates the second level of violence. However, eschatology does not close organisation. Rather, as a future without form, the eschaton interrupts the closure of the present.

VI. ETHICS, VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE

Ethics is not rendered redundant by the acknowledgement of complexity. In fact, ethics is an inevitable consequence of the first and second levels of violence. Critchley (1992: 31) argues that ethics is the horizon of all deconstruction. Without the possibility of perfect knowledge, one is responsible for the form and content of what one knows and how one acts based on that knowledge. In this sense, ethics can be thought to be prior to knowledge. However, this strong formulation implies a separation of ethics and epistemology that cannot be sustained within complexity thinking. Within critical complexity thinking, concepts like justice, nonviolence and forgiveness that inform and underpin moral and political positions are rendered problematic. Still, particularity within deconstruction, these concepts are still privileged (Caputo 1997: 41).[204] This privilege cannot be

[204] It was mentioned in section IV that justice was afforded the status of a quasi-transcendental within deconstruction. In *Force of Law* (Derrida 2002a: 243), the claim is made that, "*Deconstruction is justice*" (author's emphasis). This hyperbolic formulation is meant to underscore the significance of the notion of justice within deconstruction. Both nonviolence and justice are made possible by the opening of space in the system and also function as pseudo-origins for the movement of deconstruction. Neither is, however, a pure and transcendental origin. A truly transcendental source of ethics such as Kant's (1989: 38, 39) categorical imperative, introduced in chapter 4, provides an absolute foundation for all moral judgements.

ultimately grounded, but it persists in the form of a commitment to the possibility of relationships without violence that is simultaneously motivated and frustrated by the inevitability of violence in the complex system (Derrida, 2001: 102).

In order to subscribe to the ethics of complexity informed by the disavowal of empirical violence, it would appear that one must already perceive violence to be a problem. This is the danger of an ethics of complexity. It cannot be enforced by a law or a commandment. It is indeed the opposite that is true. The recognition of this type of ethics, which is the recognition of violence as a problem, is what gives the commitment to law is force. The ethics of complexity at which we arrive via deconstruction is an ethics that demands a singular response to the oppressed, the disenfranchised, the excluded, the marginalised, the weak and the suffering whether they are good or bad (Derrida 2002b: 35-36). It is an ethics that one might, in deference to Nietzsche (2006: 311-361) and the debt owed by deconstruction and complexity to his performance of decentred thought, frame as an ethics beyond any categorical designation of good and evil.

It should be recalled that the first and second levels of violence in complex organisation are not necessarily good or necessarily bad. Furthermore, both are necessary conditions of meaning in the system. To frame violence as a problem within complexity is not to advocate its eradication on these levels (Corson 2001: 866, 868). Without violence there is neither structure nor deconstruction. Still, the problem of violence on these two levels demands a response and an active engagement. As it was argued at the beginning of the chapter, empirical violence and the suffering it produces, create this demand.

The material violence suffered by the other is not only rape, murder and other atrocities. It is also the material experience of violent distinctions made within language and the law. The suffering of the other raises the question of ethical responsibility, what it is and how it is borne. The possibility of nonviolence produces a responsibility to act in a way that attempts to bring about nonviolence despite the impossibility of its full presence in the complex system (Cornell 1992: 149, 167).[205] Derrida (1993b: 377-380) characterises this responsibility as follows:

Neither justice nor nonviolence fulfils this requirement because of their respective exteriority in relation with the complex system as a model for understanding social systems.

[205] Caputo, (2003: 9) questions the efficacy and value of this exterior notion of justice and this question can be extended, by analogy, to nonviolence:

> But if something unconditional happens, without sovereignty and without being, without force and without power, would it have the wherewithal to transform us, to turn us around, to make us new? Would it, could it, be something truly revolutionary, or would it lie lame and lifeless and ineffective? Could something be revolutionary without having revolutionary power? Could something that is at best a "weak force" (*force faible*) be strong enough to save us?

1. One answers for one's self and one's actions beyond a simple present, for everything that bears one's name (378);
2. One responds to the other and for the other (379);
3. One answers before the other and is judged by the other (379-380).

The responsibility to respond to violence in the name of nonviolence is a responsibility that, like both empirical violence and nonviolence, is not contained within the boundaries that enable meaning and structure and law. It is thus a responsibility without a boundary (Derrida 2002a: 247). It is an infinite responsibility. The aporia of the judgement, both in terms of what conventionally falls into the sphere of ethical or rather moral judgements, as well as the decision in general, the employment of a frame, prevents the transference of this responsibility onto any code. A judge that implements a racist law does not escape the responsibility for the violence – both interpretive and empirical – that is produced by that judgement (Derrida 2005b: 145, 154).

This formulation is an outcome of the acknowledgement of complexity in the system. An ethics of complexity cannot be unproblematically translated into a practical, moral, juridical or political programme of action (Derrida 2005b: 145). Any clearly defined programme involves a leap that is discontinuous with the calculation and preparation that preceded it. The appearance of the incalculable at the limits of sense is inevitable. Derrida (146) refers to the example of cloning in order to demonstrate the appearance of the incalculable even within science. Proponents of cloning defend it because its benefits and risks can be calculated and measured against one another. Although this exercise is necessary and important, the values attributed to each benefit and risk a that guide the entire exercise, imply a leap whether this is acknowledged in the calculation or not. The leap is not mystical. It does not mean that calculation is not valid; it is simply never calculation all the way down. The same point can be made in terms of critical complexity theory. All knowledge involves reduction in complexity (Cilliers 2002: 78). It involves framing and simplification (81).[206] This sensitivity leads both deconstruction and complexity to a paradox of reduction: we cannot reduce that which we want to know without at least distorting what it is we want to know; and we cannot know with reduction (Cilliers 2005b: 137-138; Derrida 1979a). The limitations of knowledge produce a normative dimension to every act of knowing. A denial of the necessary violence of thinking, which is both enabling and constraining, is a denial of the ethical responsibility one bears for this violence.

To use the aporia of the experience of justice in order to justify a position of non-intervention is neither the intention of deconstruction nor a rigorous understanding of its emphasis on singularity and responsibility

[206] "Complex systems are open systems; interactions take place across their boundaries. However, if an infinite number of interactions have to be considered, the production of meaning will be indefinitely postponed. This, we know, is not the case. Meaning is generated in real time. How is this possible? Because meaning is constituted in a specific context where some components are included and others not. It would not be possible to have any real meaning if the number of relationships were not limited. In other words, for meaning or knowledge to exist at all, there have to be limits. We cannot comprehend the world in all its complexity. We have to reduce that complexity in order to generate understanding" (Cilliers 2002: 81).

(McCormick 2001: 416). One never escapes the obligation to act. In fact this can be formulated even more strongly. One never escapes action. No response is still a response for which one is responsible regardless of whether or not one accepts this responsibility. One must engage in political and legal debates and intervene in the opening and closing of meaning (Derrida 2002a: 257). This is a dangerous position because it is vulnerable to relativism. One has to ask, however, whether this danger is produced by a deconstructive attitude or whether deconstruction does not expose a danger that pervades all juridical and political interventions and simply goes unacknowledged. A relativistic licence to do or say anything at all is not sustainable within a rigorous understanding of opening and closure in the system. There are not infinite degrees of freedom for any form of knowledge in the system and knowledge of moral judgements is no exception. There will be feedback from the system. The second level of violence suppresses but cannot finally erase the first and third levels of violence as sources of change and eventfulness in the system. It is certainly not proposed that the system will simply self-correct as if towards some perfect self-directed end. It is simply that the possibility of change is always still the possibility of change for the better toward a nonviolent future. An ethics of complexity is therefore necessarily an ethics of transformation. Transformation requires us to engage the future by anticipating and working towards a just tomorrow, by imagining better futures.

VII. CONCLUSION

The exteriority of empirical violence and nonviolence in relation to the complex system begs a final qualification. It should be emphasised that, in chapters 1 and 2, the system was specified as a model of reality and not reality in itself. The articulation of empirical violence and nonviolence inside that model is the attempt to keep that model open to the world, to reality in itself, to which no immediate access is possible. It is because of the necessity of the model for all understanding that is absolutely imperative that there is room for a robust discussion of violence. Without this space, the validity of the model as a means of understanding social systems is greatly undermined.

One of the sources for the possible characterisation of complexity theory as a theory that reduces human beings to mere cogs in the machine is its lack of a forceful and developed articulation of violence as a problem. Without the ability to articulate violence, not only as a structural feature of the system but as an ethical, political and moral problem, the only impetus for change from the perspective of critical complexity thinking would still turn on the health or robustness of the system. For example, an argument for cultural diversity can be made from critical complexity theory. It could be made by arguing that diversity – difference – is a precondition for the emergence of complexity. And, further, diversity is not only a necessary condition for complexity, but more differences in the system allow for richer relationships between elements inside the system. This is a valid argument, given the model of complex systems developed in chapter 1. However, without the language of violence, this argument is inadequate. It gives credence to Dillon's negative (2000) assessment of complexity

theory as a merely strategic and instrumental use of difference. Using the violence of understanding as a point of departure returns the focus of a discussion of diversity back to the victims who suffer because of their difference. This may seem a trivial point. However, the suffering of others and the health of the system will not always lead us to the same outcome. Critical complexity theory – as distinguished from restricted engagements with complexity (see Morin 2005) – opened to the language of violence, allows for the rehabilitation of the person, the other, the damaged thing, the one who suffers, as the starting point of and political or moral action. From here, it can be established that social system as a complex system does not consume the individual. While this does appear at first to be a humanist argument, it can be extended to all difference and singularity that is violently suppressed and reduced in the system, including animals and the environment.

Deconstructive ethics as an ethics informed by the acknowledgement of complexity always involves a return to the margin. The separation of a text, a meaningful system, into components that are essential to the constitution of the system and components which are *merely* marginal because of their resistance to the established identity or order within the system sanctifies a certain attitude towards marginality. Deconstruction reverses this attitude (Culler, 1983: 215). Its supplementation of critical complexity theory allows this theory to develop a similar attitude towards those who suffer as a result of the normal organisation of the system. It is this attitude that underpins a commitment towards engaging with the structures of meaning in order to work towards the alleviation of empirical violence by employing the first two levels of violence. The ethics of critical complexity theory displaces the absolute authority of the closure of the present (Critchley 1992: 26). This is why the affirmation of an ethics of complexity is always also the affirmation of excess and exteriority.

Arendt (1970: 80) warns that the dependence on violence for interruption within a theory always risks endorsing empirically violent historical events such as wars and revolutions, whether they produce great suffering or not. This is not the case here. In order to arrive at this position, it would have to be possible to give content to the notion of justice that underwrites the justness of a revolution. From complexity, there is no way of arguing that a violent revolution is itself ever just. The ethics of critical complexity is not an apologia for violent revolution. What is advocated is that decisions are made and actions are taken in order to redress empirical violence in the name of the possibility of nonviolence. In this process, one cannot escape the constitutive and enabling violence of one's position. However, when one approaches the problem of violence with sensitivity to one's limitations, one's position will necessarily be provisional and correctable. The action advocated within the ethics of critical complexity is reminiscent of Spivak's (1990: 109) strategic essentialism. Although one departs from a position that is not essentialist, one is not half committed to one's actions or ideas or morals (11, 15). Every ethical-political engagement tends towards essentialism insofar as it requires a closure of the boundary (51). One imagines a better future and commits fully to a moral judgement and consequent actions in order to bring about change that secures that future. One does not say that the oppression of women is wrong given a specific understanding of women as free and autonomous agents capable of choice and action, within the context of a

specific culture and within the present historical moment, but this position cannot be ultimately grounded. One certainly does not halfway reject the violence of the Rwandan genocide or propose that in some cases, rape is not only understandable, but morally justifiable.

However, having begun with an acknowledgement of radical uncertainty and recognition of the problem of violence, one is sensitive to the discontinuities and contradictions of one's position. Spivak (58) argues that all liberation movements and identity based politics will undermine themselves because they impose a hegemonic identity and programme onto singular individuals. For example, the women's movement from which such privileges as control over one's reproductive health and the right to vote depends on an understanding of women that denies the internal differences that allow divergent experiences of womanhood. However, this identity which makes sexual difference into an essential truth is strategically useful. Our only hope is that a utopian ideal, a political movement, an identity and the law will deconstruct. Once it can no longer be maintained that a frame alleviates more violence than it generates, it must be deconstructed. Again, this judgement must be made by the employment of another frame and without any ultimate guarantee. The affirmation of an ethics of critical complexity is a risk. It is a risk that requires that one always engages in the anticipation of a different future. Further attention to the consequences of this analysis is given in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION: A RADICAL POLITICS OF NONVIOLENCE – AS IF IT WERE POSSIBLE

I. *COMPLEXUS*, COMPLEXITY, *DIFFÉRANCE*, VIOLENCE...

This conclusion is the final act of violence in this project. It is the final opportunity to gather up all the arguments developed, clear up any lagging ambiguities, any potentially heterogeneous organisations and to constrain the possibilities of (mis)interpretation and so also to enable clear meaning. It will not be used to restate the detailed analysis that has been developed throughout the body of this work. Some reinforcement is certainly necessary. However, this is, in the first place, the necessary closure of an interpretative frame. It must present itself as a justification for the project as a whole. In a sense, this justification is simple: violence is a problem that demands a response and the acknowledgement of complexity, whether through the lens of critical complexity theory, deconstruction, or informed by Nietzsche or Levinas, has implications for how we respond and why we do. In order to get to this response, two tasks needed execution: a theoretical exploration of complexity; and an exposition of the meaning of violence.

This thesis has been about violence *and* complexity. The 'and' signifies the situation of violence in an unspecified relation to the experience and conceptualisation of complexity and vice versa. The indeterminate character of this relation, the space opened by the 'and', is intended to accommodate the various meanings of violence that emerge at various levels of complex organisation. In terms of the first level of violence, it is more specific to say that there is violence *in* the system. Or, even to close the distance opened by a conjunction and pronounce that violence *is* the system.[207] In terms of the second level of violence, one might characterise it as the violence *of* the system. It is the violence that emerges in the process of the system's self-organisation, through which the system produces a structure and stable meaning. This violence of structuring, bounding and framing is the violence of the system that obscures its original violence, its arbitrary differential organisation (Derrida 1979b).[208] The third level of violence – material or empirical violence – is neither entirely in nor entirely of the system. Here the 'and' signifies a relation of difference and tension. In a sense, this violence is 'other than' or outside meaning. It must be drawn into the system by means of the first two levels of violence to become meaningful.

[207] See chapter 3. This characterisation of violence as the system is related to the idea that meaning emerges out of relations of difference between elements or components in a complex system. It is because meaningful components are organised through asymmetrical, antagonistic and relations of *différance* that this 'violent' system can be juxtaposed to a peaceful system in which meaning is a property intrinsic to individual components, and in which relations between components would subsequently be ordained by this pre-given and therefore natural order of things (Cilliers 1998a: 95, 120, 124; Derrida 1982: 8; Morin 1992: 119).

[208] See chapter 4.

With respect to each of its three modulations or levels, the exposition of violence could not begin without attention to the organisation of the system itself. The extensive discussion of the system informed by critical complexity theory and deconstruction was necessitated by the position of this paper, which holds that the affinity between critical complexity theory and other theoretical positions ought to be demonstrated. To open critical complexity theory in this deliberate way has served a dual purpose. First, it has served to underwrite a philosophical reading of a theory that has emerged largely outside philosophy. Its execution has shown how critical complexity confronts philosophical problems and that it can be used to supplement philosophical discourses that confront related problems. Secondly, contextualising critical complexity theory within a wider philosophical confrontation with complexity and complex phenomena has also served to supplement and so enrich critical complexity theory.

The conceptualisation of violence, taking the epistemological and ethical implications of complexity into account, has been dense. It has required that critical complexity theory is placed within a wider philosophical context and supplemented with several references to other theoretical positions discussed both at the core of this discussion and at its margins. A significant motivation for the choice of deconstruction as the primary supplement is that deconstruction has an expressed and pervasive preoccupation with the violence implicated in the development of meaning in human interactions with one another and with the world and objects in it (Derrida 1998: 9). This orientation is not always explicit, but it is woven into the fabric of deconstructive readings of the philosophical canon and of more marginal texts.

The relative novelty of complexity theory and its eccentricity in relation to the philosophical canon has demanded a thorough clarification of the conceptual space in which violence is to be readdressed. It has also demanded that the place of critical complexity theory within the humanities and social sciences is challenged through encounters with more established socially oriented theories. The insights drawn from critical complexity theory, of which the insistence upon limits to knowledge and an ethics informed by uncertainty have been emphasised in this project, are not unique to it. In this sense, a significant aim of this exploration of violence was to show that critical complexity theory has not fallen, perfectly formed, from the sky, and that it can and should be developed and questioned from beyond its own boundaries. There is a remarkable poverty of attention to the considered comparison of complexity theory with other theories in order to show points of agreement and divergence.[209] Where this comparison has taken place, it has often been either to show how philosophy benefits, without reciprocity, from an encounter with complexity theory; or it has been to argue that complexity theory fills the void opened by the obsolescence of philosophy (see for example Dillon 2000 and Taylor 2001).

[209] This conclusion is based on a literary survey of texts that deal with complexity and poststructuralism, and on readings of seventy-one sources that draw complexity theory into conversation with poststructural philosophies.

The relationship between complexity theory and philosophy, seen as one in which complexity theory is heralded as the usurper of the place of other more thoroughly philosophical philosophies, is firmly rejected. The extension of complexity theory beyond natural phenomena in order that social phenomena can be modelled as complex systems does, however, require pause. It requires a critical engagement with the central concepts of complexity and with its lacunae. While it is the position of this thesis that the critical complexity theory espoused by Edgar Morin and Paul Cilliers throughout their respective works – as well as similar approaches developed by other authors – do hold potential for application in the social sciences, this enthusiasm is optimistically qualified. There is still work to be done in terms of conceptual development – as this thesis attempts with respect to violence. It is not necessary that the theory is perfected before it is applied. It is also a profitable enterprise to work out certain theoretical problems in the process of application. However, what is imperative is that the critical, reflexive engagement that follows from a complexity-informed epistemology is part of all complexity related endeavours. Any model of a complex system must itself be evaluated in the course of its application. Using Derrida's (1993a: 20-21) conceptualisation, one can say that the confrontation with complex phenomena is an experience of aporia. One must develop and apply theory in order to enable understanding; but understanding also requires that theory is suspended in order that its interpretive violence is not carried out without consideration of the phenomenon in question, in its singularity (20).

Formulated alternatively, the application must be carried out with an emphasis on complexity as a problem to be confronted, rather than a solution to be enforced (Morin 1992: 386). Edgar Morin (1983a; 1983b; 1992; 2005; 2007) and Paul Cilliers (1998b; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2006) both engage with complexity in this manner. Both underline the limits of theories of complexity and of models of complex systems (see for example Cilliers 2000c and Morin 1992: 150). At the most basic level, the acknowledgement of complexity is a challenge to all those structures that impose closure onto the field of meaning. To use complexity theory, which is a discourse in development, without reflecting on the fundamental uncertainty it proposes, is to fail to enact a rigorous application of the notion of complexity, which exceeds the closure of any particular model.

If the fundamental epistemological uncertainty that is espoused by complexity thinking is to be applied with rigor; then critical complexity theory cannot simply be taken to dismiss other discourses on social phenomena in terms of its own internal distinctions – as if these distinctions are afforded the status of a metaphysical foundation. Complexity opens the philosophical conversation. It cannot close it. To develop a discourse on violence beginning and ending only within critical complexity theory would be to impose a premature and ultimately unjustifiable theoretical closure – an unproductive violence – onto it. Such violence could find no justification within a rigorous reading of complexity informed philosophy. Within the tension between critical complexity theory and deconstruction, a novel, interesting and ethically significant understanding of violence emerges.

Oriented by a concern with violence, this project has been structured in order to accommodate several points of engagement between critical complexity theory and other theories that endeavour to confront the ultimate lack of metaphysical foundation at the base of knowledge and of morality.[210] Jacques Derrida's (1997; 1981b; 1982) *différance* has been used to direct these engagements. Deconstruction has framed critical complexity and it been framed within critical complexity theory, as an attempt to navigate complexity.[211]

Deconstruction allows itself to be read as a form of complex systems thinking. However, it is also not confined to this reading. Derrida also engages various modes of complexity thinking in other theorists who do not employ the system as a philosophical tool. His (Derrida 2001: 97-192) reading of Levinas is an example of this engagement. The conclusion drawn by demonstrating the affinity between these distinct styles of thinking that also have distinct objects and arguments is not to establish an identity between them. Deconstruction is not critical complexity theory. Critical complexity theory is also not deconstruction. However, in the encounter between critical complexity theory and deconstruction, interesting philosophical/political positions can be explored.

Différance captures the sense of complexity as *complexus*; that is, as interrelation without fixed and absolute boundaries between elements inside the system (Morin 2005: 6). It also captures the sense of complexity as dynamic organisation in time and space. It is the position of this thesis that Derrida's chain of supplementary (non)concepts can be supplemented thus: trace, space, supplement, parergon, hymen, graft, writing, arche-violence, *différance*, *complexus*, complexity, boundary, asymmetry, antagonism, and violence (Derrida 1981b: 40; Spivak 1997: lxx). These infrastructures, via their relations to Saussure and to both Morin and Cilliers, have provided the structural framework for a relationship between critical complexity theory and other philosophical perspectives.

The density of the forgoing five chapters has been deliberate in one sense and unavoidable in another. It has been necessitated by Derrida's persistent attention to texts outside deconstruction and by the reiteration of significant themes and problems dealt with in this thesis, outside deconstruction and critical complexity theory. The infrastructures – *différance*, trace, space, arche-violence and others – whose general characterisation of the text must not be taken for ontological certainty, open themselves to relationships with a broader philosophical corpus. Of particular significance in this process of extra-complexity reference, not only by way of Derrida's engagement, have been the philosophical writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Hannah Arendt, Immanual Kant and Emmanuel Levinas.

[210] Derrida's (2001: 351-370) *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* was used to situate all complexity-informed and grammatological projects within the same epistemological break.

[211] See chapter 2.

The tripartite structure of complex violence is fraught with tension between the desire to articulate and redress violence with certainty, and the acknowledgement of the limitations of any such attempt. The strategic division of violence into three distinct 'levels' cannot be maintained all the way down, as it were. Still, these 'levels' are not trivial, despite the fact that, like all meaning, they are arbitrary in the sense that they cannot be metaphysically motivated. Each level of violence corresponds to different but related experiences of violence. And, although the third level of violence – the material but not necessarily physical level – appears relatively marginal in relation to discussion of the violence of meaning in this project, it must be emphasised that these two levels of violence are part of a framework in which the problem of empirical violence and violence as an empirical problem can be addressed. The first two levels of violence allow for the widest possible understanding of violence, so that no vulnerable voice claiming to have borne witness to violence may be shut up without due consideration. The theorisation of violence on the three levels of organisation is a political strategy informed by the ethics of complexity, by which violence is opened to ethical-political engagement, as an impetus for intervention.

II. THE FIRST LEVEL OF VIOLENCE: POLITICS WITHOUT GROUNDS

The first level of violence encompasses the dynamic organisation of the arche-violence within deconstruction and asymmetry and antagonism within complexity theory (Derrida 1997: 112; Cilliers 1998a: 95, 120, 124; Morin 1992: 119). Its operation is the very possibility of meaning without a metaphysical foundation. In terms of an abstract system of language, this level of violence seems relatively innocuous. However, the relational structure of meaning and the asymmetrical character of these relations are not innocuous if it enables, as it does, a system of meaning through which subjects come to understand themselves and one another. Given this performative force of language, 'asymmetry' and 'antagonism' cannot be thought of as neutral mechanisms. The first level of violence fails to maintain neutrality because it enables the emergence of boundaries and hierarchies in the system. The arche-violence is neither good nor bad on its own, but it is never on its own. There is no organisation without structure and a measure of stability. Value judgements like good/bad, right/wrong, and good/evil are possible because meaning is not random. The arche-violence is constrained by the boundary and its violence; but the boundary can also always be undermined by arche-violence. It is this second possibility that enables us to judge and to oppose one boundary with another.

The arche-violence/asymmetry/antagonism ensures that all organisation and order emerges out of the complex relations between components in the system (Derrida 1997: 37, 139-140). No order is possible without it. The first level of violence also ensures that these components are never isolated and always already engaged with one another. As a result, ethics, necessitated by being in the world with others, is made possible and always already in play. In this regard, it should be recalled that without the first level of violence – the violence of nomination – there is no possibility of addressing oneself to another or of addressing violence in the world (112). The arche-

violence opens the self to a relation to what is outside it. However, in enabling a relation to this other in this way, the arche-violence also removes me from the other whose immediate presence is thwarted by spacing opened by the name.

Considering the systemic interactions between human beings or between cultures or however the components of a social system are defined, the implication of violence (and space) of the name and of the boundary in the formation of what we mean to ourselves and to other people – as well as in the very process of ethical relation to the other – closes the possibility of unproblematic, unmediated and deterministic understanding and engagement. The asymmetry of relations inside the system always contains the possibility that there will, as Levi-Straus (1961: 292) suspects, be exploitation, domination and empirical violence. The ethics of complex interaction is also a politics of complex interaction because of this danger inherent to complex interaction in which, it would seem, all components can never be equal. Structural inequality is inevitable but never beyond the possibility of reorganisation. The possibility of inequality is thus the possibility that it will be challenged.

The relationship between components in the complex system is political in another sense. It is never only about the relationship between two isolated elements (Derrida 1997: 139-140). Every relationship always involves related subsystems as well as the system as a whole. The concept of violence on the first level can be used to affirm the old feminist motto: there is no space inside the system that is not conditioned by general systemic organisation. There is no personal space that is not political, or whose meaning can be isolated from the broader network in which its participants exist. Consequently, there is no space inside the system that cannot be addressed as a politically pertinent matter. The notion of politics employed in this argument is a lean notion, but a significant one. Politics is not meant, here, to refer to the acts or organs of the state or social institutions. Instead, this more general concept of politics encompasses all that is public and systemic and, as such, involves general social structures. Because these social structures emerge out of antagonistic and asymmetric relations, because the complex system is not a flat, homogenous structure, and because these the conditions of hierarchy emerge out of organisation on the level of the arche-violence, politics also refers to a terrain which is ordered and which is, by definition, not ordered by nature. Politics is juxtaposed to a natural state because the arche-violence destroys the possibility of a natural order.

From the perspective of critical complexity theory supplemented with deconstruction, politics can be understood as being with others, mediated by difference and boundaries, always retaining the possibility of producing empirical violence for one's self and for the others, the meaning of which is contested and always remains contestable. The politics of complexity is a politics of engagement. One is always already politically engaged. If one is engaged and always already participating in the general system of meaning which, in turn, structures one's relations with others and with the world, then the acknowledgement of that engagement presents one with the opportunity engage strategically and with cognisance of one's implication in the constitution of meaning beyond

one's own local actions. Regarding the first level of organisation, one can say: the system is violence. And, regarding the definition of politics offered here, one must also, consequently, say that the system is politics. The arche-violence separates meaning from being. In so doing it undermines the formation of a utopian vision that claims a natural or determinate status for itself. To say that we cannot formulate a perfect order or restore a natural one is not to advocate a simple maintenance of the present. Instead, it leads us to re-evaluate and revalue the future (Levinas 1979: 24). Understanding the first level of violence in this way, as necessitating an ethical-political engagement with the future, guards against the valorisation or neutralisation of violence that Hannah Arendt (1970: 74) reads in philosophies that insist on a relationship between violence and the genesis or vitality of the system.

III. THE SECOND LEVEL OF VIOLENCE: WE MUST CHALLENGE THE MASTER

If one arrives at this point at which the inevitability of ethical engagement and political engagement is acknowledged and one considers this acknowledgement alongside the perpetual possibility of empirical violence in the system – the perpetual possibility that one produces this empirical violence by one's own actions – one has an imperative to advocate and act against the simple maintenance of the present organisation of the system. One must identify and deconstruct the structures through which the second level of violence operates. One has a responsibility for oneself, to oneself, to the other and for the other, and for all the others (Derrida 1993b: 377-380). This responsibility may appear to be overwhelming, from the perspective of the choosing subject. It may be impractical, from the perspective of the ethicist, the lawyer, the politician or anyone who needs to formulate a system in which agents are held accountable by means of a chastisement or retributive action that effectively organises various acts of empirical violence on a scale of relative badness or evil or undesirability.

However, as it was suggested in chapter 5, when considering Derrida's hyperbolic formulation of responsibility, in *Politics of Friendship* (377-380) and throughout *Acts of Religion* (2002a), following Levinas' (1979) hyperbolic deference to the other, and Morin's (2007: 3-4) insistence on the dramatically named "mutilation" of thinking, and Cilliers' (2000b; 2001: 145; 2005a: 264) insistence on responsibility that exceeds the determination of *any* rule, it must be questioned whether this tendency toward excess is motivated by theoretical inclination, or if the theoretical insistence on excess exposes this condition from which rules and categories – the second level of violence – shield us. The denial of the hyperbolic is concomitantly a failure to respond to the singularity, the other person, the people, the animal, the planet, that is harmed, excluded, marginalised and oppressed with all the confidence that a rule affords. If this is indeed the case, then it might be the place of a philosophical engagement with such practical matters as lawfulness and politics, to intervene in order to restore the excess, to be, as Derrida (2001: 76) says, "the attempt-to-say-the-hyperbole". The authority of the various incarnations of the second level of violence – the frame, the boundary, the line, the law, the rule, the calculation – must all be interrogated before they are accepted and also after. This must be done at the risk of slipping

outside sense, of speaking non-sense; it must be done at the risk of sounding mad. This is not an argument against lawfulness and calculation, but only an argument against the ossification or indeed deification of order at the cost of those who are harmed by it.

A radical politics informed by the acknowledgement of complexity as an emergent property of the interaction between subject and object is radical precisely because it is underpinned by a deconstructive engagement with the present. In order to allow this engagement, the present must be understood in terms of both the past (which cannot be known objectively, but must be selected) and the future (which is constrained by the past and the present, but not to the extent that the possibility of a truly eventful event can be closed) (Cilliers 2006: 109; Derrida 1994: 14-16). The hyperbolic responsibility that accompanies the acknowledgement of complexity is, in many ways, responsibility for the present we create. The emphasis on the ultimately arbitrary character of the second level of violence, stripped of its foundation by the arche-violence, frames human social systems as creations, a collective creative acts. Things are never simply what they are but what we have made them. There is no maker or master that cannot be challenged.

Rather than propose metaphysical grounds for moral responsibility or political intervention, the position espoused from within deconstruction is that we are all infinitely responsible for what we do and what we do not do precisely because there is no ultimate transcendent justification to underwrite our actions. Derrida (2002b: 57) elaborates on the political significance of this responsibility. It is not only the state sanctioned performances of the second level of violence that require critical engagement. It is also counter-state demonstrations, revolutionary projects, liberation movements and identity politics that require the same rigorous questioning. One cannot commit oneself, argues Derrida (57), under the weight of one's responsibility, without first publically questioning the hierarchies and boundaries that structure any political movement. One must ask who is framing the process, how it is being framed, and who is marginalised and excluded by the frame. This argument implies that those with greater agency within the structure of an organisation have a greater responsibility than those who do not.

A radical politics informed by the acknowledgement of complexity cannot profess that a revolution without violence will come to save to us. We are thrown into a world of violence without anything more than the irrepressible possibility that it might not be so tomorrow. Nonviolence, justice, forgiveness, the gift, and the singular will not arrive without work. We cannot wait for the event to come. We must act and act now (Derrida 2002a: 251-252). And yet, with all the urgency of a response to violence that is necessary, our actions, models and calculations, the frame through which we are able to address violence, must be provisional (Cilliers 2001: 139). There is always the risk of reification, of carrying out our own strategic violence (Spivak 1990: 109). Responsibility for the present never rescinds, even after an intervention. Revolutions often justify the recourse to

violence by proposing the advent of the new: the new law, the new state (Derrida 2002a: 269). There is violence inherent in this vision of the future because it sees itself as a final solution with possibility of change.

IV. ADDRESSING EMPIRICAL VIOLENCE IN COMPLEX ORGANISATIONS

Empirical violence and the suffering it engenders is, again, the ultimate motivation for this engagement with violence. Sympathy with the marginalised and oppressed is what informs the critical engagement with and scrutiny of the framing of empirical violence and the programmes by which it is to be addressed (Derrida 2002b: 39). The conceptual framework developed from critical complexity theory and deconstruction allows this type of engagement. It is starkly different from the strategic engagement with the concept of violence in order to justify its use for the liberation of the marginalised and oppressed that Arendt (1970: 12-20) dismays. It has been proposed that Derrida (1997: 112) situates empirical violence on a tertiary level in order to implicate meaning and, more specifically, language in the genesis and constitution of empirical violence. However, the violence of meaning is not the pure origin of empirical violence. An alternative way of thinking about this relationship is to say that where there is empirical violence – that we have identified as such – there is always meaning and interpretation. There are competing frames and resultant understandings, and there are entrenched relationships or newly created stratification. Meaning enables empirical violence; and empirical violence creates meaning. The inclusion of violence in language is not gratuitous postmodern excess. It is also more than an assertion of the fact that words can be harmful. Most people would accept this assertion to a lesser or greater extent.

It goes beyond this assertion because the theorisation of the violence of meaning maintains the possibility that an empirical violence that is made invisible or swept aside within a certain frame could still be addressed by attending to the violence of the frame itself. No value attributed to empirical violence is final. In cases in which violence appears to be unproblematically intolerable such as in the case of genocide, this point does not seem of any particular relevance. However, it should be recalled that the understanding of any event, even such a viscerally horrifying event as genocide, is seldom unified or sufficiently aware of the need to redress *all* suffering. In the case of empirical violence where the victims are perhaps less ‘innocent’, less likable, less like us good citizens, this is all the more important.

There is much empirical violence that is made invisible by our disdain for its victims. Rape in prisons, for example, is not seen as being high on our agenda of social ills that require redress. This is not to say that we should, as a global society, spend less time focused on victims with whom it is easier to sympathise. It is, however, an argument that all violence in the world, for which we are all responsible, is never acceptable. If we do choose to accept it, then it should be understood that acceptance is the same as justification. In the case of violence in prisons, the sincere acknowledgement of responsibility for what goes on ‘in there’, or ‘out there’ or however we choose to articulate the exteriority of the problem, would radically change how we feel about the suffering that persists with our approval. Prisoners are just one group of marginalised persons. The poor, the

mentally ill, the different, the strange, the black, the female, the homosexual and all the others whose internal difference is erased in order to justify a certain identity and order in which empirical violence goes unacknowledged and unaddressed, all these who suffer demand a response. The singularity of empirical violence does not transcend the system entirely (Derrida 1997: 112). It cannot be made present within the system either. However, we all bear a responsibility to make it meaningful, to draw it into the system, to make it visible to address ourselves to the other, provisionally, with humility, but with urgency.

V. A POLITICAL STRATEGY FROM THE MARGIN FOR THE OTHER

Two things are absolutely essential to any politics that orients itself from the margin. The first is a celebration of international difference, of creolisation; and the second is the adoption and cultivation of an aesthetic attitude. Attention to the creolisation is, in practical terms, attention to what is being suppressed with words or with physical force, in order to maintain a certain order, structure, law. One must ask what is being marginalised and excluded, and which aspects are being sacrificed in the name of a general principle or ideal. For example, in a struggle for equal agency and representation for women in South Africa, how much homogenisation of women as a group can be tolerated before this homogenisation produces its own empirical violence to the extent that it can no longer be tolerated? Do we address gender related violence in domestic relationships – generally involving men and questions of masculinity – at the cost of marginalising the interests of lesbian women? Do we address the devaluation of blackness in relation to whiteness, by espousing a potentially damaging black pride or African Renaissance in this process? We, of course, as Spivak (1990: 109) suggests, tackle these political problems strategically. But, we know that strategy cannot save us, and that ultimately, every strategy will deconstruct. Given the complexity of social systems, things cannot simply be assumed to be good for everyone, everywhere, at all times. History holds a litany of testimonies that suggests the opposite is more likely.

Those who enforce their need for purity, for purification, clarity and clean lines in matters that involve human relations are merchants of violence (Derrida 1988b 119). Utopia contains the seeds of dystopia. Not only do utopian visions often require blatant atrocity in order to be instantiated, but their epistemological violence obscures their brutality and potentially vitally important internal difference (119). In ethics and politics – formulated hyperbolically – "...nothing can be simple, and contamination is a good thing!" (Derrida 2002b: 256). It must be acknowledged that utilitarianism has its place, and that the interests of the many, of the majority, must also be heard and effected. However, this must be done with care for those excluded by the very idea of the majority, for the masses' suffering certainly does not preclude them from causing others to suffer (39).

The celebration of creolisation must be accompanied by an aesthetic sensibility. The aesthetic attitude is aesthetic in the sense that it attempts to go beyond what it present and to conceptualise, create and instantiate what is yet to come. It is also aesthetic in the sense that it attempts to engage with what is excluded in the formation of a category, a concept, a narrative or an argument. An aesthetic attitude is one which moves us to the

serious business of imagining better futures (Cilliers & Preiser 2010: 291). This requires a turn to the event, without a programme and without dogma.

To proceed without dogma must not be taken as a rejection of all attempts to reach political consensus. Agreement can function as a guard against political relativism. Indeed, to elevate violence to this central focus in the development of an ethical and political position demands a level of consensus. It is not metaphysically guaranteed. However, consensus must always be challenged. One must criticise the rhetoric and categories that motivate social change and so interrogate the legitimacy of any transformation or revolution. One cannot give up on revolution as such. When one does that, one must also deny a priori the possibility of the event, and thus also the possibility of nonviolence (Derrida 2002b: 96). In order to preserve and nurture this possibility, a radical politics informed by the acknowledgement of complexity and responsibility for the other must embrace creativity, always guided by the commitment to address violence in all its forms. The incarnation of this radical politics in a political programme that is yet to be developed and redeveloped future projects.

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