

Derrida on the history of phenomenology

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Abstract:

In this paper, we have examined various aporias that afflict phenomenology- Husserl's phenomenological reduction cannot hold if the transcendental is separate from the empirical, indeed, nothing separates the transcendental and the empirical and thus they are essentially the same. We demonstrated that Heidegger's repeated attempts to inverse to negate metaphysics only reproduced metaphysics as a ghostly double that returned to haunt his anti-metaphysics which remained bound to its ontological structure and vocabulary. We showed through readings of Levinas, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot that their radical empiricisms and privilege of Other over the same repeated metaphysics like Heidegger, in negating it and reversing its structure, thus reproducing and affirming it paradoxically. In all these demonstrations we have shown that the impossibility of a text is precisely its site of possibility, deconstruction proceeds by exposing the limit of a text and then de-limiting it towards the Other that it had repressed, its method is thus transgression and exceeding of limits imposed by a text towards its blindspots through exposing an aporia, and then proceeding to show the unthought of a text that needs to be thought in order to address this aporia.

Keywords: Derrida; Transcendental; Empirical; Quasi-transcendental ; Metaphysics

In this paper I have examined the aporia that has come to pass in phenomenology: phenomenology has divided itself into either transcendental idealism or radical empiricism, and an impasse has occurred as to where truth is to be located, as idealism or empiricism. Phenomenology has traditionally assumed that

the transcendental and empirical are divisible and ontologically separate. Traditionally, the transcendental has been understood to be the ground of the empirical, whereas the empirical is thought to be but the simulacrum of the transcendental. Phenomenology, in its divide into transcendental idealism and radical empiricism, assumes these are distinct ontological spheres. Hence Husserl with his transcendental reduction strives to bracket the empirical to reduce indication to expression, while empiricists, though they may not easily recognize themselves as such, such as Heidegger, Levinas, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot, have taken the transcendental as a site of exclusion or negation for their phenomenologies. In their reverse reduction they seek to exclude the transcendental as they view this purification as being faithful to phenomena, returning to the things themselves.

This paper has problematized the relationship between the transcendental and empirical, because it has demonstrated that the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical. The transcendental is nothing outside the empirical and vice versa, because the transcendental needs to be iterated as the empirical to come into being, just as the empirical needs the mediation of the transcendental through iterability to come about. For instance, we would not grasp the object without the transcendental properties of space and time. Yet we would also not grasp the object if there were no empirical instantiation of the object. Hence the transcendental needs to be iterated as the empirical to come into being. Hence a pure idealism such as Husserl's or a pure empiricism such as Levinas' cannot stand, because delineating the transcendental requires the exclusion of the empirical to define itself, just as delineating the empirical requires the

exclusion of the transcendental to define itself. Transcendental and empirical exist only through a dynamic relation of difference and iterability, as the transcendental is and is not the empirical, their difference translates into sameness. This is because the transcendental and empirical remain separated and distinguished by nothing, as demonstrated in the Husserl papers. Were the transcendental separable from the empirical, no phenomenological reduction would be able to take place, hence the difference between the transcendental is an illusion as the transcendental does not exist outside the dynamic relationship of iterability to the empirical. Were the empirical separable from the transcendental, this would also translate as a paradox as the radical empiricists we discussed throughout this paper have taken the transcendental as a point of contention and exclusion. Heidegger deliberately excludes Christian Theology from his philosophy, just as Levinas and Ricoeur privilege the Other and embodiment over the Self, excluding the Absolute in their phenomenology. Likewise, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot emphasize corporeality and Other-directed phenomenologies, which I have argued are negative or inverse phenomenologies, and take the transcendental as a point of dissociation from their philosophies. I have demonstrated that this separation of the transcendental and empirical is thus not coherent as these phenomenologists require the transcendental as a site of exclusion to define their philosophies. Hence, defining the empirical in absence of the transcendental does not make sense. As we have demonstrated through readings of transcendental idealism and radical empiricism, both are repetitions of the same through iterability. Heidegger's radical empiricism does not differ from Husserl's transcendental idealism, because their ontological structure is essentially the same. Metaphysics and post-Metaphysics are doublings rather than negations of each other, as we see Christian theology and Heidegger's post-metaphysics share the same ontological and metaphysical structure, because reversed Platonism remains

a form of Platonism. Heidegger's post-metaphysics requires the exclusion of the transcendental while Husserl's idealism requires the exclusion of the empirical, hence both exist only in dynamic relation to each other through iterability and are essentially the same. No phenomenological reduction would take place were the transcendental and empirical separable, hence empiricism and idealism are repetitions rather than divergences from each other. The transcendental is and is not the empirical, their difference translates into sameness as we demonstrated in the Husserl papers, and hence transcendental idealism and radical empiricism are repetitions of the same through iterability and difference. As transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion, truth would be neither transcendental nor empirical. Rather the difference or difference between transcendental and empirical would be its meta-condition and that which enables the thinking of its structurality. Truth is neither presence nor absence, Jew or Greek, being or non-being, self or other but the difference and difference between these two extremes, Derrida emphasizes the importance of iterability or repetition of both extremes as essentially the same, truth is thus quasi-transcendental or the interval between transcendental and empirical which enables both.

The transcendental requires the empirical to be defined and vice versa, while their difference translates into a paradoxical sameness because as we have demonstrated in the Husserl papers, transcendental-empirical difference is an illusion. This paper has thus demonstrated the necessity of the quasi-transcendental to conceiving the relationship between the transcendental and empirical, that which is neither transcendental nor empirical, but is prior to both as it is the anterior difference that enables us to think and conceptualize both transcendental and empirical. In place of transcendental or empirical privilege hence, this paper has argued that the quasi-transcendental and difference are the conditions necessary for conceiving phenomenology as it is

transcendental-empirical difference, the point of distinction between the transcendental and empirical, that enables us to think both as each term requires the illumination of the opposing term in order to be upheld. Truth is thus not localizable to either transcendental or empirical, but translates as difference and the quasi-transcendental as we require transcendental-empirical difference to conceptualize phenomenology in the first place. Every designation of the transcendental requires its distinction from the empirical to be upheld in Husserl's transcendental idealism, whereas the radical empiricists, as I have previously mentioned, take their point of departure from the transcendental, making it a point to negate or exclude Christian theology or the ontology of the Absolute and the same in order to define their phenomenologies. This paper has thus negotiated the space between the transcendental and empirical as the difference and necessary a priori condition that is necessary to thinking and conceptualizing phenomenology in its totality, as an idealism without the empirical or an empiricism without the ideal translates into an absurdity or incoherence.

Phenomenology's divide into transcendental idealism or radical empiricism, with its subsequent crisis over origin and truth and where it is to be located, thus presents a false conflict because the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical. Their difference is an illusion or a sameness. The transcendental is nothing outside the empirical and vice versa. This is because transcendental and empirical only come into being through the structure of iterability and difference. Without the transcendental, it would be impossible to conceive of the empirical, and vice versa. Hence phenomenology is based upon the aporia of the quasi-transcendental, that which is neither transcendental nor empirical but is the difference that allows the thinking of both. The transcendental is the empirical because the distinction is an illusory distinction, as we demonstrated in the Husserl papers, because the phenomenological reduction would not be able to take place if the distinction were

ontological and substantive. The privilege of either transcendental or empirical upheld by both camps of idealists and empiricists hence generates aporia as the transcendental and empirical are divided by nothing, their difference translates into sameness. Transcendental idealism requires the empirical to be a site of exclusion, whereas radical empiricism requires the transcendental to be a site of exclusion. Hence both terms are empty terms when defined in isolation from each other because the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical, just as the empirical is the repeated trace of the transcendental. Transcendental and empirical are thus historical names derived from metaphysics, based upon an illusory distinction, which can only be defined in dynamic relation to each other as each term requires the exclusion of the opposing term for the distinction to be upheld.

The transcendental and empirical can only come into being through iterability and difference, as the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical, and does not exist outside the dynamic relation to it. This is because the transcendental translates into the empirical, the aporia of metaphysics is that their difference translates into a repetition of the same, or iterability. Hence, we know of no transcendental that can be defined in isolation from the empirical and vice versa. The debate over the source of truth as transcendental idealism or radical empiricism is thus misled. In place, this paper has argued that truth is neither transcendental nor empirical but quasi-transcendental, the space between the transcendental and empirical. This quasi-transcendental is the difference between them, which gives rise to the distinguishing movement of the trace, retrospectively producing both transcendental and empirical.

I began with a survey of secondary sources to locate the aporia that had occurred in phenomenology and outlined Derrida's intervention. In my papers on Husserl, I argued that there was no presentation but only representation; ideality has to be repeated with a difference or iterated in order to be constituted. In my papers on Heidegger, I

argued that Heidegger's non-metaphysics was essentially a repetition of it, and that there was no substantial difference between metaphysics and non-metaphysics or representational and post-representational thinking. In my papers on Ricoeur, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot, I argued that their reversals of phenomenology to embrace a negative phenomenology or radical empiricism ended up being a repetition of metaphysics rather than an overcoming of it as they remain bound to its ontological structure by negating metaphysics and thus repeat it like Heidegger. Through this paper, I have argued that iterability and signature form the conditions of possibility for the perpetuation of phenomenology and metaphysics. Derrida's discovery is thus the a priori condition of possibility for conceptuality – its iterability and mediation, or signature. Derrida's meta-phenomenology is a tracing to the roots of its conditions of possibility for conceptuality, and in this paper I have located these conditions as difference and the quasi-transcendental. My readings do not intend to elevate Derrida to absolute status, but rather I wish to suggest that Derrida has discovered the grounding conditions for metaphysics as difference and the quasi-transcendental. Indeed, such a reading strengthens rather than destroys the metaphysical project because of its meta-phenomenological status as inquiry.

Derrida, through humour, subtlety and irony, demonstrates that the traditional hierarchies in phenomenology and metaphysics, be they empirical or transcendental idealism, simply do not hold as phenomenology always lands in an aporia when one seeks to privilege the transcendental or empirical. In place, as we have seen in our discussions throughout this paper, phenomenology is conditioned by the fundamental phenomena of iterability and signature, transcendental and empirical are not separable or distinct as these concepts have to be irrevocably mediated. An idealism without empiricism or an empiricism without idealism translates into an absurdity. Rather, it is repetition of the transcendental in the empirical, deconstruction as a double science

and double writing, which produces the economy of both the transcendental and empirical through the movement of the trace.

In this paper, we have examined various aporias that afflict phenomenology. Husserl's phenomenological reduction cannot hold if the transcendental is separate from the empirical, indeed, nothing separates the transcendental and the empirical and thus they are essentially the same. We demonstrated that Heidegger's repeated attempts to inverse to negate metaphysics only reproduced metaphysics as a ghostly double that returned to haunt his anti-metaphysics which remained bound to its ontological structure and vocabulary. We showed through readings of Levinas, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot that their radical empiricisms and privilege of Other over the same repeated metaphysics like Heidegger, in negating it and reversing its structure, thus reproducing and affirming it paradoxically. In all these demonstrations we have shown that the impossibility of a text is precisely its site of possibility, deconstruction proceeds by exposing the limit of a text and then de-limiting it towards the Other that it had repressed, its method is thus transgression and exceeding of limits imposed by a text towards its blindspots through exposing an aporia, and then proceeding to show the unthought of a text that needs to be thought in order to address this aporia. Transcendental and empirical are related through a dynamic relation of iterability and repetition with a difference. Hence metaphysics is based fundamentally upon an aporia or the conditionality of the quasi-transcendental, which is neither transcendental nor empirical but the condition that enables the thinking of both. Derrida thus inscribes phenomenology in a more powerful form through naming its condition of possibility as the quasi-transcendental, thus bringing to phenomenology reflexivity about its method of production and functioning.

Phenomenology has become a science of knowledge divided against itself. Originally founded by Husserl on the doctrine of intentionality to return to the things themselves

as a purer science of knowledge that was presuppositionless and based on strict observation of phenomena, phenomenology has witnessed a split into opposing camps of transcendental idealism espoused by Husserl and an empirical psychology espoused by his followers and detractors, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, Levinas and Ricoeur. Subsequently phenomenology has seen a split along the lines of idealism and post-metaphysics, not unlike the split in metaphysics between idealism and realism. Has phenomenology broken away from metaphysics only to fall into a similar paradox and division? The debate has implications for a conception of truth: which version of phenomenology is a more accurate reading of the thing and the event?

An aporia or impasse has occurred in the development of phenomenology – in the debate between transcendental idealism and empirical psychology, or the radical empiricism of Levinas, Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty. The question arises as to which can claim to be a more rigorous and faithful reading of phenomena. The act of bracketing, which takes place in Husserl's phenomenology as an exclusion of the empirical witnesses a reversal in Heidegger's phenomenology. This is because bracketing radicalizes intentionality, to return to the anthropological and situated realm of Being. Likewise, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Blanchot espouse a negative phenomenology or radical empiricism. What both camps share is a form of purist idealism- be this transcendental idealism or empirical idealism. This paper will examine this tension in phenomenology as an aporia that Derrida's post-phenomenology addresses. Derrida's post-phenomenology recognized the paradoxical division that had taken place in phenomenology and tries to perform a tracing to the roots of both transcendental idealism and empirical psychology or radical empiricism by examining the a priori conditions that structure both versions of phenomenology. This paper will examine whether Derrida's intervention and negotiation of the debate is convincing and

whether it accounts for the meta-conditions that produce the structurality of structure in the phenomenology espoused by both camps.

Derrida locates the aporia at the center of phenomenology: that its distinctions, such as those between the transcendental and empirical, and between metaphysics and non-metaphysics or representational thinking and post-representational thinking, translate into paradoxical similarities. This happens because in his readings the transcendental turns out to be nothing outside the empirical. Non-metaphysics is repetition of metaphysics and representational thinking and post-representational thinking retain resemblances to each other. Paradoxically, the distinctions that hold at the heart of phenomenology are repetitions of the same, governed by the principle of iterability. That which makes the distinctions impossible is precisely what makes them possible : differance. This is because expression and indication translate as the same, the transcendental and empirical translate as the same, metaphysics and non-metaphysics translates as the same, as translates representational and post-representational thinking. The difference or differance between these phenomenological distinctions translate into a distinction which is paradoxically a sameness, a distinction that differentiates, and distinguishes, nothing. Derrida thus discovers the aporia that the distinctions that hold in phenomenology translate into a paradoxical sameness, or differance, which separates and distinguishes nothing.

In this section I will be examining Geoffrey Bennington's reading of deconstruction and the quasi-transcendental. Bennington's lucid and clarifying work on the quasi-transcendental will form the foundations of my paper. I extend Bennington's reading of the quasi-transcendental to readings of phenomenology. Bennington's readings on the quasi-transcendental are cogent as they define the fundamental conditions of possibility for reading metaphysics: excluded and a priori difference is necessary to think the economy of metaphysics. Bennington locates excluded difference or differance : the quasi-

transcendental as the condition of possibility for metaphysics, the third sphere of excluded difference, that which is neither transcendental nor empirical but between, as the founding condition that determines metaphysics. Bennington defines the quasi-transcendental as an excluded difference which structures the very possibility of reading: “The reading work carried out by Derrida consists in the location of these excluded terms or these remains that command the excluding discourse- the supplement (masturbation or writing) in Rousseau and the index in Husserl, the parergon or vomit in Kant.”¹

Bennington defines Derrida’s work as a work of reading. This work of reading refers to the active act of elucidation and illumination, to understand and shed light on a written text. In the context of Derrida’s work, the work of reading is the elucidating of certain oppositional structures in philosophy which are informed by a double bind or shadow, which Derrida’s work of reading locates as a binary structure that suppresses or relegates as secondary one element. This element in fact, governs and is crucial to informing the primary structure as it forms its basis and functions as its conditionality for understanding the primary structure.

Read in this context, the transcendental, which has historically been read as the source of the empirical, must be understood as that which is simultaneously conditioned by the empirical through the dynamic relation of iterability, differance and repetition. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that Derrida is simply locating oppositional structures only to reverse them, as his concern is to elucidate the fact that these exist in a dynamic relation of differance and iterability, transcendental does not exist outside the empirical just as the empirical is but the trace of the transcendental and cannot function outside its conditioning. The transcendental and empirical do not exist outside the structure

of repetition and differance. It is the repeatability of the mark, its ability to differ from itself, which defines the structure of transcendental and empirical interaction, or differance. In other words, it is transcendental-empirical difference, differance, the trace or the quasi-transcendental, which determines the structure of metaphysical production and functioning through the action of iterability, or repetition with a difference. It is this system of differences, that relays signifier to signifier, in an infinite chain of supplements, that determines metaphysics as arche-writing.

Deconstruction according to Bennington is thus the location of the supplementary as that which is the conditionality of the primary as it forms the oppositional structure which governs and conditions the primary. Derrida’s work of reading elucidates such oppositional structures or binaries to demonstrate that it is the fundamental principle of repetition that produces metaphysical structures. Transcendental and empirical only exist in a dynamic relation of repetition with a difference, it is not conceivable for the transcendental to exist without the empirical or the empirical to exist without the transcendental. In Husserl for instance, expression is not separable from indication as a sign by its very nature refers to something else and hence no exclusive expression without indication exists as an ideal sign has to be indicated in order to be communicated even in solitary mental life. In other instances, Husserl reduces metaphysics to mind and Merleau-Ponty reduces metaphysics to body while Derrida demonstrates that these exist only in and through each other, mind and body exist in a state of dynamic interaction, iterability and differance. Mind is not reducible to body, just as body is not reducible to mind. These exist only in dynamic interaction as the transcendental and empirical exist only in a state of repetition with a difference or iterability. Mind is mediated only through body and vice versa and hence it is absurd to conceive body without mind or mind without body, they exist in a dynamic relation of

¹ Geoff Bennington. “Derridabase,” *Jacques Derrida*. Chicago- University of Chicago Press, 1993. 284.

interdependency, iterability and differance. Likewise, love is only experienced through concretely manifested acts of love just as physical acts of love without the transcendental spiritual experience of love does not mean anything. God exists only in and through differance, through history and through Christ, just as these mean nothing without the founding principle of God.

In other words, the negative determines the positive just as the positive determines the negative. Derrida's argument, according to Bennington, is that the excluded terms are not secondary but essential to determining the primary structures. The "supplement in Rousseau, the index in Husserl, the parergon or vomit in Kant"² are all terms that have been relegated to a secondary place in philosophy but which determine the positive as a condition of possibility in Derrida's reading, functioning as the index, differance, or quasi-transcendental which determines both positive and negative. It is transcendental empirical difference, the quasi-transcendental, or differance that determines both transcendental and empirical and upholds metaphysics. Derrida's act of reading elucidates that such pairings are interdependent and not exclusive to each other, existing in and through each other with the structure of repetition, and that oppositional structures thrive on their dynamic pairing and oppositionality in order to function. In other words as will be demonstrated by this paper, transcendental is not conceivable without the empirical and vice versa, self is not conceivable without the other and vice versa, metaphysics is simultaneously determined by non-metaphysics. Metaphysics is thus not determined by the transcendental but the difference between the transcendental, differance or the quasi-transcendental.

Truth will be demonstrated by this paper to be neither transcendental nor empirical, but situated in the space between that is differance. On Bennington's reading, Derrida's work highlights through his reading

the fundamental oppositionality of structures which are dynamically inter-related and co-dependent, existing through a structure of repetition rather than statically depending upon one term to determine the other. Binary structures are thus organic and dynamic inter-dependencies which depend essentially on both terms to elucidate and determine the functioning of each term, truth is then the paradox that is situated in the space between as one cannot conceive of one term without the other. In other words, phenomenologists have been caught up in situating truth as either transcendental or empirical, but this paper will demonstrate that because of the dynamic interdependency and differance between the transcendental which determines both as the quasi-transcendental, truth is neither transcendental nor empirical but quasi-transcendental, located in a paradoxical space of aporia between the transcendental and empirical.

The aporia is the paradox that transcendental is not conceivable without empirical and empirical is not conceivable without transcendental, truth is thus the paradox that transcendental and empirical are simultaneously similar and different, identical and non-identical, bearing sameness in difference. The transcendental is and is not the empirical, their difference translates into a non-difference or sameness, and hence the fundamental relationship between the transcendental and empirical is the aporia of sameness in difference. It is paradoxical that difference should translate into non-difference or sameness, yet this is the conditionality of metaphysics that Derrida discovers, for transcendental exists in and through the empirical through repetition just as the empirical is but a trace and repetition of the transcendental. Radical empiricists such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas and Blanchot negate idealism only to affirm it by repeating its ontological structure.

Building on Bennington's paper that Derrida's work is a work of reading that elucidates oppositional structures in order to show the dynamic interaction between them

² Geoff Bennington. "Derridabase," *Jacques Derrida*. Chicago- University of Chicago Press. 1993. 284.

and interdependency, this paper will argue that the quasi-transcendental in Derrida's work functions as that which determines metaphysics by relating the transcendental and empirical in simultaneous identity and difference, identity and non-identity. The quasi-transcendental relates the transcendental and empirical in a paradoxical relation of sameness in difference. My work is essentially an extension of Bennington's reading of the quasi-transcendental to readings of phenomenology, demonstrating that the quasi-transcendental is the conditionality that determines metaphysics in phenomenology. The transcendental and the empirical exist in a state of dynamic interaction and repetition rather than existing as ontologically separate substances as has been historically determined by metaphysics.

For instance, the subject is nothing without its historicity, because it is through these acts, characteristics, performances and utterances that a stake to the "I" can be claimed. The self does not exist in a vacuum, but in and through its history. This is the necessity of iterability to the realization of every event and phenomenon. Just as the subject is nothing outside its staging and performance, the ideal is nothing outside the material.

To discuss the matter in more concrete terms, every designation of a phenomenon requires its opposite to delineate itself against to be realized. Just as Hunter is opposing history to the transcendent and then expelling the transcendent as something which has fundamentally contaminated the social sciences, Derrida demonstrates that truth cannot function without fiction, philosophy cannot function without non-philosophy. In a moment I will respond to charges that Derrida is nihilistic, but the supposition that Derrida is a nihilist likewise cannot function without the opposite claim that Derrida is more of an idealist, which this paper will claim at some points. The supposition that Derrida shares more in common with Nietzsche and Heidegger is a moment in the history of philosophy, at which Derrida took a turn, claiming to be neither Nietzschean nor

Platonist, but between. This is because each term requires its opposite to define itself against. Just as the idea cannot survive without its history, transcendental and empirical require each other as opposing terms to define themselves as I will demonstrate throughout this paper. The same can be said of philosophy and non-philosophy. Without its opposition to non-philosophy, idealisms such as Husserl's cannot stand. Likewise without their opposition to idealism, materialisms such as Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's cannot derive any meaning because it is only the dividing moment of a priori difference and the separation of each term from its opposing term that each term acquires its meaning and coherence.

In this paper, I will argue about the necessity of exemplarity or iterability to the realization of a concept. In response to the charge that this paper sublates all differences into anonymity and thus brings Derrida to nihilism, my response is that Derrida is affirmative ultimately of difference and singularity in his move to respond ethically to the Other and reinscribe the Other into phenomenology. This paper will show consistently how thought is generally shadowed by its unthought, as the ghost of a text returns to haunt it. Hence Derrida's move is a move to include this shadow of philosophy and Other of the text in showing that it is necessary to thinking and conceptualizing the One. Where I argue that difference is sameness, this move is not to flatten philosophy into an ahistorical mass, but to suggest that philosophy, in its various forms, is an expression of the Absolute and transcendental-empirical difference. Transcendental idealism and radical empiricism both require transcendental-empirical difference or difference in order to function, and what I will suggest throughout this paper is that this a priori or transcendental-empirical difference should be foregrounded rather than suppressed by confining philosophy to either idealism or empiricism. Each thinking of the transcendental or empirical requires its opposite in order to be conceptualized, hence

the suggestion that difference translates into sameness is not a nihilistic suppression of identity, but affirming ultimately that metaphysics is essentially a structure that requires opposites to define itself. Since both transcendental and empirical are essential to the thinking of this structure, it makes no sense to define the transcendental without the empirical or the empirical without the transcendental. Rather philosophy is a double writing, dynamically consisting of both ideal and material, and if there is any anonymity or suppression of identity it is only the recognition that historically, philosophy has been constituted by metaphysics – which consists historically of both transcendental and empirical. These terms have not changed despite reconfigurations of philosophy either into pure idealism or pure empiricism. However each reincarnation of philosophy as either pure idealism or pure empiricism affirms the structurality of structure whether in affirming it as a centre or deviating from it as a non-centre. What does not change is the language of metaphysics and its terms such as transcendental and empirical which have haunted phenomenology and philosophy throughout. In all its incarnations thus, whether as pure idealism, or as pure empiricism, Derrida has demonstrated the necessity of repetition to thinking these terms as they do not exist separately but through iterability, or incarnation. Mind does not exist outside body, transcendental does not exist outside empirical, what remains is the essential dual nature of metaphysics that requires its opposite in order to be delineated and defined, philosophy is thus democratized by coming to terms with the equal necessity of both terms to thinking each other.

Against charges of nihilism, I would argue that reducing difference to sameness is not a move that suppresses identity but enables it. Where Derrida argues that Christian theology does not differ essentially from Heidegger's atheistic ontology, he is not consigning identity to nothing but demonstrating that these share more in common than is supposed in a strict division.

Each term requires the exclusion and repudiation of the opposing term in order to be defined, and thus shares ultimately, the same metaphysical and ontological structure. It would be impossible to conceive of Christianity without its opposite, atheism, and thus upholding their similarity is not a move of suppressing identity but a move to recognize the structural necessity of thinking the ghost or shadow of a text in order to conceptualize it. Also, Derrida does not maintain the difference is ultimately a non-difference, but a paradoxical simultaneous similarity and difference. The transcendental is and is not the empirical because it precedes it but has to be realized through it. Hence it both is, and is not the empirical. The difference is not suppressed but doubled into a paradoxical relation of simultaneous similarity and difference.

I will also take pains to suggest throughout this paper that Derrida is not a materialist but a thinker of paradox and aporia. It is the aporia that the transcendental both is and is not the empirical that has sustained metaphysics, due to the fact that the phenomenological reduction can only be enabled if the difference between the transcendental and empirical is a difference which is nothing. Hence the difference is paradoxically a simultaneous similarity and difference. Hence against the charges of nihilism, Derrida is not a suppressor of differences but a democratic thinker of the Other that is necessary to thinking the one. Derrida is a thinker of the double writing that is necessary to conceptuality and thus does not suppress identity but only expands and multiplies it in showing that opposites require each other to sustain the metaphysical project. Hence in suggesting that differences are ultimately similarities, Derrida is not homogenizing philosophy, rather he is elucidating the base conditions necessary to thinking philosophy – each term requires its Other to delineate itself against, and hence there can be no strict ontological division or either/or logic, rather it is the thinking of the third space, the neither/nor and ultimately transcendental-empirical difference which will

allow us to view philosophy as a whole which is organic and constituent of parts rather than a strict idealism or strict empiricism. Derrida is thus a democratizer of phenomenology to the extent that he recognizes that transcendental and empirical are empty terms which mean nothing separately, but only exist in relation to each other and metaphysics as an organic structure and whole. Derrida is then not a nihilist but a thinker of opposites and the paradox that one term cannot function without its opposing term, phenomenology's quest for an either/or truth in a pure idealism or pure empiricism thus cannot hold because these terms only mean something in relation to each other. In response to charges of nihilism then, my argument is that Derrida doubles identity instead of relegating it to nothing. Derrida does this through demonstrating that the unthought forms the basis of thought and the ghost of a text always returns to haunt it.

In this sense, this paper maintains the right to viewing Derrida as a thinker of paradox in simultaneous similarity and difference rather than a thinker of pure difference in the vein of Deleuze, Žižek, Badiou or Delanda. While these thinkers are valuable in bringing insights to the tyranny of homogeneity and the Same, these thinkers paradoxically commit the same crime that they accuse idealists of by committing philosophy to pure materialism. As argued throughout this paper, because materialism exists only in relation to idealism, one would suppress transcendental-empirical difference in committing to a pure empiricism, materialism or pure realm of difference. Derrida is a thinker not committed to thinking pure difference but paradox, simultaneous similarity and difference, identity in non-identity, but in doing so he does not commit all to the realm of the Same of an ahistorical mass because he doubles ontology. He does this by committing us to see opposing points of view, in their separate uniqueness and integrity, without committing and consigning these to a realm of a sublated ideal à la Hegel. Derrida is then far from being a nihilist but a thinker that enables us to see that philosophy consists dynamically of opposites and each term is

essential to illuminating the other, hence a pure idealism or pure empiricism does not stand. Derrida is a thinker of irreducible difference in transcendental-empirical difference being the ultimate difference that grounds philosophy, hence far from being destructive or a nihilist, Derrida is profoundly affirmative. Derrida affirms opposites, but shows their necessity to thinking each other, and thus includes the Other and democratizes philosophy by demonstrating that philosophy cannot function without this a priori difference or oppositionality.

Building on a priori difference, my readings of the quasi-transcendental also take a point of departure from contemporary readers of Derrida such as Leonard Lawlor, Rodolphe Gasche, and Paola Marrati. Leonard Lawlor argues that the quasi-transcendental is defined as immanence- “In Derrida, there is a double necessity between an indefinite series of opposites, such as presence and absence, genesis and structure, form and content, law and arbitrariness, thought and unthought, empirical and transcendental, origin and retreat, foundation and founded, and so on.”³ Lawlor then pronounces “Immanence is complete”. I will argue that the relation between the transcendental and empirical is not immanence but paradoxical identity in non-identity, sameness in difference rather than an immanent relation that relates transcendental to empirical in a straightforward mutual implication as immanence implies. Paola Marrati defines the quasi-transcendental as the contamination of the transcendental and empirical- “In Derrida's work, the confrontation with Husserl and Heidegger, with a thought of the transcendental and an ontology of temporality, takes the form of an irreducible contamination, a contamination, first of all, of

³ Leonard Lawlor. *The Implications of Immanence-Toward a New Concept of Life*. Fordham University Press, 4.

finitude and infinitude, of life and death.”⁴ I will argue that it is not a mere contamination of the transcendental and empirical as this implies a sort of conflation and straightforward mutual implication but the relation of the transcendental to empirical in a relation of paradoxical identity in non-identity. Rodolphe Gasche comes closer to my interpretation of the quasi-transcendental when he writes, “The quasi-transcendentals are, on the contrary, conditions of possibility and impossibility concerning the conceptual difference between subject and object and even between Dasein and Being.”⁵ However while I agree with Gasche that the quasi-transcendental is a meta-condition of metaphysics determining the transcendental and empirical through the dynamic relation of iterability and differance, I diverge from his interpretation of the transcendental and empirical as a relationship of infrastructure as I do not conceive the relation between the transcendental and empirical as infrastructural or systemic, but something that exceeds the very thinking of system. This is because it is primarily a paradox and non-system of simultaneous identity and difference, sameness in difference, identity in non-identity which is irreducible to the conceptualization of this relation as systemic or infrastructural.

In this paper, I will be discussing the relation of phenomenology to deconstruction. The relation between phenomenology and deconstruction has been misconstrued by contemporary phenomenologists to be one of interruption and disruption. Contemporary phenomenologists regard Derrida as a destroyer of phenomenology. Contrary to this assertion, my paper will suggest that Derrida contributes to the phenomenological project by discovering its conditions of possibility and

thus strengthens it by offering a meta-phenomenological critique of it, critique that does not serve to destroy but affirm and strengthen by bringing phenomenology to terms with its conditions of possibility. In my discussion of Husserl I will demonstrate, through Derridean readings of phenomenology, that transcendental is nothing outside the empirical through iterability and differance. Likewise, I will demonstrate that radical empiricists such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Blanchot and Ricoeur require the transcendental as a point of exclusion from their philosophies in order to maintain their respective empiricisms. Husserl’s transcendental requires the empirical to be excluded in order to establish his idealism, just as the radical empiricisms of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Blanchot, Levinas and Ricoeur require the transcendental to be excluded from their empiricisms, accounting for the transcendental on empirical grounds, in order to establish them. Derrida shows that each text is inescapably haunted by its double, and hence deconstruction becomes a double science and a double-writing, in which the ghost of a text returns to haunt it through aporia and the delimitation of limit. Truth is thus neither transcendental nor empirical, but quasi-transcendental as the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical and vice versa. Truth is differance, or the difference between the transcendental and empirical rather than belonging to either side as the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical, related in paradoxical simultaneous similarity and difference, identity and non-identity. The transcendental is and is not the empirical, their difference translates into a sameness, as the transcendental and empirical are separated by a difference which is not a difference, differance. Transcendental-empirical distinction is an illusion, hence the divide of phenomenology into strict idealism or empiricism is based upon an aporia because these exist only in relation to each other through iterability and differance. This paper thus demonstrates that Derrida saves phenomenology by addressing the problem of transcendental and empirical

⁴ Paola Marrati, *Genesis and trace- Derrida reading Husserl and Heidegger*. Stanford, Stanford University Press; 2004.2.

⁵ Gasche, Rodolphe. *The Tain of the Mirror*. Harvard University Press, 1988. 317.

genesis through his concepts of differance, iterability and the quasi-transcendental. Derrida thus inscribes phenomenology in a more powerful form through bringing it to terms with its condition of possibility as the quasi-transcendental. This is because it is the quasi-transcendental which institutes the possibility of transcendental-empirical distinction and the impossibility of their separation as the transcendental and empirical exist only in dynamic relation to each other through differance and iterability. Derrida thus enables phenomenology to be reflexive about the conditions that bring about its mode of production and functioning. In this way, Derrida strengthens and renders the phenomenological project more powerfully than it would have otherwise been without his intervention. Differance, the quasi-transcendental and iterability will be shown to be conditions that phenomenology cannot function without. Derrida's meta-phenomenology thus saves phenomenology from its fixation over a pseudo crisis or struggle over

transcendental or empirical truth, because truth is neither transcendental nor empirical, indeed these terms are incoherent as entities separate from each other as the transcendental is simultaneously the empirical and does not exist outside a dynamic relation to the empirical through iterability and differance. As transcendental empirical difference is an illusion, truth rather is quasi-transcendental, neither transcendental nor empirical but the paradoxical space between that allows the thinking of both. This paper thus argues that Derrida rescues phenomenology from its crisis of origins and truth by demonstrating that the relationship between the transcendental and empirical is dynamic and interdependent, through iterability and differance, hence one cannot define one term without the other as each term requires the exclusion of the other for the distinction to be upheld. Hence, truth is differance and the quasi-transcendental, the difference between the transcendental and empirical which is the foundation for thinking both.

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