

Transcendental-Empirical Difference In Derrida's Heidegger: The Question of Being and History

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*Derrida thus argues that Heidegger's destruction is not annihilation or demolition but in fact repetition because it reproduces the structure of the metaphysical idealism it tries to negate. Derrida thus argues there is no difference between Hegel's transcendental *Widlung* and Heidegger's *Destruction* because both repeat the structure of metaphysics by negating and thus affirming by repeating its negated structure as a negative. In place these negations of the transcendental and the empirical reproduce the structure of metaphysics entirely when they negate and thus affirm the structure of metaphysics as constitutive of both transcendental and empirical, it is the side they privilege that differs- idealism or empiricism but which repeats metaphysics in the same ontological structure- as the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical, or iterability.*

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Before even entering, as we shall have to do, into the problem of the relations between Husserl and Heidegger, from the point of view that interests us, it is certain that Heidegger's gesture is here entirely analogous- I do not say identical – to Husserl's: reduce historicity, refuse to tell stories, bracket the real ontic or practical genesis in order then to grasp in its profound originality the historicity of meaning. For it is not by chance that in the history of thought the only book along with *Sein* and *Zeit* that explicitly begins

with the refusal to tell stories is not the Sophist which does not begin with this refusal but *I fact Ideen I.* (Derrida, 2016: 75)

Derrida thus claims that Heidegger's destruction is the same as Husserl's transcendental reduction, not that they are identical but analogous, both refuse to tell stories, both suppress transcendental empirical difference and bracket the transcendental or the empirical when metaphysics is the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical as iterability that constitutes its true form, it does not make sense to uphold the transcendental without the empirical or the empirical without the transcendental, both Heidegger and Husserl does suppress transcendental empirical difference and the mediation between the two that metaphysics requires.

If one wants to measure from a great distance and a great height the immensity of the itinerary that must lead to the question of the history of being itself one must first realize that the question of historicity of *Dasein* (or of *Existenz*) which is only a question preliminary to that of historicity of *Sein* itself constitutes an immense step forward. An immense step forward not only with regard to anti historical idealisms, but even with regard to what one might consider to be the question of the historicity of transcendental subjectivity in Husserl. It is at the price of immense effort and at the end of a long path that transcendental historicity was discovered In Husserl and even then it affected only the historicity of

meaning and affected it only with a concern. If one bears in mind that Heideggerian Dasein is a notion that takes us back before the distinctions proper to transcendental idealism (activity – passivity, consciousness subject object etc) distinctions that are laden with metaphysical presuppositions then speaking of the history of Dasein already goes a long way if only in a preliminary way. (Derrida, 2016: 76)

Derrida thus argues that Dasein and Husserl's transcendental subjectivity share the same history and this is the history of metaphysics with its transcendental and empirical distinction. With Husserl's bracketing to rid phenomenology of the empirical and with Heidegger's bracketing of the transcendental in his destruction of idealism to arrive at ontology we see that both philosophers attempt to do away with history- the history of metaphysics as the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical as iterability and the suppression of transcendental empirical difference or the quasi-transcendental as the condition of possibility for phenomenology.

This paper argues that Derrida democratizes phenomenology in demonstrating that transcendental and empirical difference is an illusion. By demonstrating that transcendental empirical difference is an illusion, Derrida shows that the struggle over claims for truth or the primacy of the transcendental or empirical have been sustained over illusory hierarchies and that this presents a false dichotomy and conflict. Phenomenology is not hierarchy but exchangeability, and the implication of transcendental-empirical difference being an illusion is that truth is not localizable to either transcendental or empirical, but translates as paradox, aporia and the quasi-transcendental.

The transcendental and empirical are the same and the transcendental is nothing outside the empirical, just as the empirical is the trace of the transcendental through iterability. Phenomenology is rather determined by aporia- the third space of the quasi-transcendental which produces both transcendental and empirical through the distinguishing movement of the trace. Aporia, the third space, the quasi-transcendental and difference as the interval between the transcendental and empirical that determines both are shown to be the meta-conditions that govern metaphysics. This paper thus posits the space of the third and between, namely the quasi-transcendental, as the root condition that governs metaphysics and allows it to function. Where phenomenology has historically defined truth as either transcendental or empirical, this paper will proceed to demonstrate that truth is rather quasi-transcendental, neither transcendental nor empirical but a space between that enables the thinking of both. Against current scholarship that defines the quasi-transcendental as immanence and contamination, I will argue that the quasi-transcendental is a relation of paradox.

The quasi-transcendental relates the transcendental and empirical in simultaneous identity and difference, identity in non-identity, sameness in difference. Paradoxically, distinctions translate into non-distinctions because the difference between the transcendental and empirical translates as a nothingness, an a priori difference which is not a difference. Death thus lies at the heart of phenomenology and constitutes it as a priori difference, difference, distinguishes and separates nothing. Derrida reconfigures phenomenology through his discovery of the quasi-transcendental, the space of the third, paradox, aporia and the between, that which is neither transcendental nor empirical, as the conditionality of thinking both

transcendental and empirical. This quasi-transcendental determines metaphysics by being prior to transcendental and empirical and conditions its production and functioning. Derrida thus democratizes philosophy in demonstrating that its distinctions, its privilege of transcendental or empirical and its divide into materialism and idealism is based on illusion and myth of origin. Phenomenology is thus determined by its other and its unthought, true phenomenology acknowledges that which has escaped its structure in transcendental and empirical determination, or the third space, between, aporia and interval of the quasi-transcendental, as the true condition that governs, produces, and upholds metaphysics. Derrida thus inscribes phenomenology in a more powerful form by bringing it to terms with its condition of possibility as the quasi-transcendental. I define the democratization of phenomenology as a site of inclusion, expanding phenomenology's horizons to include the other and unthought of phenomenology as its condition of possibility. As texts such as *Monolingualism of the Other* demonstrate, there is no pure language that is uncontaminated by the Other as all language is acquisition and assimilation. Also, *The Politics of Friendship* shows that the Other has to precede me before friendship is possible, just as Narcissus relates to Echo only by seeing the Other in himself.

Along similar trajectories, phenomenology's Other or unthought is shown to be the basis for the One or thought. What this paper thus proceeds to show is the unthought that forms the basis for thought, thereby expanding phenomenology beyond its territorial concerns of an either/or kind of truth because phenomenology is always determined by difference, the neither/nor, and the ghost of the text that returns to haunt it. At the same time, this paper

argues that Derrida's move to save phenomenology inscribes in it a measure of fallibility through his demonstrations that thought is always contaminated by its unthought, the ideal is always contaminated by contingency and undecidability, Derrida's arguments are not absolute treatises to be taken at face value but a mode of interrogation in which he questions the basis of presence, fully given to itself, uncontaminated by absence, contingency, the empirical, the Other, and as such inscribes the necessity of incarnation and a necessity for the mark to fail as presence has to differ from itself materially in order to be realized. In order to succeed thus, phenomenology has to fail as it has to survive itself as the trace.

Derrida thus democratizes phenomenology in showing its success depends upon its incarnation and death to self presence in order to realize itself through living on after its death as the trace. In *Positions*, Derrida defines history as the history of the metaphysical concept, which does not exist outside of a system of differences and play. Derrida's work is thus a reworking of teleological history into histories, showing that transcendental and empirical do not exist outside relationality to each other as supplements and traces. Derrida demonstrates that phenomenology has proceeded through the exclusion of metaphor, or suppressing the metaphoricity of texts by privileging an either/or side of the binary, where phenomenology is to be viewed as constituted by metaphor, dynamically relating both transcendental and empirical rather than privileging either side.

To show that Heidegger's thought was not an ontology we had to dwell on the problem of what Heidegger in the opening pages of *Sein und Zeit* calls the *Destruktion* of the history of ontology. *Destruktion* that meant neither annihilation nor demolition (we specified these concepts) not critique nor refutation nor error. Not even a refutation in the

sense that Hegel gives this word. And to make this clear we had to be attentive to the difference which could sometimes appear to be null between Hegelian *Widerlegung* with the total extension that Hegel gives this notion which allows him to logicize the totality of the negativity in being- a difference that could appear to be the null between Hegelian *Widerlegung* and Heideggerian *Destruction*.(Derrida, 2016: 47)

Derrida thus argues that Heidegger's destruction is not annihilation or demolition but in fact repetition because it reproduces the structure of the metaphysical idealism it tries to negate. Derrida thus argues there is no difference between Hegel's transcendental *Widerlegung* and Heidegger's *Destruction* because both repeat the structure of metaphysics by negating and thus

affirming by repeating its negated structure as a negative. In place these negations of the transcendental and the empirical reproduce the structure of metaphysics entirely when they negate and thus affirm the structure of metaphysics as constitutive of both transcendental and empirical, it is the side they privilege that differs-idealism or empiricism but which repeats metaphysics in the same ontological structure- as the repetition of the transcendental in the empirical, or iterability.

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