Jacques Derrida believes that he comes to philosophy at a crucial juncture in its history — at a time when western metaphysics as we have known it has come to an end. "The history of being as presence, as self-presence in absolute knowledge, as consciousness of self in the infinity of parousia — this history is closed."\(^1\) Assuming the perspective of a Zarathustra, he speaks about the dawning of an age, in relation to which the voice of metaphysics — comprehension, presence, absence, being, non-being — must fall silent,\(^2\) and something else, more primordial than metaphysics, display its trace. It is into this context that Derrida introduces his notion of *differance*.

*Differance* is unspeakable, if speaking means comprehension. Before it can be comprehended, it has already passed as trace. If *differance* ever appears in speaking, it only appears as that non-being/non-entity which allows for the appearance of otherness. But to speak of what is beyond speaking is almost an impossible task for even beyond Being, whose domain is comprehension, resides *differance*, which is the primordial "no-thing" of every possibility of a being's distinct entity. Derrida's task is precisely to speak the unspeakable, in order to awaken us to what is beyond comprehending. For he realizes that we have been too comfortable in the realm of metaphysics where all thinking is promised the reward of a final and complete comprehension, a parousia wherein all things will fall neatly into a systematic wholeness. Everything, from the most mundane systems of factory production to the most complex socio-economic systems, from the rules of engagement of the most childish games to the most comprehensive rules of proper human conduct that a society espouses, promises a totality which encompasses all


\(^{2}\)Ibid., p. 103.
things and fixes them to a place. This state of affairs, of course, is most comfortable for the human who seeks solace in the idea that all things are comprehensible, are comprehended in a system of wholeness. We desire that all things end up neatly. All things must fall into system and order. The achievement of civilization is the elimination of chaos and the inauguration of the absolute reign of cosmic order. Our highest goal, then, involves the reduction all things to order, the embrace by and in system of even what is outside of system, if necessary, by the exclusion of the other.

Derrida sees beyond system and calls our attention to what is beyond system, totality, comprehension. This no-thing which he call our attention to is ironically what makes system possible and at the same time is the “secret worm” which subverts system. Derrida has been dismissed as a fashionable anarchist, if not as a puerile radical. Nevertheless, he succeeds in jolting metaphysics out/Áf its complacency. He may announce the end of metaphysics, or perhaps, offer it a new beginning — one cannot, this early in the game, say. Whatever it is, he challenges metaphysics out of its complacency. I would like, at this point, to make a brief exposition of Derrida’s insight into the unspeakable. I begin with his understanding of metaphysics, and of the place in metaphysics of differance.

Metaphysics and Acts of Comprehension

For Derrida, metaphysics is a closed totality. It is a system which is absolutely self-enclosed and admits nothing of the other. It is the monolith of the same which embraces the totality of what is. As Irene E. Harvey notes, metaphysics, in Derrida’s view, is a system of power:

Metaphysics is thus a system of force, power, mastery, domination, violence and, above all, surveillance, for Derrida. There is apparently no escape from this ‘system’ since metaphysics has itself ‘understood,’ involved, and therefore dominated its other, and all possible others.3

Metaphysics is the system of the same where all things are being and fall under the control of Being. Nothing is, that is not being, or of Being. In all of metaphysics, the supreme quest is the quest for the one, unchanging center of unity which gathers all beings. Plato’s the Good, the Scholastics’ God, Hegel’s *Eidos*, and even Heidegger’s mysterious, almost mystical, *Sein*, are emblematic of this quest. They conjure up systems in which all existents are imbedded in a totality determinative both of their coming to be and their telos. We are not even speaking here of an experience of rigid determination in a system of totality. We speak, rather, of the experience of the fact that all beings fall into Being, that all will be right with the world. In fact we find the surrender to the totality desirable. It is the quest both of the philosopher and the religious man. It supplies us with our hope against the darkness of mortality.

Derrida challenges this quest for security and shows how metaphysics and our conception of Being can be a dominating imperialism. Harvey notes:

[\[T\]he structure of reducibility of all differences to an essence that is the same, the center, and the form which inhabits the only apparent multiplicity is inherent in the metaphysics of language.\]

The prevailing idea behind metaphysics is the idea of reduction of otherness into a system of absolute domination. For all things, once reduced to absolute comprehension, find their place in a system of totality. In this totality, all things will have their assigned place. What is not of the system will be comprehended as the outside, as the *other*, in contradistinction to the same, thereby being defined in relation to the same.

Membership is a given, since existence, Being itself, is determined by this structure of presentation. To not be thus determined is to be non-sense, madness, non-existence, or nothing.\[\]

From Harvey’s discussion of Derrida, we get a sense of the violence of metaphysics. It is a system of total domination which admits the other, but only as defined, negatively, by the same. And so if we are to

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\[Ibid., p. 112.\]

\[Ibid., p. 115.\]
inventory Derrida’s characterizations of metaphysics, we would find such expressions as, “appropriating mastery,” “total surveillance,” “hierarchical ordering,” “envelopment of all,” “a movement of approaching the other from the known.” Such is the necessary character of metaphysics as Derrida understands it because the maintenance of an unchanging totality demands acts of reduction and absolute comprehension. A metaphysical system which does not comprehend absolutely falls short of a true metaphysics. For metaphysics is the system, the all comprehending system, which embraces all systems. Its end is to achieve total self-transparency, embodied, for Derrida, in the idea of presence.

The metaphysics of totality is what Derrida has in mind when he speaks of as the metaphysics of presence. The idea of presence speaks precisely the idea of metaphysics because in the idea of presence we can see how what is present is wholly itself sans differance. To be absolutely present is to be before consciousness, or whatever it is that accepts what comes to presence, in its totality as an undivided totality. This undivided totality comes before consciousness as its own. The present presents itself as wholly itself because whatever it is is gathered in a center that comes to be known as the essence. Whatever interior multiplicity it bears, this multiplicity is reduced to the singleness of a self-gathering center. In the idea of presence, Derrida finds a cipher for what he understands to be the ideal of metaphysics: i.e. the comprehension of a self-gathering whole in which all otherness is collapsed into the same. What is emphasized in the idea of presence is the idea that this self-gathering totality comes to make itself present because of its inherent, indissoluble unity. The absolute apex of presence is self-presence, for what come to presence in self-presence is the totality making itself present to nothing outside of itself. When this being comes to present itself in self-presence, it presents itself to itself. The monolith of the self is not broken up because the same remains within the same. Derrida writes:

Since absolute self-presence in consciousness is the infinite vocation of full presence, the achievement of absolute knowledge is the end of the infinite, which could only be the unity of concept, logos and consciousness in a voice without differance. (*The history of

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6Ibid., p.116.
7Ibid., p. 112.
metaphysics therefore can be expressed as the unfolding of the structure or schema of an absolute will-to-hear-one-self-speak.) The history is closed when this infinite absolute appears to itself as its own death. A voice without difference, a voice without writing, is at once absolutely alive and absolutely dead.\(^8\)

Derrida marks the fullness of presence in absolute self-presence in consciousness. This is because in self-consciousness, we have the idea that there is no break in the monolith of the same. There is no greater unity, adter all, than a self which is present to its own consciousness. In self-consciousness, the I making itself present is definitely reduced to the same as it is comprehended by consciousness. At the same time, consciousness, which is the locus of the I, is in no way broken-up, for it extends itself to itself and consumes its self. Ultimately, the monad is most present in its presence to itself. Derrida will further dissect the idea of presence and reveal the working of the metaphysics of presence in his deconstruction of Husserl’s theory of signs.

**Husserl and the Metaphysics of Presence**

The ideal of metaphysics, of any classical metaphysical endeavor, is the arrival at the absolute, unchanging thing-in-itself. The fullness of what is in its being there, being present. Whatever this thing is that is making itself present, it must make itself present and have that quality of unchanging reality. Only in an unchanging present being can we realize the ground of truth. The presupposition of all metaphysics is that there is a being making present, there is the thing which comes before consciousness, able to present itself as a totality which is unified and complete. This present being can be called the living present because it is the thing, which is itself and always itself, the actual present. Husserl’s phenomenology, although it professes to be “the reduction of naive ontology, the return to an active constitution of sense and value, to the activity of a life which produces truth and value in general through its signs,” still works, in Derrida’s view, to “confirm the classical metaphysics of presence.”\(^9\)

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\(^8\) *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 102.

Ultimately, phenomenology seeks the thing-in-itself, the ideal object which meaning speaks.\textsuperscript{10} There is an explicit understanding in phenomenology that all meaning is grounded in an ideal object that exists as the object of consciousness. This is the reason why in his theory of signs, Husserl downplays the importance of indicative signs as meaningful expression. He sees that indication even with “complete empirical certitude” will never demonstrate “apodictic necessities or ‘truths of reason’ in contrast to ‘truths of fact.’”\textsuperscript{11} Indicative signs “fall outside the content of absolutely ideal objectivity.”\textsuperscript{12} The ideal belongs to some stratum of meaning where indication and the contingent sources of meaning do not yet contaminate the purity of the ideal object. For metaphysics, the sign has the character of being: (1) derivative or secondary, (2) a lack or absence, (3) a duplication of something else, but inadequate, (4) a representation of a more originary representation, and (5) is inessential in its relation to that which it represents.\textsuperscript{13} This understanding of the sign is confirmed by what Derrida understands to be Husserl’s insistence that true meaning resides in a rootedness in the realm of ideal objects.

Derrida points out that ideality for Husserl means the permanence of the same and the possibility of its repetition.\textsuperscript{14} This ideality is a way of being which is “irreducible to sense experience or empirical reality.”\textsuperscript{15} What determines ideality for Husserl is tied up with the “determination of being as presence.” Because the ideal object is that which stands in front of, is presented before the act of repetition. It is also determined on the basis of a living present; the now is a source point, ensuring the purity of ideality.\textsuperscript{16} Derrida, therefore, insists that Husserl’s entire project of a radical return to the things themselves is really working within the horizon of a metaphysics which insists on presence as the ground of certainty, meaning, or truth. Within the insistence that the ideal object is that which is the living present, or that which is capable

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 27.  
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 29.  
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 30.  
\textsuperscript{13}Derrida and the Economy of Differance, p. 73.  
\textsuperscript{14}Speech and Phenomena, p. 52.  
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 53.  
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
of being presented indefinitely, is the desire to "transgress empirical existence" and insist on the "presence of the present as the ultimate from of being and of ideality."17 This way, difference is not permitted to contaminate the same. The present remains for it is always being-before, being there. It is the eternally what it is. Husserl founds ideality in presence because this is precisely what ideality aspires for, i.e. the always being what it is. Clearly, this entails the rejection of empirical reality or the realm of the contingent.

But to remain oneself is to refuse admission to difference, to otherness in the same. Husserl insists that ideal being or the ideal object always remains within itself. For instance, in the realm of meaning, he insists that meaning is not founded on the need to communicate, for communication is a move from oneself to the other. In the split of communication where the same moves out of itself to explain to the other what it means, there is a breaking up of that instant when I am present to myself and most clearly aware of my meaning. There is no other to break up meaning in soliloquy, thus the perfection of the monad speaking to itself is the seat of meaning.18 As Derrida points out, empirical worldly existence is bracketed and lived experience is present to itself in monologue.19 To myself, no other medium outside of myself is needed to mediate meaning. Meaning is present immediately, instantly. The idea of the instant, therefore, is central in Husserl's metaphysics.

Husserl takes the experience of the present as a cipher for the ideal of the fullness of presence, as a signal for the fullness of identity. For our experience of the instant is absolute punctuality.20 The instant is indivisible and not composed of simpler parts. It is the most simple, nucleus of temporality.21 The image used here is the image of a comet traveling through space. What we know to be the instant is the nucleus of the comet with the tail of retention trailing behind it, and perhaps the space of pro-tention anticipating it. With this idea of time, we can glean the reason for the priority Huserl accords to the present (in the temporal sense) and to present-being as the center which governs truth

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and sense. He seeks to found truth in the unchanging and self-contained. The present holds a certain romantic attraction for the metaphysician in search of the ever elusive thing in itself because the fully self-contained is in no way infiltrated by otherness and is thus no longer susceptible to change.

Derrida challenges this understanding of the present and its punctuality, of presence and its substantiality. For Derrida, there is no such thing as the present as a monolithic whole or a substance which is simple and absolutely self-contained. Always he sees *differance* enter the game of the quest for the thing itself.

*Differance and the Constitution of Presence*

One of Derrida's most eloquent arguments against the metaphysics of presence is his discussion of Husserl's understanding of the temporal present. What is present is understood to be the center of a comet with a tail of retention and the space of protention meeting it. The present appears only always surrounded by non-presence. It is defined to be what it is by the "primary memory" and "expectation" which surround it.\(^{22}\) If the present is an *Augenblick*, a blink of an eye, the instant of the blink still admits otherness. The relation with the non-present allows the present to emerge, makes possible its "renewal, upsurge and virginity."\(^{23}\) Without the otherness of the non-present, the present would not present itself in its defined presence. What allows the present to appear defined and clearly distinct as a whole is the non-presence which surrounds it. Derrida notes that "the living present springs from its non-identity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. It is already always a trace."\(^{24}\) What is the present, after all, if not what stands after the past and before the future. Thus there is no simple self-identity in the present. There is only that space where otherness is already admitted in the defining of the same. The same, what is present, is present in relation to the trace of what has passed or will pass. Otherness belongs to the remaining the same of the same.

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\(^{22}\) *Ibid.*, p. 64.


This insistence on the present as a monolithic totality is symptom-atic of the whole metaphysical enterprise of Husserl. For instance, his understanding of the voice as the perfect medium of meaning is rooted in its being immediately effaced with the speaking. It is immediately present in the act of expression and its phenomenal or empirical body disappears the moment it is produced. I hear myself when I speak, thus there is no mediation in that immediate self presence. Like the perfect instant where no separation occurs between the speaking and the comprehending. That perfect instant for Husserl stands for the ide-ality of expression where no gap allows otherness, no outside is allowed to enter the monolith of meaning. But Derrida asks, how monolithic is the monolith. How tight is this moment of auto-affection? If auto-affec-tion is the exercise of the voice, doesn’t it suppose the entering of otherness to divide self-presence? Derrida argues:

The process by which the living now, produced by spontaneous generation, must, in order to be a now and to be retained in an-other now, affect itself without recourse to anything empirical but with a new primordial actuality in which it could become a non-now — this process is indeed a pure auto-affection in which the same is the same only in being affected by the other, by becoming the other of the same.

Even in the purest auto-affection, otherness enters. The now affects itself and in that self-affection becomes a non-now. Its being its own otherness seems to be the demand for the same to affect itself. In Husserl’s view, however, the important idea is to keep auto-affection within the instant when nothing outside or other than the thing itself affects and defines itself. This is a necessity for the kind of ideality where the ideal entity is what it is because of an absolute fullness. Derrida here seeks to demonstrate that even in this fullness, otherness comes along to define what is the same. The idea of differance is the most crucial in Derrida’s thought and it may be his most important contribution to contemporary thought.

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25 Ibid., p. 77-78.
26 Ibid., p. 82.
27 Ibid., p. 85.
Difference and the Ground of Beings Prior to Being

Difference is a commonplace word in French, which means, to differ. It is that which makes things distinct from one another both in the sense of spatial differance and of temporal deferment. The idea of differance covers both temporal deferment and spatial distancing.\textsuperscript{28} Something is different from some other thing on account either of spatial separation or of temporal separation. It is not in the same place or in the same present time as the other thing, and so is not the same thing. In that sense, differance connotes a coming-between or a separation. It entails the insertion of space or time within the monolith of a totality. It is a disturbance which “remains silent, secret, and discreet, like a tomb.”\textsuperscript{29} It is a kind of origin, a source of all differences, of distinctions, but it itself is not a distinction or a thing making distinctions. Derrida attempts to define or explain the operation of differing as follows:

[W]hat is supplementary is in reality differance, the operation of differing which at one and the same time both fissures and retards presence, submitting it simultaneously to primordial division and delay. Difference is to be conceived prior to the separation between deferring as delay and differing as the active work of differance.\textsuperscript{30}

Difference somehow fissures and retards presence. It displays the fact that there are no such things as closed totalities, only things, substances broken up by the differance inserted into their heart. This notion of insertion conjures up the image of a wedge creating a cleavage between what is itself whole. Derrida insists, however, that differance involves the insertion of no-thing, at least not a thing which can be understood to be something. Derrida’s insistence that differance is not “some thing” is crucial because a thing is something that can be comprehended as that which is within the realm of Being. And the realm of Being is the realm of the comprehended. This is the very sense of the metaphysics of presence discussed above where we showed how the totality of Being is a closed system which comprehends a totality and does not allow the appearance of any other. Difference cannot belong to any such system because the system of totality destroys the other, while the whole move-

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., p. 129.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 132.
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 88.
ment of differance is the allowing of the other to emerge. The focus on the discussion of differance then would be the subversion of metaphysics as a system of totality because, prior to Being, the all-encompassing source of truth, and prior to metaphysics, is differance. Derrida is explicit about this:

Not only is differance irreducible to every ontological or theological—onto-theological — reappropriation, but it opens up the very space in which onto-theology — philosophy — produces its system and its history.

In other words, before the all-encompassing system, there is a nothing which opens-up the very unbroken unity of the totality. There is a no-thing prior to totality and the act of totalization. Prior to comprehension is the movement of making other which is differance. Thus Derrida finds in differance a non-concept or non-word,\(^{31}\) denoting a non-force operating on the other side of Being and encompassing.

When we speak of Derrida’s experience of differance we must always speak in the negative for positive definition is an act of surrounding and fixing the reality of what comes to experience in the totality which he wishes to avoid. Experience may not even be the appropriate word to describe what is being indicated in differance. But we must remember that Derrida is trying to show us a new way of understanding meaning and existence other than system and totality. “Not only is there no realm of differance, but differance is even the subversion of every realm.”\(^{32}\) Truth and meaning are no longer rooted in systems of totality incapable of allowing any thing other to make its appearance. He indicates the very source and possibility of otherness. He has to find a non-concept which can speak the experience of the source and possibility of otherness in terms other than those of totality. The only image really available to him is the image of the trace. The trace is available to Derrida because the idea of trace speaks of the passing which cannot be held down in space and time, but affects what it passes. Derrida writes:

It is a trace of something that can never present itself; it is itself a trace that can never be presented, that is, can never appear and

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 140.
\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 153.
manifest itself as such in its phenomenon .... Like *differance* the trace is never presented as such. In presenting itself it becomes efaced; in being sounded it dies away, like the writing of *a*, inscribing its pyramid in *differance*.33

*Differance* hardly disturbs the order of Being. It is only felt as the passing which allows for the emergence of the other. Finally, Being re-establishes itself, and *differance* cannot allow itself to be inscribed into the order of Being other than as a passing. This insistence on the idea of trace is necessary because Derrida is searching for a defining principle of existence which goes beyond the exclusive enclosure of totality. At the same time, although it is a passing which continues to go beyond what is comprehended, it is a passing which allows for the presence of the presence. *Differance* is the movement which is beyond Being, the beyond system and totality which supports beings in their being other that that which falls neatly under the purview of Being. In order to understand the necessity of *differance* we must understand the idea of presence and the necessity of otherness in the making present of what is present.

As we said above, the present is self-present. It is most present when it presents itself to itself. But this self-presencing implies the insertion of *differance* into that which is present. Here we see the importance of Derrida's critique of Husserl's idea of the present and the immediacy of self-presence. Derrida's basic insight is expressed as follows:

*Differance* is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be 'present,' appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element.34

The thing itself is not so absolutely simple that it is a totality which admits no other into the whole. Derrida insists that the other is needed in order to constitute the wholeness of the same.

And it is this constitution of the present as a "primordial" and irreducibly nonsimple, and, therefore in the strict sense non-primordial, synthesis of traces, retentions, and protentions .... that I

propose to call .... differance.\textsuperscript{35}

Here we see that the same is a nonsimple "synthesis of traces." What seems to us to be simply present is constituted, and it is constituted because within its reality, there is the play of differences that makes for the presence of the same.

We have to understand this non-metaphysical (non-metaphysical because it is outside the realm of what can be comprehended in the totality of being, but it is metaphysical in the sense that it takes a position on the constitution of beings) position of Derrida in the context of the rejection of the monolith of entity or substance which is part of our understanding of the ideal reality. Even in our comprehension of the constitution of meaning, for instance, we believe that what is meaningful, i.e. meaningful words, always have an ideal object. Ideally, when we speak the truth, we hope that the truth we speak speaks the ideal reality which is its object. Every meaningful expression would speak immediately the ideal being, which is simple, absolute, unchanging. Furthermore, we believe that what we speak is an entity whole unto itself. When we speak the truth, the object of speaking is a totality which is in itself what it is. It is the same and will always be the same. For the truth to be true, there must never be a gap between what it is in itself and in its coming to presence. What is present, its presence, must always be the same. The key to our taking anything to be the truth is that it is always the same. It is always repeatable and in every repetition it is present as it is. Thus the same remains the same and otherness is something which does not belong to the equation. For the entity of the same to remain the same, otherness must be denied it. Thus the truth is always what speaks the unchanging, absolute reality which is itself always itself, independent of what is other than the self which constitutes it. Against this heavy metaphysical framework, Derrida asserts his own understanding of what constitutes the thing as it is in itself. He will insist that whatever is present is present as itself because it is a product of the play of differance. There is, for him, prior to the totality and unity of the same, the movement of differance which allows the same to emerge as the same because it is played in a web of otherness.

It is not clear in 'Differance' and Speech and Phenomena how the web of differences allows the emergence of the same. We only have the

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 143.
cipher of the present as constituted by what is not present. Also we have the cipher of words gaining their meaningfulness in a web of other words which is not defined absolutely by its reference to an ideal object. But the metaphysical implications of the Derridian insight are clear. The metaphysics of presence is grounded on what is prior to the clear definition of presence, of Being as present. But, for Derrida, there is that ground which is undefined because it is trace and, as trace, is self-effacing. The idea presented here is the movement of some no-thing which escapes the absolute realm of totality in order to allow beings the free play of *differance* in allowing themselves to come into presence. Each entity which is itself what it is, is involved in a play with other beings which are themselves what they are. But this being what they are is made possible by the free play of beings involved in each other's otherness.

Derrida's anti-metaphysics speaks to us of an order of things which insists on free play, where every being that is the same is never entirely defined in a fixity of the never changing. Rather, what something is is always dependent on the movement of some transcendent which does not define but allows the free play of beings. Perhaps this is precisely the character of post-modern philosophy, this sense of not being tied to a fixed order of totality. There seems to be this sense of otherness which inserts itself into any comfortable totality. Being, totality, and order as unfinished seems to mark the post-modern experience to existence. Derrida shows this very clearly in the concept or non-concept of *differance*. There is no ending, no clear closure or comprehension of beings in the realm of differance. Things are always in play, always becoming other than what is defined and fixed. Perhaps the post-modern is a negation of fixity, a rejection of totality. And Derrida speaks this rejection of totality well, with his exposition of *differance*. For with *differance* we get the idea of how the units of meaning, of being which we understand to be self-defining/subsisting entities are made to remain what they are because of their involvement in the movement of *differance*. *Differance*, the apparent subversion of Being, moves within Being in order to help beings come into a sort of meaningful whole, not, however, born of fixity and a rigid remaining within the same. Rather, he gives us a model of the same remaining what it is by being engaged in the other, in a system which is constant definition and re-definition. There is still the same it seems. Derrida admits meaning and, at least in *Speech and Phenomena*, there is an admission of the con-
stant reassertion of the same. He rejects, however, the idea of an ideal object, a fixed source of meaning, the present. There is no present if the present refers to a thing, fixed in its thingness. There is always room for the continuous positing of the same which is never, at any point, finished and completed for it remains completely within the realm of its ideal self. There is always the coming to be, the present defined by what is not present, where the monolith of fixity is constantly challenged by otherness. Where the play of otherness allows what remains the same to remain because of its engagement in the play with the other.

Perhaps Derrida does not overturn metaphysics. But he does come at a crucial time in our thinking about Being. After the later Heidegger’s seeing into the living dynamics of Sein, our metaphysics could never return to the naïveté of a belief in the absolute ideal object defined by a fixed and absolute Being. Today’s faith in Being as the absolute source of ideality has disappeared, leaving behind the contemporary struggle with the realization that existence is dynamic and beings come into reality within a dynamic order. Within the stability of existence there is the dynamic movement of coming into truth and existence. The contemporary task is to grapple with this dynamics either through the rejection of the absolute or the reassessment of what it means to be the same within the horizon of a dynamic world of life and existence. Derrida rises to the task, at least in this work, by exposing the naïveté of the metaphysics of presence and exposing the play of différence which even the metaphysics of presence, inadvertently, recognizes. By exposing the play of différence we can come to recognize the possibility of working out a metaphysics that recognizes the possibility that the same remains the same while taking account of the play of otherness which can no longer be denied to accommodate the facile adherence to the absolute character of Being. Derrida disturbs, and intends to disturb, because he intuits that he comes on the scene, at the time of reckoning, a time when the naïveté of the absolute has to be negated, in order that a second naïveté may emerge. Ours perhaps is a time of the death of the same, so that the same may be resurrected more fully understood to be itself. We must question how the same comes to be the same in the realm of the play of otherness for ours is a world deeply engaged in the play of otherness. Until we can take this play into account, we will never understand what it means to be the same.