

JACQUES DERRIDA AND THE RESPIRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

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OF
THE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

In the university, the influence of Jacques Derrida's thought is immeasurable. Yet, his thoughts and writings *on* the university remain somewhat unacknowledged. Derrida has written and spoken extensively on the subject of the university with the hope of initiating a discussion that will, by questioning all aspects of the "university," create an opening toward its future. This thesis explores Derridean discourse on the university and suggests it as a useful and provocative means of (re)thinking the university. Chapter One of this thesis consists of a close reading of Derrida's essay "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils." By following Derrida's historical, philosophical and political allusions, this chapter functions, in a certain sense, as a concordance to Derrida's essay. After exploring Derrida's discussion of how *not* to speak of the university, Chapter Two attempts to use Derridean discourse to understand the university as a "body." If the university were a body, what would it look like? In this chapter, I propose the existence of two quite different university bodies: the metaphysical university and the university in-carnate. The metaphysical university body is infused with spirit and in fact rejects the body. By repressing its "body" (its historical, political and social determinants) the metaphysical university hallucinates its body as a unified, indestructible, inconsumable and uncontaminated whole. To preserve the university, the metaphysical university body suggests a return to "spirit." The university in-carnate on the other hand, understands its body as wounded, parasitized, consumable, displaced and gaping. I suggest that this university body represents Derridean discourse on the university in its desire to think its body--its own constitution.

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Introduction

What is the university's *place*? To ask this question is to inquire not only into the university's economic, intellectual, and political *place*, but also, into how the word, the concept "university" circulates in contemporary society. In this era of late Western capitalism, the demand for answers to the question of the university's place has become increasingly pressing. Yet, in a 1985 interview with Peggy Kamuf, Jacques Derrida suggests that with questions of this magnitude we must avoid offering a reflex response, but rather, strive for a reflexive response-- a response achieved only by proceeding "very, very slowly and very, very, cautiously" ("Deconstruction in America" 4). Given the significant revisioning of knowledge in most academic work, the question of the "place" of the university has never been more pressing, and Derrida urges us to think carefully about the ways in which we choose to speak and *not* to speak of the university. Derrida's thought on the university is extensive, and Derridean discourse on the university is both a useful and provocative means of re-thinking the university as we move within the epistemological questions that both surround and revise our fundamental understanding of the diverse activity that produces "the university." Resistance to Derridean thought, however, continues in the university. As a figure for what is sometimes poorly understood as "deconstruction," Derrida's texts often serve to constitute a threat rather than that rare kind of thought that seeks to preserve the institution by radically questioning its fundamental principles--that is, rather than serving as a means of determining its most consequential position in the future.

In this thesis, Chapter One offers a close reading of Derrida's "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils"--an essay that represents Derrida's most pointed and extensive attempt to question the university, and more crucially, to speak of the "university" as a question and as an opening for discussion. My reading of this essay is an attempt to unravel the paths of Derridean thought on the university and to explicate the philosophical, historical and institutional implications of the principle of reason. By tracking Derrida's allusions while examining their relevance to his understanding of the university, this chapter attempts to trace what Derrida calls his "new university responsibility" ("The Principle" 16). This new responsibility is an awareness of both the limits and the possibilities of university sight: of the sight in its blindness and the blindness in sight. More specifically, this chapter unfolds Derrida's perception of the university as a *place* (conceptual, social, geographical) whose most radical depths cannot be brought to light but whose constitution must nevertheless be thought in order to preserve the memory and plurality of chance, of thought as risk that is so vital to its continuance. Thus, for Derrida, the university must remain a place that is always *forthcoming*.

Chapter Two investigates Derridean discourse in an effort to interpret the university as body and as em-bodied. In this chapter I suggest that Derridean discourse on the university figures the university as the body "in-carnate"--a body that remains in a dialogic relationship with the metaphysical university's body (the university that privileges spirit while rejecting the body). The university in-carnate is a university body that recognizes its uncontainable, indeterminate, parasitized, contaminated and monstrous constitution. Using contemporary debates as examples of either the desire to discipline or

dissolve the boundaries inside/outside, parasite/host, theory/literature, I isolate a tension between two quite radically different visions of the university body. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the “Dejected University” and the “Consumable University”--two provocative new understandings of the university as in-carnate.

This thesis, then, while produced within the discursive and institutional constraints of the university, will seek, paradoxically, to explore the possibilities for a re-figuring of the university through the possibilities presented by Derridean discourse on the university.

Chapter One

“The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils”: Traces of a University Forthcoming

Jacques Derrida's essay “The Principle of Reason: The University In The Eyes Of Its Pupils” appeared in the fall 1983 issue of *diacritics* under the heading “Response.” The heading “Response” suggests both an a priori promise to respond and a certain responsibility in responding, both of which Derrida acknowledges in the opening statement of his essay: “Today, how can we not speak of the university?” By phrasing this question in the negative, Derrida is frankly accepting the responsibility of speech, recognizing that there are certain ways of “speaking” which must be avoided.¹ For Derrida to ask how one must *not* speak is also to ask, or rather to ask at once, “how if one speaks of it, to avoid speaking of it? How not to speak of it? How is it necessary to speak of it? How to avoid speaking of it without rhyme or reason? What precautions must be taken to avoid errors, that is inadequate, insufficient, simplistic assertions?” (“Denials” 83). In posing these questions, Derrida concedes that in speaking about the university, he will have to limit his remarks to those of a propedeutical or preventive nature--yet, by suggesting how we should *not* speak of the university, he makes clear that he is also implying precisely how we *must* speak of the university. We cannot *not* speak of the university, but this imperative is in no way a license to speak of the university too quickly. In counselling a

¹How to “avoid” speaking is a question that Derrida addresses in several of his other texts, including his essay “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials” and *Of Spirit*, the latter of which is Derrida’s reflection on Martin Heidegger’s “avoidance” of the word “spirit.”

reading process that amounts to a temporal caution, Derrida means to suggest that thought about the university should not proceed without a reasoned reflection not only upon what a university is (an institution, a symposium of scholars, a business, a school, an organism, a state of mind, the “mind” of the state, etc.), but also upon whose interests are reflected in the differing definitions of the university. For Derrida, this reasoned reflection must risk a reflection on reason “itself,” on the *raison d’etre* of the university.

Tracing Derrida's speech, which is to say, marking not only the immediate contextual background of the “speech” as a whole--as it was originally given at Cornell in the form of a lecture--but also the thinkers, issues and tonalities he invokes, is the method by which my own remarks will speak about “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils.” I could suggest that the tracing of Derrida's careful and allusive steps, the unfurling of his arguments as he presents them, comprises the “mission” of my discussion. But this, I fear, would be to impose both an origin and a telos on an argument that is deferred by Derrida's essay itself; that is, Derrida's aim is to “initiate discussion” (3) rather than to foreclose potential avenues for thought in the achievement of a metaphysically sanctioned strategy of closure. By taking up the paths which Derrida abandons for the sake of brevity, I want to offer not answers, but a perpetuation of his own explicit impetus for speaking in the *first place*. This chapter, then, unfolds in three sections which address the issues in Derrida's essay as he speaks of them or, as is often the case, as he chooses *not* to speak of them. The first section follows Derrida's thoughts as he reflects upon the anxiety with which he approached the subject of the university and his “triple” difficult task of speaking *of* the university *at* a university such as Cornell--a

university that stands, in the social-institutional hierarchy of higher learning in America, as an exemplar of what a university should represent. When Derrida does begin his remarks on the university, he begins with a history of the principle of reason--one of the histories of the modern university. In this second section, then, I take up many of the historical and philosophical paths linked to the principle of reason, which Derrida must abandon due to the temporal limits of his speech. Thus, this section constitutes a brief of history of the principle of reason--of the university as constituted by that principle. In the third and final section of this chapter, I will explicate what Derrida calls his "new university responsibility." More specifically, before concluding his remarks on the university, Derrida realizes that he cannot defer speaking of the university--he must speak about his "topic," about his perception of the institution.

An event, an occurrence--what Martin Heidegger called *ein Ereignis*--is infinitely simple, but this simplicity can only be approached through a state of privation. That which we call thought must be disarmed...The sublime feeling is the name of this privation. --

Jean François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde" 90, 107

In the title "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils," Derrida promises to speak of both reason and reflection. To do this is not to speak of them separately but, rather, to show their relatedness by speaking of them simultaneously. The colon in Derrida's title--acting like a permeable membrane--suggests what he believes should be the synchronous questioning of both the principle of reason and the university's reflectiveness, which is to say, its capacity and indeed its mission to reflect. More

specifically, to ask what is the university's reason for being is, Derrida points out, also to ask the vitally important questions: What is the view from the university? What does the university reflect? And, perhaps most important, what is reflected in its own eyes--what is its essence? But to ask after the "essence," the *raison d'etre* of the university is to ask a question that, for many reasons, must not and cannot be quickly or simply answered. Too often those who speak of the university speak quickly and decisively of the university's reason for being, as if its essence were accessible and its constitution, knowable; as if it possessed a singular and identifiable essence that could then be put to a certain social, political, administrative, and intellectual "use." This belief in imagined and "useful" essences frequently manifests itself in the form of university mission statements. Yet, for Derrida, to think of what the university *is* is to encounter the thought of the sublime--a thought that is characterized by a "lack," a privation resulting from an awareness of the undefinable, uncontainable and irreducible nature of the "university." But this thought of the university is not a nihilistic thought, which is to say, a thought that is confronted with a subject too immense to be described and is therefore figured as "nothing." In his essay "Academic Work: The view from Cornell," James Siegel suggests, rather, that when confronted with such vastness, such sublimity, the mind is unable to hold the entirety of what it sees and therefore focuses and re-defines its view until that view is more manageable. The view blurs, but it "is not because something is blanked out, but because space is overcrowded to the extent that [one] must attend to one impression at a time, something [one] feels competent to do"(75). Derrida uses Siegel's essay as a point of departure for his own remarks, since Siegel explores the similar questions of university

definition, boundaries and views, although through the geographical or “topological” context of the Cornelian landscape. Siegel examines, for example, how different campus views determine the perceived boundaries between a number of hierarchically arranged binary oppositions that make academic life “intelligible” including: inside/outside, life/death, academic success/failure. Siegel notes the

frequent mention of death and particularly of suicide in these interviews is often the function of the logic of sublimity. The mind, set in motion by all that is seen, is not able to match what is seen with a stable image...If the view downstream is associated with sublimity, absence and death, the other side is associated with presence, the positive, the university and work. (75; 77)²

For the students of Cornell, a turning away from the gorge, from the sublime, is necessary for the continuance of academic work. Thinking about how he might speak of the university, Derrida reflects on Siegel’s essay and points towards a need to confront the “bottomless pit”--the constitutive sublimity--of the university, but in a way that is not deadly. Otherwise, one always stands at a safe distance from the university and need never face the complexity, magnitude and impossibility of ever actually speaking of the

²The gorge that geographically defines the Cornell campus has been the site of a number of student suicides. In order to prevent further deaths a “protective barrier” was erected along the bridge that traverses a segment of the gorge. Siegel notes: “In upstate New York there are many places with gorges and bridges over them. Only Cornell (and not, even, Ithaca), however, so far as I am aware, is known as the “suicide capital” with its own term for suicide, “gorging out.” It appears to be the case that Cornell has no more suicides than most universities; of the suicides at Cornell, a majority are not from the bridges. The myth of suicide at Cornell--the idea that Cornell has an exceptionally great number of suicides and the association of suicides with bridges--comes about not only because the logic of the sublime confronts students and faculty as they cross the bridges to the university, but because there is an interest in putting suicide, suggested by the view, in relation to work.” 76

university (3). Perhaps then, one could also figure the thought of the university--the thought of the sublime--as an anxious thought; an anxiety in the face of the sublime that might figure as one of the reasons why the question of the *raison d'etre* of the university, has, since Heidegger, remained dormant.

For Derrida, to ask, "Does the university, today, have what is called a *raison d'etre*?" is not to suggest that there are *no* reasons for the university, is decidedly not a "postmodern" renunciation of the university as a locus of ethical choices, critical dissent, and social responsibilities. The absence of a singular *raison d'etre* for the university does not preclude or neutralize the question of ethical choices, critical dissent, and social responsibilities, but rather, it makes them all the more pressing. In *The Wake of Deconstruction*, Barbara Johnson suggests how a questioning of the university's meaning(s) is (mis)understood by opponents of theory and, more specifically, of "deconstruction" as obscurantist and nihilistic. She notes:

It is as though they are saying that if more than one interpretation is possible, then everything is equally meaningless; if value judgements are open to debate, then they cannot be made; if words sometimes shift in meaning, interpretation becomes fruitless rather than all the more necessary; if analysis is an interminable process of struggle and debate, it's not worth starting. It is as though thinking, reading, and interpreting are only worth undertaking if we know in advance that we will come to rest in absolute, timeless, universal truth. (26)

To better understand Derrida's question, "Does the university, today, have what is called a *raison d'etre*?" it is important to note that while posed by Derrida, it is neither specifically--nor originally--Derrida's question.

Like the question of “spirit” in Heidegger’s work, the question of the university’s reason for being is yet another “open question”—a question that is specifically “opened by Heidegger and opens with regard to Heidegger” (*Of Spirit* 7). In Lecture Three of *The Principle of Reason* Heidegger asserts that despite the influence of reason upon our lives, the principle of reason—i.e., that nothing is without reason or cause—has yet to be interrogated with sufficient thoroughness, not even by those who are supposed to know something about the “essence of reasons” (24). Heidegger is, of course, referring to those researchers within the university who are purportedly closer—better attuned—to reason’s call. At the end of this lecture, Heidegger notes: “Everywhere a nimble, gratifying spirit is at work in the study of the sciences. But if we reflect for a moment on the question posed a moment ago, we must still say that in all our endeavours in the sciences we haven’t ever stumbled on the principle of reason” (24). Heidegger wonders whether a university can be grounded upon a principle—especially one which it cannot see (24). In his next lecture he responds to his own question by suggesting that if those within the university have never encountered the principle of reason, then perhaps the statement that the university rests on the principle of reason is both an “exaggerated and weird assertion” (28). Playing on the Aristotelian notion that knowledge only consists of that which can be rendered or accounted for by the senses, Heidegger suggests that if no one has seen the principle of reason, then perhaps the university is not founded upon it after all. Heidegger then deduces that if the university is not founded on the principle itself, then perhaps it is founded upon that about which the principle speaks—the demand to render things reasonable (28). This incites him to ask the most obvious and, consequently, least asked

question: “*From where* does this demand of reason speak to its being rendered?” (28).³

Heidegger ends his remarks on the university with this “open question”--a question which would, until Derrida, lie strangely dormant-- as did before Heidegger, the very questioning of the principle of reason.

With the re-opening of this Heideggerian question, Derrida realizes that he must challenge and collapse the metaphysical understanding of knowledge as that which can be brought to light through vision. Derrida reminds us that the “university” is not, and should not be, something that can be punctually brought into the light and sight of knowledge. The university is founded on knowledge, yet the “university” itself, as one object of that knowledge, remains problematical. Derrida is interested in how this dehiscence, this breach in knowledge (i.e. the ways in which the “university” is not necessarily available to knowledge in the way that an object is brought to sight) disturbs the foundations of the university by pointing towards its *a priori* ruination. Thus, to speak of the university's reason for being is to reject the oculo-centric belief that it can be known, which is to say, that it can be seen as if it were just one object amongst many others in the material world. Since Aristotle, vision has been privileged as the sense that engenders all

³In “Lecture One” of *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger suggests that as humans we continually fail to see that which should be most obvious to us: “Our relation to the obvious is always dumb. The path to what lies under our nose is always the farthest and hence the most difficult for us humans” (5). More specifically, the principle of reason, while always within “view” (3), is not always viewed. Those who are closest to the principle of reason--those whose relation to it is most involved--are, for Heidegger, the ones who have the most difficulty questioning the “reason for reason.”

knowledge while blindness is a state of non-knowledge.⁴ In the final pages of his *Conflict of the Faculties*, for example, Kant draws an implicit connection between the preservation of the faculties of the university--of knowledge--and the preservation of the faculty of sight: "I might also suggest that the author of *The Art of Prolonging Human Life* (and in particular, literary life) kindly consider the protection of readers' eyes (especially the now large number of women readers, who may feel more strongly about the nuisance of glasses)" (209).⁵ Kant moves to a discussion of his own ocular deterioration--the last word in the text is a footnote in which he asks how is that one can "lose the sight in one eye without noticing it" (213). Kant's question--and his related concern about his own eyes--links a loss of vision to a loss of knowing to a loss of reason. For Kant, to lose vision in one eye without noticing it is somehow beyond reason; that is, at the same time

⁴In *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, Derrida explores the historical, philosophical and artistic understandings of "blindness". Throughout this work Derrida attempts to get behind vision--behind the eye of both the seeing and the blind subject. Of the blind man Derrida suggests: "[C]an it not be said that the eye of the blind man, the blind man himself, derives its strange familiarity, its *disquieting strangeness*, from being more naked? From being exposed naked without knowing it?...More naked because one then sees the eye *itself*, all of a sudden exhibited in its opaque body, an organ of inert flesh, stripped of the signification of the gaze that once came to both animate and veil it. Inversely, the very body of the eye, *insofar as it sees*, disappears in the gaze of the other....[A]s a general rule--a most singular rule, appropriate for dissociating the eye from vision--we are all the more blind to the eye of the other the more the other shows themselves capable of sight, the more we can exchange a look or gaze with them." (106)

⁵Kant's allusion to women readers is, on the one hand, an acknowledgment of the large number of women who were reading and writing in the eighteenth century--even if it went unrecognized. On the other, Kant's statement conveys his belief that women would, for vanities sake, choose blindness over sight if it meant that they did not have to wear glasses. Further, Kant seems to be suggesting that in the act of reading without glasses, women are not really reading the words at all--vanity prevents them from partaking in true, rigorous academic study.

that it is beyond reason, it also cannot be brought before consciousness in a manner that satiates his own construction of reason. Thus, in losing his vision in this manner he has also reached the limits of reason. Kant, one might suggest, loses sight of the university; that is, in his reflection on his own vision Kant becomes aware of the limits of sight--the blindness that comes with a reflection on sight. In his attempt to understand and control his vision, sight drops out of Kant's vision. For Derrida, sight is not enough to answer the question "What is the university's reason for being?" Derrida suggests, "for knowing how to learn and learning how to know," we might close our eyes "in order to be better listeners" (4). Before speaking, then, of the university--of his view of the university--Derrida turns back on the conditions of reflection and decides that the university, as such, is not in *sight*.

Speaking with a new self-reflexiveness--an awareness that the totality of the university cannot possibly be held in his view--Derrida proclaims: "Let me confide in you, to make what in French I could call a *confidence* but in English must call a confession" (5). Derrida's confession, the secret that he must convey to his audience/readers, is his anxiety over what he considers to be his "triple impossible" task of preparing a lecture on the university(5). Derrida isolates three of his inhibitions which are, I would suggest, three insights into how *not* to speak of the university. First, is a lecture at a university, let alone at Cornell, the right moment to speak of the *raison d'etre* of the university? Second, when he does speak of the university how can he avoid assigning it a destination--a destination too easily assigned by thinkers who find themselves in his incredibly influential position. Finally, why would anyone want to listen to him--Derrida, professor-

at-large--speak of the university? What status grants him the right, the knowledge, and the ability to speak even cursorily of the university? Similarly, what construction of power relations incurs a promise of responsibility on his own discourse about the university? Impossible questions to be sure, but queries that institute yet another path of unanswerability--who can ever speak adequately of the university?

As the Andrew Dickson White Professor-at-Large, Derrida wonders what his view of and from the university should be. As a guest and an inaugural speaker is it the right time to question the reason for reason?: “Was this inaugural lecture a well-chosen moment to ask whether the University has a reason for being?” (5). Implicit in Derrida's self-reflexivity is the question of reason and temporality--that is, what could possibly be the right time to demand the reason for reason itself? Ironically likening himself to a “prophet of doom,” to “Elijah denouncing the power of kings”(5), Derrida figures himself as the unwelcome guest at a party not unlike Sigmund Freud who, upon being invited to lecture at Clark University, declared “They do not know that I am bringing them the plague” (Bass 165). In *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger warns of the risks associated with questioning the principle of reason, risks which Derrida also acknowledges as he envisions what he will say to his audience. In Heidegger's words:

But what are we getting ourselves into if we take the principle of reason at its word and move towards the reason of reasons?...If we persist in this sort of questioning, where can we find a respite and a perspective on reason? If thinking takes this path to reason, then surely it can't help but fall into groundlessness. So one might like to make a cautionary note here:

whoever takes such a path to reason is one whose thinking runs the danger of going to *ruin* (12; italics mine).⁶

But of course, in questioning what might be the “well-chosen moment” to ask the reason for reason, Derrida poses this question as someone who might *hypothetically* concern himself with the possibility that he is ungracious, that is, by raising such impertinent questions of the university *at* the university, he would appear to bite the hand that feeds him, or to change metaphors, to act as the parasite to his generous hosts at Cornell. But this is of course only a mock-concern; he is playing or performing this concern precisely to ask us to think about what “our” (faculty and pupils) most important responsibilities are, to consider more radically what forms of “ungraciousness,” even “parasitism” are necessary to critique the university, from within. Derrida understands that a certain kind of concern about being gracious is only an alibi for *not* critiquing the university, and that this form of civility serves the interest of protecting the university from asking the most probing questions of itself. In this sense, there can be no “well-chosen moment.” All are equally good or bad moments. One way *not* to speak of the university, then, is to presume it is too “sensitive,” too “gracious” a host, that it cannot or could not withstand such

⁶Heidegger's use of the word “ruin” can mean two quite different things in the context in which he has placed it. On the one hand, in the process of thinking about the origins of reason thought becomes circular, questions lead not to answers but to more questions and hence, thought become ruinous rather than helpful. On the other hand, thought becomes “ruin” in the very moment it tries to think the unthought, that is, the origins or the unthought is always already the trace of what it no longer is. As Derrida suggests in *Memoirs of the Blind*: “In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face of the memory itself, what *remains* or *returns* as a spectre from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed” (68).

questioning of its *raison d'être*, its reasons for being. One reason for *not* speaking of the university this way (“feminized” in the manner of Kant's women, who “should” be protected from straining their eyes too much) is that its ruination has always already taken place.⁷

Derrida's second inhibition is his fear that he is implicated in an act of dramaturgy in which--not unlike Wilhelm Von Humboldt--he is “writing-out” the “view” that has informed the university.⁸ Derrida asks “what can the university's body see of its own destination? (5), but he is wary of such a responsibility. More specifically, Derrida knows that the responsibility to speak about the destination of the university is often a license for a certain *irresponsibility* towards the university, that is, a freedom to impose a destination

⁷I am grateful to David L. Clark for this insight and this phrasing.

⁸In the proposal that would “found” the modern university--the University of Berlin--entitled “On the Spirit and the Organisational Framework of Intellectual Institutions in Berlin,” Wilhelm Von Humboldt envisions the destination, the “spirit” of a university which is yet to exist. He notes: “[I]t is easy to see that in matters of the spirit, i.e., of the intellectual and moral component of higher intellectual institutions, effective accomplishment depends on strict adherence to the principle that science and scholarship do not consist of closed bodies of permanently settled truths...” (244). How Humboldt can construct an essence--a destination--for a university that does not yet exist is a question that Derrida might ask of Humboldt. Humboldt warns that if knowledge is not pursued completely, and in the correct “spirit,” the university will eventually rot from the inside out: “If such an attitude is held for a long time, science and scholarship become dissipated; when this happens only their language survives as an empty shell” (245). For Humboldt, a university divested of its ontological, or spiritual, meaning could only exist in the form of a carcass, with only the vultures finding it worth visiting. For a discussion of Humboldt's envisioning of the modern university see Timothy Bahti's “Histories of the University: Kant and Humboldt.” Bahti notes that the meaning of the Humboldtian university is allegorical. The university is always the outward form of an *other*, inner meaning: “When Humboldt ‘founds’ the University of Berlin, it is an idea that can only be read, not seen” (452). See also Derrida's “Languages and Institutions of Philosophy,” in which Derrida questions the implications of a university “founding.”

and an origin on the university(the word destination and destinal thinking always presupposes both an origin and a telos, an origin reflecting in the telos, a purposiveness that presupposes an origin and a telos). By posing a question about destinations, Derrida forges what he knows is the dangerous connection between “essence” and “destination.” In *Of Spirit*, Derrida carefully re-examines Heidegger's 1933 “Rectorship Address,” in which Heidegger explicitly links the “essence” of the university to the supposed “destination” of the German people. Heidegger declares:

To take over the rectorship is to oblige oneself to guide this highschool spiritually. Those who follow, masters and pupils, owe their existence and their strength to a true common rootedness in the essence of the German University...To will the essence of the German University is to will science, in the sense of willing the spiritual historical mission of the German people. (OS 34-35)

For Derrida, the significance of this academic moment--this inchoate affirmation of spirit--must be interrogated, not least because the contemporary university, in Germany as everywhere in the West, always risks reproducing its most dogmatic, essentializing, and exclusionary principles. In other words, Derrida's scrupulous re-thinking of Heidegger's “Rectorship Address” is not only a direct critique of Heidegger, but it is also, indirectly, an examination of the university today. His analysis in *Of Spirit* is thus as much about the university as “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils.” Derrida is not Rector, but Professor-at-large, and this is not Freiburg, but Ithaca; but both are in the extraordinarily significant position of addressing the university, its pupils, its faculty. Thinking of Derrida’s repeated and insistent meditations on Heidegger we could figure his essay as in many ways antithetical to the “Rector's Address,” in which the renunciation of

destinal thinking is so important. Presumably, one effect Derrida is seeking is to produce in his readers a reflective response when that readership hears university administrators speak about mission statements--is this not always risking destinal thinking? Did Heidegger not speak of the university in a way that helps us see how we can *not* speak of the university?

As a philosopher whose texts are devoted to a contestation and over-turning of metaphysics--to a twisting away from spirit--Heidegger's reification of "spirit" constitutes a strange "turning" back. Yet, a spirit by nature never rests. Its presence is always felt even if it is absent--either in a linguistic or physical form. In this sense, spirit *does* return, haunting Heidegger, and haunting Derrida in a very special place--when each speaks of the university: "Metaphysics always returns, I mean in the sense of a *revenant* (ghost), and *Geist* is the most fatal figure of this *revenance* [returning, haunting]" (OS 40). If Heidegger can--with the dropping of a set of quotation marks--reify spirit, could it not be said that the "essence" of the university is affirmed through the university body's desire to think its own body?⁹ Is the spirit of the university merely the difference between the thought which affirms and the thought which negates? To be sure, Heidegger, as the very

⁹Prior to his Rector's Address, Heidegger always placed the word spirit in quotation marks--which is, at once, to use it while questioning that any such entity exists. Heidegger's famous dropping of these quotation marks constitutes a reification of spirit, a foreclosure on all prior questioning of "spirit." Heidegger connects a desire to think the institution with a desire, or need, to think also of "spirit." As David Wood suggests: "Faced with history, with actuality, with events sufficiently momentous to have the direst consequences for the 'world' in which such openness is played out, the question of the institution arises...What Spirit and the spiritual achieves for Heidegger is a way of thinking concrete institutions (university, State, leader)..." (81).

figure for an “acting” body of the university--a speaking of and about the university--decided that the university possessed an essence, a spirit, and, consequently, a very specific destination. Derrida urges us to think about the motives of “acting” bodies, not unlike Heidegger, who can affirm, negate and exploit the “spirit” of the university in order to meet specific ends--ends which might be unclear to the rest of the university corpus.

At this point in his remarks Derrida pauses and states: “Perhaps now you can better imagine with what shudders of awe I prepared myself to speak to you on the subject--quite properly sublime--of the essence of the university”(6). Having explicated two of his inhibitions with regard to his task of speaking of the university, Derrida reveals one final concern: What status grants him the ability and the authority to speak of the university? As a professor at large--someone who is adrift from the university, like a sailor at sea moving from port to port--what does he understand of his subject? A subject moreover that is already so entirely difficult to address. Derrida notes:

I wondered whether a professor at large, not belonging to any department, nor even to the university, wasn't rather like the person who in the old days was called *un ubiquiste*, a "ubiquitist," if you will in the University of Paris. A ubiquitist was a doctor of theology not attached to any particular college. Outside that context, in French, an *ubiquiste* is someone who travels a lot and travels fast, giving the illusion of being everywhere at once. (“Principle” 6)

Derrida is aware that while he might give the appearance of being everywhere at once, when he speaks of the university he can only ever speak of it partially--as a fragment.

Derrida draws attention to the absolute impossibility of every speaking as an authority on the university. But, like the trapped animal that he imagines himself to be when preparing

the text of a lecture, Derrida accepts that it is too late to turn his back on this university audience that has waited too long to hear some words on the subject of the university. With the question of the reason for reason resting on his lips, Derrida, his audience, and now, his readers, hover--"suspended between life and death," exaltation and fear--waiting for the interrogation of reason to begin.

We may or may not know it, we may or may not pay particular attention to what we know, but our stay in this world, our sojourn on earth is constantly under way to grounds and reason.

--Martin Heidegger *The Principle of Reason*, 10

For Derrida, this aporetic space--the space in which he finds himself unsure of how to begin speaking of the university--is the support from which he makes his next leap, or rather, the foundation in which he plants his foot *before* leaping--of "taking the call on one foot" (*prenant appel sur un pied*)(Mochlos 31). Thus, Derrida begins his discussion of reason and the university by making a leap ahead, that is to say, by making an assumption: "As far as I know, nobody has ever founded a university *against* reason"(7). What else can he assume? What other reason than reason itself could have been responsible for the "founding" of the modern university? Derrida concedes that he cannot "plunge" into the abyssal question of the origins and history of reason, yet both his use of the word "founded" and his subsequent statement that the "principle of reason is not simply reason" are leaps which find their completion in the very centre of the question of origins. By using the word "founded" in the same sentence as "reason" Derrida is implicitly urging us

to think along a specific trajectory--one of which he has already said he would not speak: the history of reason. By italicizing the word "against", which stands between "founded" and "reason", Derrida places the responsibility upon his audience, and now his readers, to hear his statement with different intonations, that is to say, with the stress alternately on the words "founded," "university," "against," and "reason". Listening for a question about origins, Derrida's statement might now be heard with a quite different inflection: "As far as I know, nobody has ever *founded* a university against *reason*".

The "founding" of reason did not officially occur until the seventeenth century when Leibniz first put into language what Heidegger has called--"the long-since commonplace idea "nothing is without reason"(P of R 118). Leibniz did not simply (re)iterate the words "nothing is without reason"--forming a principle in the act of articulation-- but much rather, he reformulated reason into a principle of principles: the *principium reddendae rationis sufficientis*(118). In the act of formulating reason into a principle, Leibniz created a protective barrier for reason--in fact, the very word "principle" denotes a basic level of truth or incontestability to the principle itself. For Heidegger, and now Derrida, the constructedness of this Leibnizian moment--this incarceration of reason--must not be forgotten. Is the beginning of reason's history the moment of the articulation of the principle of reason? Or was that Leibnizian moment merely the commencement of its formal history--young reason's first official cry to be "rendered"? What was reason's "pre-history," that is, its history before it was given a history? Why did reason have such an excessively long incubation period? It is almost possible to hear the puzzlement in Heidegger's voice as he hypothesizes about reason's pre-Leibnizian gestation period: "Is

the unusually long incubation period a preparation for an unusual wakening, a quickening to a wakefulness that no longer admits of sleep, least of all, an incubation, an oracular slumber” (118).¹⁰ Perhaps Heidegger’s questions cannot be so simply answered. As Derrida suggests in “Mochlos,” the foundation of reason cannot be understood using the cognitive tools that were responsible for its “founding”:

An event of foundation can never be comprehended merely within the logic that it founds. The foundation of a law is not a juridical event. The origin of the principle of reason, which is also implicated in the origin of the university, is not rational. The foundation of a university institution is not a university event. (29-30)

While there are no simple answers to a question about “foundings” and “origins,” the interrogation of the formulation of the principle of reason must continue. Heidegger poses three questions concerning Leibniz’s curious formulation of the principle of reason: questions to which Derrida responds in this essay: “1. How come a reason is always a

¹⁰Heidegger’s use of the word “incubation” [*Ausbrüten*] is oddly ambiguous, at once denoting both the incubation of a foetus--that unborn child of reason--and the incubation of a disease. Heidegger wonders if this long incubation period--this “quickening,” that is to say, the first movements of an unborn child, was a preparation for a newfound alertness or enlightenment characterized by unstoppable, frenzied movement. At the very least, Heidegger concedes, it was an incubation, an oracular slumber. Again, an “oracular slumber” is at once a sleep in which the path of the future is brought to consciousness, and a deep *unconscious* slumber in which the oracle--foresight, knowledge and wisdom--sleeps. It is also worthwhile to think about the gestation of reason along the trajectory posited by Aristotle in his “Generation of Animals”: “The period of gestation is, as a matter of fact, determined generally in each animal in proportion to the length of its life. For it is reasonable that the development of the long-lived animals should take a longer time... The real cause of a long life in any animal is its being tempered in a manner resembling the environing air, along with certain other circumstances in nature, of which we will speak later; but the cause of the time of gestation is the size of the offspring.” (“Generation of Animals” 1202).

rendered reason? 2. How come a reason must be rendered, that is, explicitly brought forward? 3. To whom or what is a reason rendered?" (*The Principle of Reason* 118).

The plural nature of the verb "to render" prevents a precise determination of Leibniz's intended meaning in his formulation of the principle of reason. Derrida questions the various implications of the different meanings of the verb "to render"--of this bizarre act of "rendering reason." To "render" possesses at once the meanings: to bring something to consciousness, to make it accountable, to give back, to give up, to contribute, to pay and to represent. But what, Derrida asks, does "render" mean when uttered in the same breath as "reason"--when read together in the same blink of an eye? Derrida suggests that perhaps it becomes a commodity--that which can be exchanged, circulated and borrowed, that which, in an economic sense, becomes a giving back, a payment for services *rendered*: "In any case, if "reason" in the principle of reason is not the rational faculty or power, that does not mean it is a thing, encountered somewhere among the beings and objects in the world, which *must* be rendered up, given back" (emphasis mine 8). In this sense, reason becomes one among many objects in the world which can be commodified and traded. Easily understood and accounted for, reason is relegated to a specific category of understanding and is no longer questioned. Why is it, Derrida asks, that reason "must" be rendered--that if reason can be rendered *it must*? From where does this imperative--this "one must" (*il faut*) come?¹¹ As Heidegger suggests in the opening lecture of *The Principle of Reason*, we are always attending to

¹¹For a more thorough discussion of the imperative "one must" see Derrida's essay "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" in which he questions both why and how it is that one "must" speak--why "it is necessary" to speak (81).

this summons to render reason: “Without exactly knowing it, in some manner we are constantly addressed by, summoned to attend to, grounds and reason” (3). How do we answer this pressing call? Once again, Derrida raises the question of the responsibility of responding, that is, is there more than one way to respond to the summons, and if so, is there a specific university responsibility in responding?: “[I]s answering *to* the principle of reason the same act as answering *for* the principle of reason? Is the scene the same? Is the landscape the same? And where is the university located within this space?” (8).

In his 1833 *A Discourse on the Studies of The University*, Adam Sedgwick warns his colleagues at Cambridge University of the dangers of adopting systems of thought which question the unquestionable: “[I]n every question, even of physical science, we take but a few steps towards a first cause, before we are arrested by a boundary we cannot pass--before we are encompassed with a darkness no eye can penetrate” (34). For Sedgwick this darkness, this boundary, is an indication of a more “profound”, more spiritual thought, while the thinking that attempts to question this darkness is “clear only because it is shallow” (34). Sedgwick advocates an acceptance of darkness--a desire to “see” in darkness rather than penetrate it--while he simultaneously dismisses all attempts to “think” this darkness as frivolous and irrational. This fear of particular lines of philosophical questioning exists one hundred and sixty two years after Sedgwick's address and manifests itself in such intellectual debates as “The Cambridge Affair”-- in which a group of British intellectuals tried, unsuccessfully, to stop Derrida from receiving an honorary degree on the grounds that he was an irrational thinker whose only merit was his adeptness at word play. It is this type of foreclosure on reflexivity--this unconditional

acceptance of “darkness,” of a belief in impenetrable boundaries, of which Derrida is most suspicious. As he points out in “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils,” the distinction between answering *to* and *for* reason is the choice of reflexivity over simply reflex, it is the difference between a *reflex* response and a *reflexive* response.

At the moment of Leibniz's casting of the principle of reason, the world witnessed the birth of two twins who would change the world forever: modern scientific reason and a new type of answering to this reason--rational thinking or rationality (Gasché 107). To answer *to* the call of reason is to account automatically for--or make accountable--effects, based on their roots or principles(8). Most importantly, it is to respond to a summons without thinking through the reason for this summons. As David L. Clark suggests, to answer *to* a summons is, at once, to respond and foreclose on the responsibility to respond: “It calls, so to speak, but asks nothing. We automatically answer, but cannot reply directly. Out of the blue, perhaps even out of a night in which all cows are black, comes a disembodied voice, to which we instantly respond, without thinking: *Abraham!* Here am I” (Clark 132). To respond *to* the call of reason is to hear it as only one summons among many--all bearing the same importance. When Isaac, heavy with the wood for his own sacrifice, declares, “My Father”, Abraham responds “Here *am* I, my son”. When the angel of the lord calls upon Abraham as he prepares to sacrifice his son Abraham responds, once again, “Here *am* I”, as if “here” were always the same place, and the urgency of the summons--inconsequential (“Genesis” 22). Thus, to respond *to* the call of reason is to accept the call unconditionally. Nowhere is this call more insistent than in the university--the place in which “modern” reason is institutionalized. As Derrida points

out, the necessity to respond to the call of reason became even more pressing with the formulation of the principle of reason (8). While the rage for causes, roots and first principles has been present since the “dawn of Western philosophy,” its re-birth in the form of “modern” reason, created a new rage for reasons--one which would become the *raison d'etre* of the university. With the demand to render reasons constantly echoing in our ears--Heidegger suggests that like the sound of city traffic, we eventually forget that we even hear it at all: “Do we hear the demand to render reasons? We must answer: yes and no. Yes--for lately we have had the demand to render reasons all too oppressively in our ears. No--for we indeed hardly notice its pressing demand” (28). Thus, to answer *to* the principle of reason is to stand “in the face of” this principle and, with an unwavering voice, repeat, “Here am I--hearing, not hearing” (9).

To answer *for* the principle of reason is to stare into the darkness and shout, not “Here am I”, but much rather, “Where are you?” To respond *for* the principle of reason, Derrida suggests, is to question its origins, its grounds--to demand the reason for reason itself: “We do not listen in the same way when we are responding to a summons as when we are questioning its meaning, its origin, its possibility, its goal, its limits” (9). But to answer *for* reason, is neither, as Rodolphe Gasché so succinctly points out, to divide reason with irrationalism--to decide “on the transcendental conditions of reason's proper (epistemologically and ethically) successful powers”-- nor is to posit a critique in the name of an Other than reason (Gasché 110). It is essential to understand that answering *for* the principle of reason is not an irrational act, it is not to disobey, or laugh “in the face of” the principle of reason, as for example, thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas (*The Philosophical*

Discourse of Modernity), John Ellis (*Against Deconstruction*) and Allan Bloom (*The Closing of The American Mind*) have argued. It is, rather, to follow the principle of reason--to comply with it--by bringing reason before the tribunal of reason itself: "By asking for reason's credentials, this critique inaugurates another phase in the history of reason"(Gasché 109). This "new" phase in the history of reason has been met with considerable resistance--a resistance which incites Derrida to ask:

Who is more faithful to reason's call, who hears it with a keener ear, who better sees the difference, the one who offers questions in return and tries to think through the possibility of that summons, or the one who does not want to hear any question about the reason of reason? (9)

Derrida is, as he points out, responding explicitly to Heidegger's discussion in *The Principle of Reason* of how we at once hear and refuse to hear the principle of reason. In the final address of *The Principle of Reason* Heidegger posits a question--the answer to which he claims will decide the fate of both the earth and human existence (129). Derrida explains that he cannot explore this "Heideggerian question" given "the limits of the talk," but Derrida has, both explicitly and implicitly, already spoken of Heidegger. To be more precise, his essay comes out of the very Heideggerian question that he has simultaneously privileged and relegated to the periphery of his discussion. Thus, an understanding of Derrida's project is not possible without, at the very least, a cursory examination of this Heideggerian question *and* of Derrida's decision "not" to speak of it.

The Heideggerian question itself cannot be properly heard without inquiring into the different nuances at once present and absent in the formula "nothing is without reason" (9). Like Derrida's statement "Today, how can we not speak of the university?," the

formula, “nothing is without reason”, is a double negative, stating at one and the same time: ‘*Nothing is without reason*’ and ‘*Nothing is without reason*’. On the one hand, everything has a reason--everything can be accounted for--everything can be broken down into its first causes: *nothing is without* a reason for being. Like Derrida's statement: “As far as I know a university has never been founded *against* reason,” the formula “*nothing is without reason*” states conclusively that the only thing that is not “reasonable” must be “nothing”. As Derrida assumes that the university was founded for reason (he cannot know what that other system of thought that “founded” the university might have been), Leibniz is certain that only “nothing” is without “reason”. As a “principle” this formula attains a certain incontestability; that is, we accept this principle as truth because of its title. We assume that because it has been given the title “principle,” it has already been rigorously questioned and doubted, and hence, can now be accepted as law--as a rule. In Lecture One of *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger argues that this belief in the solidity of the principle of reason has led to a disregard for that of which the principle truly speaks: “We are finished with the principle of reason as soon as we hear it. Nevertheless, perhaps the principle of reason is the most enigmatic of all possible principles. If this is the case, then we would do well to treat it more attentively than we have till now” (5). Like the *renard rusé* in *Les Fables de LaFontaine*,¹² the word “principle” is a distraction which occludes the full meaning of the principle of reason.

¹²In *Les Fables de La Fontaine*, the fox distracts the gatekeeper so that he may satiate his desire.

“Nothing *is* without *reason*”, on the other hand, speaks neither of calculations, nor deductions, but rather, it speaks of the very nature of human existence. Read with the emphasis shifted from the negative to the affirmative, the principle now makes an explicit connection between “reason” and “being”: the “isness”--the essence of being--is reason.

Heidegger:

Whenever it speaks of beings, the tiny word “is” names the *being* of beings. When the “is” means “being” and sets the pitch in the principle, “reason” is also taken up along with it in the intonation: nothing *is* without *reason*. Being and reason now ring together in one. The principle of reason now has a different ring and says: ground/reason belongs to being. The principle of reason no longer speaks as a supreme fundamental principle of all cognition of beings, which says every being has a reason. The principle of reason now speaks as a word of being. (125)

Thus, the principle of reason answers the question, what does “being” mean--what is the essence, or “isness” of being? “Being” is “reason” and “reason” is the grounds for “being.” This principle of grounding is the very grounds of being itself--it is a conclusive statement about the “grounds” for being. The Heideggerian question--the question which Derrida “avoids” asking--is as follows: Do we accept the principle of reason as the end of thought, that is to say, the last word about “being?” Has “the question,” perhaps the only question that ever mattered, already been answered--the riddle of existence solved? According to the principle of reason we are the *animale rationale*, but should we be satisfied with what the principle of reason has named us? Is there no longer a necessity to think about “being”? Deeply sceptical about the “Atomic Age,” Heidegger cannot understand why we fail to question our status as the “animale rationale” and where that status has brought us. Do we not want to think beyond the principle of reason? Is the

future of the university--of philosophical thought--not dependent on the desire to continue thinking, to believe in the importance of the “unthought”--the thought which is forthcoming? As Heidegger notes:

[M]ay we give up what is worthy of thought in favor of the recklessness of exclusively calculative thinking and its immense achievements? Or are we obliged to find paths upon which thinking is capable of responding to what is worthy of thought instead of, enchanted by calculative thinking, mindlessly passing over what is worthy of thought? That is the question. It is the world-question of thinking. (129)

The response to this question is the difference between answering *to* and answering *for* reason--it is the choice between a foreclosure and an opening towards thought. But, as Derrida points out, to follow the path of this Heideggerian question is to follow a path which inevitably leads to an abyss--an abyss which at once must remain the “thought” and the “unthought.” More specifically, to think the origins of reason--to demand “What is the reason for reason?” is to find oneself in the midst of what Clark has called “aporetic thought”--thought which is both “unbearable and unavoidable”(“Tropics” 81).

The path of the Heideggerian question leads to both origins and futures. Derrida imagines a conversation between Charles Sanders Peirce and Heidegger--together in time for a few hours to discuss the risks and possibilities associated with an inquiry into the reason for reasonableness. By imagining a conversation between these two thinkers, Derrida projects a conversation between philosophers who implicitly respond to each other's questions--questions about both origins and “ends.” Again, however, Derrida concedes that he cannot, within the “limits” of his talk, reconstitute this dialogue. But this conversation occurs in the textual divergences of the two thinkers:

Peirce: “Subsequent experience of life has taught me that the only thing that is really desirable without a reason for being so, is to render ideas and things reasonable. One cannot well demand a reason for reasonableness itself.” (332)

Heidegger: “Nothing is without reason, says the principle of reason. Nothing--which means not even this principle of reason, certainly it least of all”(19).

Peirce: “[T]he only thing that makes the human race worth perpetuation is that thereby ideas may be developed, and the rationalization of things furthered...No other occupation of man is so purely and immediately directed to the one end that is alone intrinsically rational as scientific investigation” (Peirce 334).

Heidegger: “Now, modern science understands itself as the exemplary mode of the founding representation of objects. Accordingly, it is based on the fundamental principle of rendering reasons. Without modern science there is no modern university. If those of us here are aware of ourselves as belonging to the university, then we move on the basis upon which the university itself rests. That is the principle of reason...The demand to render reasons for all statements--for every utterance--speaks in the principle. *From where* does this demand of reason speak to its being rendered? (28).

The dialogue, assuredly, would not have ended here, but it is at this moment, that Peirce, retreating from the inquisitive gaze of Heidegger, would pause and ask, “But where will this questioning lead us?” To which Heidegger would respond: “Instead of getting an answer, we once again run into a question” (126).

Derrida suggests that by questioning the principle of reason, thought encounters both circles and abysses (9). Thinking takes the shape of a circle when each answer inevitably leads to another question--the question which can't be answered. Heidegger:

[T]his word of being is supposed to answer the question: what after all does “being” mean? Instead of getting an answer, we once again run into a question. For we immediately ask: what, after all, does “ground/reason” mean? Now, the only answer to this is: “ground/reason” means being”. “Being” means “ground/reason”--”ground/reason” means “being”: here everything goes around in a circle. We become dizzy. Thinking stumbles into perplexity. (126)

The limits and limitlessness of thought are at once expressed in this hermeneutic circle; that is to say, thinking will continue, *ad infinitum*, along this trajectory, but we will never be able to think beyond this trajectory because its origins are beyond the limits of our own thought: “Any *philosophical* inquiry into the origin of thinking, of reason and logic, cannot if it is to be *philosophical* describe these origins in the categories constitutive of what these origins make possible” (Gasché 122). Derrida suggests that the principle of reason has secured its “empire” by guarding the abyssal question of being--by keeping the question of the grounding of the ground out of the line of sight (10). Thus, the university is founded upon that which is disclosed by the principle of reason and that which it conceals. The university is “founded” upon an abyss. When thought reaches the abyss it has, in fact, reached the very edge of thought, but unlike the circle, the abyss is not a continuance along a specific trajectory--it is an *aporia*: “The abyss, the hole, the *Abgrund*, the empty “gorge” would be the impossibility for a principle of grounding to ground itself” (10). The origin of thought (and thus the origin of the university) is that which is yet to be thought. Is it possible that the university--the place of the institutionalization of thought--could be founded on that which has not yet been thought? Is it possible that the grand principle of founding has no grounds? As Heidegger, and now Derrida, both conclude, the thought of “being” and the thought of the university--the thought that is the university-

-are still *forthcoming*: “The future is that from which we are provoked to take a responsibility, and to say, beyond a delivering knowledge, ‘come.’ That which says ‘come’ is the forthcoming, the future; it is not a subject which says ‘come’” (Canons and Metonymies 210). To answer *for* the call of reason is to risk circles, abysses, and the “ruin” of thought. It is to stare, once again, into the darkness and shout, “Come.”

Derrida's attempt to think the unthought is the thought to which Heidegger said, “come.” It is neither motivated by a modern, nor a post-modern desire to overthrow a specific historical formation of thought (Gasché 121). But the focus of his thought cannot be construed as a disinterest in historical formations of thought, reason, or subjectivity. In fact, Derrida is responding to a responsibility to and for thought posited by Heidegger. More specifically, once we have stood “in the face of” the principle of reason, and read it as more than a statement of causality, there is a responsibility to respond--at the very least to attempt to think that which cannot be thought. Is Derrida's decision “not” to speak of Heidegger's question “responsible?” Or has Derrida not already taken on the weight, the responsibility, of Heidegger's question? Again: Is he not always already speaking of Heidegger? Derrida's thought was the thought that was forthcoming when Heidegger formulated his question about the principle of reason, *but* that question no longer belongs to Heidegger or Derrida. Rather, it belongs to whoever chooses to answer *for* the principle of reason. Perhaps Derrida can “not” speak of this Heideggerian question because that responsibility is no longer his--it is that responsibility shared with his audience and his readers. Tired of “meditating at the edge of the abyss,” or, perhaps, worried that

he might have lost his audience in the abyss, Derrida moves closer to the walls of the university--to the "concrete."

By moving closer to the concrete Derrida is, at once, concretizing his arguments by locating them in a specific topology, and exposing the materiality of the concrete--the university walls--which is to say, how they are determined by the philosophical questions posed in his preceding discussion. Thus, Derrida is not foreclosing on a philosophical discussion of "grounding" and "founding"; rather, he is suggesting how these issues are re-formulated in the question of university research. How does the principle of reason determine the destination of university research? For Derrida, this question can no longer be answered using the distinctions posited by thinkers such as Schelling, Kant, Peirce and Nietzsche in their writings on the university. In *On University Studies*, for example, Schelling explains that to speak of the uses of philosophy would be beneath its dignity. After all, Schelling concludes, "Anyone who can ask what its usefulness might be is assuredly not capable of a true conception of it...[I]t exists for its own sake alone; its very essence would be destroyed if it existed for the sake of anything else" (50).¹³ Similarly, in *The Conflict of the Faculties* Kant divides the study of knowledge into "higher" and "lower faculties--faculties which are influenced by the state and those which exist for the pursuit of knowledge alone--for basic research:

¹³Schelling's observations about the uses, or rather, lack of uses of philosophy, seems at odds with an earlier remark concerning state interference in university studies: "It may be asked whether it is proper to make philosophical demands on the university when everyone knows that they are instruments of the state and must be what the state intended them to be"(22). Schelling seems at once, to acknowledge and foreclose on the possibility that even philosophy might be "oriented"--might possess ends which are determined by the state.

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings...one that, having no command to give, is free to evaluate everything and concern itself with the interests of the sciences, that is with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. (27)

For Kant, the lower faculty--philosophy--is the only faculty which is founded and grounded in reason. The higher faculties--medicine, law and theology--Kant argues, are mere instruments of the state as they necessarily fail to question reason. These faculties survive through the "tyranny of reason," through the failure to question rather than simply transmit knowledge. C.S Peirce also posits the need for a field of study which possesses an autonomy within the university and within society. Derrida reflects, once again, on Peirce's "The definition and function of the university" in which Peirce collapses the distinction between personal goals and the goals of academic research, and concludes that scientific investigation is the only field in which reasoning is done solely for the sake of rational investigation. Peirce writes:

Our scientific schools distribute circulars which dwell chiefly upon the handsome incomes their alumni are making, thereby calling up such images as a handsomely laid table with a pair of Havre de Grace ducks and a bottle of Chateau Margaux. What comes of such a conception of education and of life, for surely the purpose of education is not different from the purpose of life?...[N]o other occupation of man is so purely and immediately directed to the one end that is alone rational as scientific investigation. It so strongly influences those who pursue it to subordinate all motives of ambition, fame, greed, self-seeking of every description, that other people, even those who have relatively high aspirations, such as theologians and teachers, altogether fail, in many cases to divine the scientific man's simple motives. (334)

Derrida suggests that there has been a reactionary return to the ideas of thinkers such as Kant and Peirce, in the belief, posited by some guardians of the humanities, that there can be disinterested research--that there can and should be a department which exists solely for the pursuit of basic research, truth and the disinterested exercise of reason (12).

For Derrida, while the structure of disciplines may remain semi-intact within the university, there are no longer--and perhaps never were--distinctions between those disciplines which are determined by the state and those which are able to escape its influence. After all, even Kant felt the influence of censorship and oppression from the state, the only difference being that in Kant's day it was possible to identify the sources of censorship because the university was directly accountable to the crown.¹⁴ Derrida suggests that in this technological age--this age in which all research is determined by techno-political forces--it is no longer possible to separate basic research from end-oriented research. As Derrida suggests, "One can no longer distinguish between technology on the one hand and theory, science and rationality on the other" (12).

Derrida asserts that while research is no longer directly censored by the state, the state is now "omnipresent"--which is to say, its influence is exercised in every aspect of research production, transmission and diffusion (13). Failing to recognize that even the most basic research can be co-opted by the state, the university leaves itself open to interference from forces that are apparently external to it, i.e. presses, foundations, the mass media (13). Even knowledge that is considered "disinterested" can be made useful in the state's

¹⁴For an example of this censorship see the preface to Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* in which Kant defends himself against Frederick II's accusations of heretic teachings.

perpetuation of its ideology--in fact, this intellectual “aestheticism” can easily support a project of naturalizing that ideology--of dissimulating any critical difference between “the natural” and the “ideological.” For Heidegger, this failure to recognize the technological influences bearing down on the university, is analogous to the failure to hear, correctly, the call of the principle of reason--a failure which permits the domination of technology:

Modern technology pushes toward the greatest possible perfection. Perfection is based on the thoroughgoing calculability of objects. The calculability of objects presupposes the unqualified validity of the *principium rationis*. It is in this way that the authority characteristic of the principle of reason determines the essence of the modern, technological age. (*Principle* 121)

Derrida recalls Heidegger's use of the word “information”--a word which, as Heidegger explains, means, “the appraisal that as quickly, comprehensively, unequivocally and profitably as possible acquaints contemporary humanity with the securing of its necessities, its requirements and their satisfaction” (124). Heidegger asserts that information gives humans mastery over the earth by directing knowledge so that it functions solely for the aims of technological advancement. Derrida briefly discusses the implications of the word “information,” noting that information is, at once, that which transmits and that which “forms” knowledge (14). In Heidegger's words: “Yet while information in-forms, that is, apprises, it at the same time forms, that means, arranges and sets straight” (124).

Invoking the Heideggerian question of how we hear the summons--how we hear the word “information”--once again, Derrida explains that he cannot engage in a discussion of the

different implications of that Heideggerian question. Instead, he pauses as if lost in thought--both Heidegger's and his own--and asks, "What, then, is my topic?" (14).

These new responsibilities cannot be purely academic. If they remain extremely difficult to assume, extremely precarious and threatened, it is because they must at once keep alive the memory of a tradition and make an opening beyond any program, that is, toward what is called the future.

-- Jacques Derrida, "The Principle of Reason" 16

On the one hand, by asking "What, then, is my topic?" Derrida gives the fleeting impression of disorientation, that through the course of his remarks he has--like a scatter-brained professor-- lost his place and must pause, collect his thoughts and ask himself, "Where am I going, Where have I been?" On the other hand, Derrida is explicitly asking, "What, then, is *my* topic?," which is at once to ask, "What is my project, what am I suggesting, what have I suggested"? At this juncture in his remarks, Derrida stops and, for what will be the last time, raises the question of responsibility--the question which has lead him to this juncture and is, quite unmistakably, *his topic*: "I have been thinking especially of the necessity to awaken or to resituate a responsibility, in the university, or in the face of the university, whether one belongs to it or not" (14). Derrida warns his audience and readers that the "new responsibility" is one which will be met with resistance from those who view it as irresponsible--as irrational. They will view this "new responsibility" as a threat to those "thoughts" of truth, memory and tradition predicated on the ideality of the western metaphysical philosophical tradition. But this "new responsibility" was, in fact, first suggested by one of the most intense believers in unity

and tradition: Schelling. In *On University Studies* Schelling states: “[I]t is imperative that universities give general instruction in the aims and methods of academic study, both as a whole and in respect to its particular subjects”(6). One hundred and ninety-three years later, Derrida calls for a re-opening of this Schellingian discussion, for a renewed questioning of the constitution of the university--of its assumed origins and its ends. As Derrida points out, this new responsibility, over-looked in Schelling's time, returns as a threat to those who do not want to think about how their institution is constituted--particularly in terms of the principle of reason. Derrida's call to “thought” is perhaps all the more threatening to those who understand theory and practice as oppositional gestures, and more specifically, Derridean thought as a “theoretical” discourse on the university that is uninformed by practice. Yet, as Derrida states, theory and practice are never mutually exclusive, least of all in his formulation of a “new university responsibility”: “It is possible to speak of this new responsibility that I have invoked only by sounding a call to practice it”(16).

This “new responsibility” would constitute as desire to think the entire landscape of the university, that is, to question its foundations, its ends, its abysses, its illusory boundaries and its “protective barriers.” It is a responsibility towards the university, towards thought, which is to say, a recognition that the preservation of the university depends upon a dedication to speaking and questioning every aspect of what we call the “university.” Derrida insists that students and professors must have a forum in which they can question the history of the university--the de-ontology of their own profession (15). What might this de-ontology look like? First, in his essay “The Injured University,”

Timothy Bahti argues that the university must allow for the interrogation of history itself, of what constitutes knowledge--and how knowledge is constituted--an endeavour which disappeared with the institutionalization of history as a discipline within the university:

My sense of injury within the 'humanities' leads me to insist, quietly but firmly, that all historical knowledge without an accompanying rationale for its constitution and existence is contre-intellectual and ultimately counter-rational...No history of literature, no history of art, no history of society, without a philosophy of history, a method of historiography, an internal and external accounting. (73)

Second, as Derrida recognizes, as much as the interrogation of history, of the essence of reason, and of the aims of the university is a university event--it cannot entirely be a university event; this new responsibility cannot be purely academic (16). This new mode of thinking must seek, at once, to preserve memory and tradition while creating a space which is extra-institutional, that is, a space for the thought which is not yet the university. Concomitantly, since we are determined by the very discourses we use to question the principle of reason in the university, there will always be an aspect of ourselves and our place in the university which cannot be penetrated within the university system. Thus, even though the discourses we employ may be rigorous enough to question academic practices, their conception and continued application within the very system which they attempt to interrogate, acts as a barrier (some would say a protective barrier) which only allows for a limited questioning of the university's reason for being:

[W]hat ever conceptual apparatus they may have, whatever axiomatics, whatever methodology (Marxist or neo-Marxist, Weberian or neo-Weberian, Mannheimian, some combination of these or something else entirely), they never touch upon that which, in themselves, continues to be based on the principle of reason and thus on the essential foundation of the

modern university...even when it claims to be revolutionary, this discourse does not always trouble the most conservative forces of the university.
(16)

Thus, Derrida's new responsibility is also a call for a new discourse--a new thought--one which is rife with risks--and suggestive of possibilities.

To adopt this new discourse is not, Derrida argues, to place oneself in opposition to tradition, to memory, or to truth. Rather, the third and perhaps most significant aspect of an emergent and continually emerging de-ontologizing of "tradition" is Derrida's invocation of a double gesture which simultaneously moves to preserve aspects of tradition--those texts, social institutions, and other discursive formations that continue to form us--while "going as far as possible, theoretically and practically, in the most directly underground thinking about the abyss beneath the university" (17). Clearly, this strategy of preserving a double reading avoids the charge of nihilism. But though this double gesture--or double responsibility--is interested in the preservation, in the life of the university, it continues to be threatening to those who see it only as a negation and a dismantling of traditional university thought and practices. In a 1991 interview with Gary Olson, Derrida explains the dynamic of this double gesture with reference to deconstruction--the discourse he has metonymically come to represent:

I'm in favour of tradition. I'm respectful of and a lover of the tradition. There's no deconstruction without the memory of the tradition. I couldn't imagine what the university could be without reference to the tradition, but a tradition that is as rich as possible and that is open to other traditions, and so on. That's conservative; tradition is conservative to that extent. But at the same time deconstruction is not conservative. Out of respect for the tradition, deconstruction asks questions; it puts into question the tradition and even the concept of "question." (132)

The university must, at once, *be* a place of tradition and a place which is *beyond* tradition. Derrida recognizes that a university must be a place of both memory and forgetting, that is, an institution that protects history by allowing for the radical re-thinking of history. As Derrida puts it: “Beware of ends; but what would a university be without ends?” (19)

To be sure, a university must have ends, but to define the university, to construct for it one definitive mission statement--a statement which informs each and every university decision--is immediately to limit the possibilities for the future of the university. To know the future of the university risks obliterating that future; yet who can proceed without such knowledge? To say what the university is by carving its motto on an escutcheon, for example, is also to suggest an anti-motto, that is, to re-call all of the things which the university is not. Yet, as Eve Sedgwick argues in “Gender Criticism,” the university is always already defined, somewhat surprisingly, both *most* and *least* of all by its nomenclature:

The very name *university* conveys its ambition to represent something huge in a disproportionately tiny space...Beyond being condensed, and thus tending toward the unreal or the hyperreal, in its synecdochic relation to the universe it claims to represent, the university is also in an anachronistic relation to it. (295)

Attempting to represent society in such a localized space, the university has the tendency to both intensify certain aspects of society, which is to say, as it focuses in on specific aspects of society it allows others to escape its purview entirely. Thus, attempting to redefine the university without inquiring into the ways in which the university space is always already defined risks the worst, that is, it risks permanently closing off the university's view. For this reason, Derrida insists that while we must demand the reason

for reason, we must avoid speaking of the university in ways that would wrongly define it--in ways that would either construct it as an institution created solely for the pursuit of pure thought--of basic research--or, as a conglomerate of professional schools working for the ends determined and enforced by the state. For Derrida, the act of definition must, at once, be attempted and avoided. Thus, to think the possibility of the university, Derrida suggests that thought must embrace both the principle of reason and that which escapes it--the *arkhe* and the an-archy (19).

To think the possibility of the university requires the understanding and acceptance of the institution as, necessarily, a ruin. At the moment of definition the university is always already the trace of that which it no longer is--a ruin. Like the self-portrait, so insightfully examined by Derrida in *The Memoirs of the Blind*, the university exists only as a representation of that which no longer is. As Martin Jay explains:

For Derrida, the act of drawing itself necessitated a moment of non-seeing in which the artist depicts the ruins of a previous vision. Or rather, there is no initial vision that is not already a ruin (a visual analogy to his familiar argument that there is no original word or thing prior to its representation). (522)

To think of the university as a ruin is also to think of it as a metaphor, a necessary figure of understanding which is always at a distance from, and which allegorizes, the thing itself. As Nietzsche points out in "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," "We believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things--metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities" (83). When we say "university" we assume a common understanding of what a "university" actually is without inquiring into the

profound and lasting implications of such a homogeneous perception of the university. So deeply immersed in our illusions, Nietzsche suggests that our eyes merely “glide over the surface of things” (80). For Derrida, the university is a metaphor, but it is a metaphor that is ruinous. For this reason, Derrida labels the moment in which one begins to paint the self-portrait, or rather, the moment in which one begins to define the university, a moment of non-definition--the *L'ouvre on ne pas voir*--the opening where one cannot see (*Memoirs* 34). This blind spot constitutes both a locus of potential vision and a perpetual lack of vision. More specifically, by acknowledging the limits of sight--by confronting the blind spot--we are attempting to reflect on the very conditions of sight itself, conditions which are constantly over-looked:

Why are we not aware of the blind spot? There are a number of reasons. First, we usually use two eyes, so when an image falls on the blind spot of one eye, it falls on the receptors of the other. But we are not aware of the blind spot even when we use only one eye, so there must be more to the explanation. Another reason is that, even in one-eyed vision, the blind spot is located off to the side of the visual field, which means that we don't see it in sharp focus...But perhaps the most important reason that we don't see the blind spot, is that some as yet poorly understood mechanism “fills in” the place where the image disappears. (Anstis 589)

Derrida points out that as a “supplementary body” the university is an institution that is capable of both reflecting society and allowing for reflection on society: “But with the relative autonomy of a technical apparatus, indeed that of a machine and of a prosthetic body, this artifact that is the university has *reflected* society only in giving it the chance for reflection, that is, also for *dissociation*” (19). The university, however, has lost sight of the importance of reflecting on the very conditions of reflection. Perhaps the university's constitution as a place of reflection has come to replace the actual need to reflect, or

rather, the architecture of reflection has come to replace reflection itself (Clark “Against Theological Technology” 198). Derrida urges a turning back on reflection as if “with the help of a new optical device one could finally see sight, could not only view the natural landscape, the city, the bridge and the abyss, but could view viewing” (19). By reflecting on the conditions of sight, by suddenly opening our eyes and stating “I am seeing,” perhaps we might see more--perhaps we might even recognize the possibilities inherent in the blind-spot and the blink.

Of the visual metaphors invoked by Derrida in this essay, it is the image of the blink--that 250 milliseconds in which the eye receives no stimuli--which encompasses all that Derrida has suggested. A moment of chance, memory, renewal, decadence, vision, and non-vision, the moment of the blink represents the thought which is the future of the university: “It is the chance for an event about which one does not know whether or not, presenting itself *within* the university, it belongs to the history of the university...The chance for this event is the chance of an instant, an *Augenblick*, a ‘wink’ or a ‘blink’ it takes place in the “twinkling of an eye”...(20).¹⁵ Derrida points out that it might even be a moment that “tears up time,” that is, a moment when the university is turned *inside out*. Here, Derrida is referring to the moment in which a thinker from the “outside,” one who

¹⁵In *The Life of the Mind / Thinking*, Hannah Arendt reads Nietzsche’s formulation of the *Augenblick* through Heidegger. For Nietzsche, the *Augenblick* is the “Now,” the place where two paths meet leaving a long “eternal lane” that leads backward and another lane that leads forward into an eternal future. Arendt, quoting Heidegger, notes: “Whoever stands in the Now is turning in both directions: for him Past and Future run against each other...This is the authentic content of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, that Eternity *is* in the Now, that the Moment is not the futile Now which it is only for the onlooker, but the clash of Past and Future.” (204)

might even be hostile to the university, reflects upon the “inside” in a manner that is more insightful and provocative than academic reflections themselves (20). The blink is a moment of both memory and chance: in order to blink, we must first have the capacity of sight. But in the absence of a continuity of sight, the brain creates images before the eye based on memory--memory engenders sight by generating visual representations to fill in an otherwise sightless moment. Thus, the moment of the blink is always a moment in which the chance for an extraordinary (one might venture to say extra-ocular) occurrence is immanent. The blink, like the future of the university, is dependent on both memory and chance, each will engender the other, preserving traces--both past and forthcoming--of the university.

Chapter Two

The *Corpus Academicus* and other Teratologies

After all, what is this body?

--Jacques Derrida (Canons and Metonymies)

Monsters cannot be announced. One cannot say: "Here are our monsters," without immediately turning the monsters into pets.

--Jacques Derrida ("Some statements and Truisms about Neo-Logisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms")

What is a body? If the university were a body what would it look like? In "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils," Derrida suggests that one way we might figure the university is as a "prosthetic body," (19) by which he means, a body whose supplementarity allows for a certain dissociated reflection of society and by society. For Derrida, the supplement is never merely an addition, but rather, that which responds to an a priori "lack." This body is not added on to society, instead it responds to a certain incompleteness within society. But what precisely is the nature of this supplemented incorporation? Derrida's recognition that the university is recognizable as some kind of body points towards a specific connection between philosophical understandings of the body and the discursive activity constitutive of the university--a connection which extends beyond the rhetoric of embodiment, that is, the rhetoric that em-bodies. Derrida uses the figure of the body as an aperture--more specifically, Derrida's "aperture" is not a neutral scopic metaphor but, rather, signifies an opening *toward* a new understanding of the university. Derrida's linguistic opening becomes an

allusive figure which can at once suggest a multiplicity of associations, and thus, can offer a pluralized vision of potential applications and directions for development of the university's body and the university *as* body. If we explore the practical implications of Derrida's linguistic mobilization of the university as body, Derrida's deliberate desire to increase the possibilities for development of the university body reveals a multi-plex path that is provocative for the interpretation of both Derridean discourse on, and the historical contribution to, the discursive construction of the university. By tracing the figure of the body within the philosophical traditions' figuration(s) of the university, I want to suggest the presence of a third discourse--what I will call the "university in-carnate"--a discourse which, potentially, develops the Derridean project in a radically new direction.

At work in Derrida's double embodiment of the university is an ethical discourse of *both* the body and the university--together as one concept--sharing the same history, a history which is, I will suggest, the oppositional relation of the body proper to the body improper, of the metaphysical university to the university incarnate. By the term "metaphysical university" I am suggesting a university that privileges "spirit" over the body (a privileging that is not only a belief in the existence of a transcendental essence for the university, but also that this purely self-identical university spirit is always already recovered, reconstituted, paradoxically, as a whole or complete body) and embraces the idealistic, originary and unified discourse of western metaphysics of which the notion of "spirit" is an important part. This spirited university represses the "body" of the university which is, dangerously, a repression of its social, historical circumstances, its memories, its

traditions. In short, this metaphysical university rejects the body as it fills that body with spirit.

The “university in-carnate,” on the other hand, chooses to think the existence of a university body constitutively supplementary--which is to say, fragmented. It is a university body that, far from being a site of incarnate presence, is one that is characterized by absences, openings, crossings, displacements, parasitisms and contaminations. This latter discourse replaces the totalizing (and thus exclusionary) discourse of “spirit” with the possibility of a more inclusive if fissured notion of the university’s corporeality --a space which, on the one hand, preserves an element of the “spiritual” in the designation “university”--of the metaphysical history of the university--while, on the other, acknowledges that even to think the existence of an originary spirit would be to think the impossible--the abyss. The university in-carnate, the “body” that I want to evoke, after Derrida, is precisely the body that the university represses, avoids, and sublimates into a synthesized discourse of spirit. The university is organized around “bodies” of knowledge (“bodies” which Schelling and other metaphysical thinkers argue must be marshalled by spirit into an organic whole that is the university) but in doing so we evoke perfected bodies, when, in fact, knowledge is much messier and conflicted--bodies overlapping, parasitizing, grafting each other and perpetually (re)producing academic monstrosities. Thus, this idea of Derrida’s academic corporeality--of a university “spirit” lying in ruins, un-recoverable, and hence, unthinkable--radically shifts away from metaphysical understandings of the university. In my attempt to understand the Derridean movement towards a de-spiriting of the university (and thus a new university

embodiment) I will pick up the trace of a path which begins with Immanuel Kant, and I will abandon it after returning to Derrida--recognizing, of course, that the history of this third discourse cannot be contained within the body of my own framework, that a beginning is never *the* beginning and the end--only a crossroads.

Reflecting on Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Derrida asks: "What happens when a philosopher (and moreover a professor of philosophy, a state functionary) says 'I,' and talks about his health?" ("Canons and Metonymies" 207). Here, Derrida is referring to Kant's essay at the end of *Conflict*, "The Philosophy Faculty versus the Faculty of Medicine," in which Kant discusses the healing powers of reason. Kant's essay is a useful place to begin a discussion on the university and the body since it exposes a more general belief in the opposition of the body and the university. By attempting to reason through the illnesses which plague him, Kant sets himself the task of proving that philosophy is the preventive cure, the "panacea" which "must still be an ingredient in every prescription" (175). With a good dose of reason, Kant believes that he can gain a mastery over his body, which is to say, rational thought will enable him to *unthink* his body, to control it and, thus, to render it invisible and non-intrusive. Yet, in the process of illustrating the so-called medicinal uses of philosophy, Kant's discourse moves along two quite different trajectories.

On the one hand, Kant refuses to think the body. He explicitly suggests the existence of a split between the mind and the body, or rather, between reason and the body. Hypochondria, for example, has "no definite seat in the body and is a creature of the imagination" (187), a creature which can be overcome through reasonable thought,

just as the physical weakness of old age can be compensated through philosophy, “whose interest in the entire final end of reason (an absolute unity) brings with it a feeling of power...a rational estimation of life's value” (185). For Kant, it is reason that gives humans a mastery over their own bodies. To live a long life, is not, he suggests, to demonstrate excessive wisdom; instead, it is to demonstrate a certain mastery over the fate of the body--to resist what Kant considers the most “humiliating sentence that can be passed on a rational being”: “You are dust and will return to dust” (179).

On the other hand, while Kant explicitly forges a connection between the principle of reason and a mastery over the body, there are cleavages in his discourse that betray the grounding oppositions of mind/body, sickness/health, mastery/submission by exposing Kant's inability to reconcile the conflict between the body and the university, which is to say, his inability to control the abyssal aspects of the principle of reason. This sub-text in Kant's discourse reveals a pressure that compels a wreckage of the spirit's capacity to unify this scission; that is, the spirit of philosophy--which is also that of the university--cannot be recovered in a strategy of disavowing the body in/of the spirit. Thus, in this essay Kant unconsciously questions and confronts the limits of reason in a way that anticipates *and enacts* a movement away from the metaphysical university.

In the first sub-section of Kant's essay, “On the Power of the Human Mind to Master Its Morbid Feelings Merely by a Firm Resolution,” Kant examines the oppositions of life/death, sickness/health implicated in man's two wishes: “to have a long life and to enjoy good health during it” (179). Kant argues that man's first wish, to live long, is

hardly rational thought at all, since man *instinctively* desires to live a long life, even in moments of ill health. Kant notes:

Take a sick man who has been lying for years in a hospital bed, suffering and indigent, and hear how often he wishes that death would come soon and deliver him from his misery. Do not believe him: he is not earnest about it. Though his reason does prompt him to wish for death, his natural instinct is to live. (179)

Implicit in this passage is Kant's division between the mind and the body, between reason which tells man he should submit and the body which incites him, instinctively, to live; however, he also suggests the presence of something other than reason that compels man to live, something that cannot be contained within the unity of the principle of reason. Similarly, in his next argument concerning man's wish to be healthy, Kant must, once again, admit that man can never *know* that he is healthy: "man" can only use judgement to ascertain this knowledge--judgement he adds, that "can err" (181). Although Kant's aim throughout this essay is to reason through to the first causes of the illnesses that plague him, here, in what might be considered his introductory remarks, Kant admits that "*causality* cannot be felt" (181).

The insufficiency of reason to supply causal relation between the appearance of sickness in and of the body and that sickness's relation to the unity that is the spirit produces a fault line, a breach, in the "foundation" of Kant's argument is further evidenced in his discussion of catarrh. Kant charts what he considers the debilitating effects of catarrh (an illness characterized by cold like symptoms, predominantly a nagging cough) on the thought processes of the metaphysical philosopher. Kant has, prior to his discussion of "catarrh," been able to isolate the first cause, and subsequent remedy, of

each ailment plaguing him. Catarrh, however, is an illness which Kant must concede he cannot cure with his reasoning powers alone. His powers of reason are, in fact, reduced to a spasmodic state by catarrh. He explains:

This pathological condition of the patient, which accompanies and impedes his thinking, in so far as thinking is holding firmly onto a concept (of the unity of ideas connected in his consciousness), produces the feeling of a spasmodic state in his organ of thought (his brain)... This feeling, as of a burden, does not really weaken his thought and reflection itself, or his memory or preceding thoughts; but when he is setting forth his thoughts (orally or in writing), the very need to guard against distraction which would interrupt the firm coherence of ideas in their temporal sequence produces an involuntary spasmodic condition of the brain, which takes the form of an inability to maintain unity of consciousness in his ideas, as one takes the place of the preceding one. (207)

Of all the ailments which could befall a person, the inability to form sequential thought and to think in terms of unified concepts is, for Kant, the most disturbing. In the context of university work, Kant's fear of a spasmodic state of thought is figured as the potential dissolution of the faculty of philosophy. Kant argues that while the university is divided into two faculties, the "lower" and the "higher," it is the lower faculty--the faculty of philosophy or pure reason--that is a unified, autonomous concept not only within the university but also in society in general. To think of a fragmentation of this faculty, this faculty which is "reason," would be to think the impossible--the disaster:

It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings;...one that, having no command to give, is free to evaluate everything and concern itself with the interest of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak and act publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this would be to the government's detriment). (*The Conflict of the Faculties* 27)

Like the lower faculty that must, in its search for truth, be free of disturbances (i.e. state interference), the mind must also, in order to think in a logical, progressive manner, be free of (bodily) distractions. Each time he sets out to write or deliver a speech, Kant explains that he must always signal a starting point and a final destination. Catarrh, however, disturbs his ability to point, or rather, orient his thoughts for the development of a logical progression, much less toward a singular destination. Instead, his thoughts become fragmented and move not towards unity, but rather, against the current of reason. For Kant, the mind must be able to perform on demand--it must be able to think a unified concept (the concept of the university, for example) on command. The free-play of ideas, the loosening of the grip of reason, is the providence of leisure time. For example, Kant suggests that while walking the scholar must resist the temptation to engage in any sustained philosophical thought, and instead strive to keep the mind from "becoming fixed on any one object" (199). Kant implicitly connects the healthy and disciplined body with reason and unity, while the sick and undisciplined body is that which is unable to fixate on any subject and hence unable to progress. As Kant states elsewhere, "moral ideas that govern man inwardly, may be made, as it were, visible in bodily manifestation (as effect of what is internal)" (*Critique of Judgement* 80). On one level, Kant is striving to overcome the physical symptoms of catarrh, symptoms which leave his mind scattered and unable to form coherent speeches, while on another, his discussion of catarrh demonstrates a resistance towards a particular understanding of philosophical thought (thought as fragmentary, non-totalizing) which threatens the beliefs of the metaphysical philosopher. In writing *The Conflict of The Faculties* Kant was unaware that his experience of catarrh

is the very figure of another construction of reason itself--a figure for the collapse of the unified concept and the fragmentation of the metaphysical university--of history and the body as constituted by and of that history.

Kant attempts to guard against this fragmentation by bringing three of his essays together in one complete text, thus attempting to sublimate fragmentation on the constative level with unity on the performative level. In his preface to *The Conflict of the Faculties* Kant states: "Under the general title *The Conflict of the Faculties* I am now issuing three essays that I wrote for different purposes and at different times. They are, however, of such a nature as to form a systematic unity and combine in one work" (21). Implicit in this prefatory remark is Kant's hope that his own arrangement of the isolated texts as one work will constitute an act of unity, that in itself the "work" will survive history as a unified concept to be upheld by future generations. Yet, as Derrida suggests in "Mochlos," Kant's vision of the university and of his own text was already fragmented--it was always already a ruin. Derrida states:

Reading him today, I perceive his assurance and his necessity much as one might admire the rigor of a plan of structure through the breaches of an uninhabitable edifice, unable to decide whether it is in ruins or simply never existed, having only ever been able to shelter the discourse of its non-accomplishment. (11)

In his desire for "absolute unity," Kant fails to recognize the blind spot in his vision of the university and in his vision of the body; that is, he continually defers the impossibility of gaining a mastery over these concepts--concepts which were fragmented from the start. Believing in the unifying spirit of philosophy which holds the university *and* the body together, Kant is unable to acknowledge that neither the university nor the

body can be contained by or within a discourse of “spirit.” Curiously enough, even in the final paragraph of *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant's *body language*--his reflection on the functionings of his own body-- betrays his argument for the unifying powers of reason, for the possibility of closure:

When I was forty years old I experienced the first attack of a *pathological condition* of the eyes (not really an ophthalmic disease), which used to recur, from time to time, at intervals of some years but now comes several times within a year. The phenomenon is that, when I am reading, a certain brightness suddenly spreads over the page, confusing and mixing up all the letters until they are completely illegible...Once when this phenomenon happened, it occurred to me to close my eyes and even hold my hand over them to keep out external light even better; and then I saw in the darkness a luminous figure outlined in phosphorous, so to speak...I should like to know whether other people have had the same experience and how we can explain this appearance. (213)

Perhaps we might understand this “luminous figure” that slips beneath Kant's closed lids as one final linguistic figuring for the unacknowledged fallout from a metaphysical discourse which privileges “spirit.”

Friedrich Nietzsche's 1862 lectures “The Future Of Our Educational Institutions,” confront this tension between the discourse of “spirit” and the wreckage of “spirit,” which Kant's text fails to explicitly acknowledge. Like Kant's study of the university, Nietzsche's lectures are also devoted to a privileging of spirit--specifically, as a desire to restore the German spirit through a re-valuation of German culture in the university. Yet, unlike Kant, Nietzsche acknowledges that his vision of a “new” future for the university (and thus for Germany) is, from the moment of its formulation, already in ruins. He is, on the one hand, in love with “school spirit” while on the other, sickened by it. This tension between Nietzsche's belief in a unifying spirit and his skepticism that such a spirit--that

such a unified concept of the university--could ever be a possibility, unfolds in the Preface and Introduction to his lectures. Nietzsche returns to spirit, expressing a wish to be “united in spirit” with those thinkers present and past who choose to reflect upon the university (8). Nietzsche figures spirit as a binding force and, using the rhetoric of a proselytizer, he works to engender a feeling of comradeship between himself, his reader, and an elite group of thinkers who are blessed with the capacity to reflect on the university:

Now, with this book in his hand, the writer seeks all those who may happen to be wandering hither and thither, impelled by feelings similar to his own. Allow yourselves to be discovered--ye lonely ones in whose existence I believe!...Ye contemplative ones who cannot, with hasty glances, turn your eyes swiftly from one surface to another!...It is you I summon! (6)

Yet, Nietzsche stipulates that he is only summoning a specific type of thinker--one who does not bring his own historical or cultural perspective to this reflection on the institution: “The third and most important stipulation is, that he should in no case be constantly bringing himself and his own ‘culture’ forward after the style of most modern men, as the correct standard and measure of all things” (5).¹ Thus, Nietzsche summons a

¹Nietzsche's desire for an “objective” reflection on the university, for a reader who still desires to reflect and is aware of the “specific character of our present barbarism and of that which distinguishes us, as the barbarians of the nineteenth century, from other barbarians,”(6) is recapitulated (almost verbatim) in Martin Heidegger's discussion of technology in the final lecture of *The Principle of Reason*(see pp.117-129). Like Nietzsche, who states this his lectures on the university are intended for “calm” readers who “have not yet drawn into the mad headlong rush of our hurry-scurrying age,” (4) Heidegger also calls for a reflection on the “atomic age” which “threatens to overpower us through the principle of rendering sufficient reasons” (123). Both Nietzsche and Heidegger express a nostalgia for a Germany of the past--one which needs to be recovered in order to restore a sense of Germany nationalism. Although I cannot here explore more extensively this connection between the two philosophers, it is important to note that both Nietzsche and Heidegger view the university as a place not only capable of but particularly

thinker who believes in an ageless, timeless, incorruptible and unified university spirit--a spirit which is, above all else, *a-historical* (5). By calling for a reflection on the university that is stripped of all context, Nietzsche implies that the university can and should exist outside of time--largely outside of memory itself. In this sense, to believe in a university spirit is to erase that spirit's material history--that is, all of the social, political, and economic forces that inscribe the university. It is to posit the possibility of objectivity and place the university in a vacuum. Out of this blinding nostalgia for an unnameable origin in which spirit was purer, stronger, more perfect comes a vision of the future of the university as a return *to* spirit, to what Nietzsche calls the "originally sublime tendencies" of the German university at its foundation.²

If Nietzsche conjures the spirit of a university past, he is nonetheless quick to relinquish his role as oracle or seer, proclaiming

I repudiate even more emphatically still the role of a prophet standing on the horizon of civilisation and pretending to predict the future of education and of scholastic organisation. I can no more project my vision through such vast periods of time than I can rely upon its accuracy when it is brought too close to an object under examination. (8)

suitably for engendering this German nationalism.

²Nietzsche's argument supports a privileging of spirit, but enervating the achievement of this spirit is his belief that the German university has an excess of "academical freedom" (133) which is responsible for a more pervasive lack of national culture, an apathy and despair among students, and the plummeting intellectual value of the university. Of the life of a student he notes: "His condition is undignified, even dreadful: he keeps between the two extremes of work at high pressure and a state of melancholy enervation. Then he becomes tired, lazy, afraid of work, fearful of everything great; and hating himself. He looks into his own breast, analyses his faculties, and finds he is only peering into hollow and chaotic vacuity"(132-133). Similar opinions about the consequences of "academical freedom" can be found in contemporary discussions of the university, including Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (see pp. 243-312).

Nietzsche, like Kant, invokes the limits of his own physical capacities in order to suggest the limits of his understanding of the future of the university. The crucial difference between Nietzsche and Kant, however, is Nietzsche's acknowledgement that the destination of the university was never clear: it was blurred from the start, or, as Derrida has since formulated, always already a ruin. Nietzsche recognizes that the future of the university is always out of sight, whether it is immediately before one's eyes or several years in the distance. No one, he argues, should attempt to describe the future of the university unless the idea already exists "in germ today, and that all that is required is the extension and development of this embryo" (10). However, Nietzsche's skepticism in regarding his own genetic metaphor, his disbelief in the possibility that any such ideal could be recovered is evident in this argument and in his suggestion that the university be "born again" in a form which better represents "the sublime tendencies" of the German university at its foundation. Nietzsche calls into question his own suggestion that such a university could ever be "born again." To be sure, he is calling for a university that embraces a university spirit of old, but he is, at the same time, signalling the impossibility of a singular definition of the university. Nietzsche articulates this impossibility: "By reviving the German spirit in the universities, they would be at once old and new, whereas now they only profess to be 'modern' or 'up-to-date'" (10). Nietzsche seems acutely aware that his idea of the "ideal" university is just that--no more than a linguistic formation. As Timothy Bahti has since formulated, the written histories of the university serve as the visible sign, the "letter on the body" of a university whose "true" history--an "other" history--is unrepresentable ("Histories of the University" 452). Thus, Nietzsche

both signifies the possibility of a unifying spirit for the university--a spirit that is teleological in nature--and forecloses on the possibility of a hermeneutic effort that can bring this depth--this body--to light. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche unreservedly states this philosophical position on spirit³:

How much truth can a spirit *bear*, how much truth can a spirit *dare*? that became for me more and more the real measure of value. Error(- belief in the ideal-) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*...Every acquisition, every step forward in knowledge is the *result* of courage, of severity towards oneself, of cleanliness with respect to oneself...I do not refute ideals, I merely draw on gloves in their presence. (34)

Nietzsche suggests, then, that it is not simply the renouncing of ideals that demonstrates a “step forward in knowledge.” Rather, it is the precautionary gestures which reveal a more acute awareness of the implications of idealistic discourse. To “draw on gloves” in the presence of ideals is to display a more critical understanding of the tension between metaphysical longings for ideals and the awareness that these longings cannot possibly be satisfied. This reflexive gesture--a gesture whose ramifications remain somewhat underarticulated in Nietzsche's lectures on the university--is reconstituted in Derrida's formulation of a “politico-academic unconscious” dimension of the university. As part of Derridean discourse on the university, this formulation not only displaces spirit but, I would suggest, also represents an alternative practice of re-membering the university.

³When Nietzsche gave his lectures, *The Future of our Educational Institutions*, he was twenty-eight. At this time he was very much under the influence of Hegel, whose idealism he would later critique. I cite *Ecce Homo* because it is here that Nietzsche articulates more clearly the tension between his conscious resistance to metaphysics and his perpetual slippage back into metaphysics--a tension that is, though unarticulated, evident in his early lectures on the university.

To re-member the university through the “politico-academic unconscious” is to recall it from memory, but this remembering is a dismembering, a re-collection of the whole, unified university as evidenced by fragments of that whole made available to conscious memory. These fragments, then, are re-cast and re-assembled into a construction which merely represents a “university”. In “Canons and Metonymies” Derrida simultaneously offers a vision of this unconscious as a space of non-totalizing if potentially complete memory and historicizes the very notion that the unconscious can act as a fully containing, unifying entity from which nothing escapes. Thus, Derrida suggests that (un)certain elements, traces, can never be recovered in their entirety:

There is a political unconscious no doubt, and also a politico-academic unconscious--we should take them into account, so as to analyze, so as to act--but there are ashes also: of oblivion, of total destruction, whose “remains” in any case do not stay with us forever... This incineration, this finitude of memory corresponds to a possibility so radical that the very concept of finitude (already theological) is in danger of being irrelevant.
(198)

Derrida identifies three conditions in the process of re-membering the university: the political unconscious, the politico-academic unconscious, and the ashes, the wreckage or fall out of the operation of binary oppositions. For Derrida, the “politico-academic unconscious” is, presumably, the social-political conditions that make some disciplines, fields, departments, and faculties rich and others poor. More specifically, it is the often forgotten, repressed historical context that conditions the production of knowledge by making certain kinds of knowledge possible at specific historical moments. Derridean deconstruction is not averse to such historicization of the university as a means of initiating a thinking and questioning of its past, present and future. But such a re-

membering of the university's past or "unconscious" is not all that is necessary. Derrida suggests that there are also trace-effects, ashes, supplements, ruinations, teratologies, that also need thinking about--but which are not available to knowledge in the traditional, oculo-centric, sense of the term. If this (un)certain element must be thought as a constituent of the body of the university, then the ideal of a body that was or is once whole reveals its continuity with nostalgia--that is, the concept of an unconscious from which all is potentially obtainable is a fiction constructed from a desire for unity. And yet, Derrida sees the politico-academic unconscious as a construct that has materialized a certain figure of the university. Although Derrida points to that which escapes the confines of the totalizing entity figured as the politico-academic unconscious, he also suggests that this vision of the university has produced--has embodied--particular discursive formations of the activity or energy for which "university" becomes a signifier. Thus, for Derrida, the unconscious is a boundary concept, which, in his reading differs from a psychoanalytic understanding of memory. Derrida's formulation of the academic unconscious does not constitute the unconscious as a space which contains the repressed university history or "spirituality" that can be recovered or, somehow revisited. In fact, Derrida states that he cannot adopt the optimistic belief that "what was repressed is stored in the unconscious of a culture whose memory never loses a thing" (198). To re-think an academic unconscious, is, for Derrida, not to posit yet another binary opposition--unconscious/conscious; rather, it is to begin to think a quite different space which, on the one hand, stores the "spiritual material" of the university (its history, traditions, memories) while, on the other, does not allow for the reification of this material into a unified,

originary discourse of spirit that can be recovered. By acknowledging the impossibility of recovering a university spirit, whose origin and constitution is unknowable, Derrida's formulation of the "politico-academic unconscious" presents an alternative means of thinking about both the history and the future of the university--the history that is the future of the university.⁴ Thus, the academic unconscious takes spirit *into account* without rendering the university *accountable to spirit*. It represents the movement from a privileging of the spiritual mission of the university, to a desire to think both the spirit and the body--a "respiration" of the university which is at once the infusion of spiritual breath, and the requisite inhaling and exhaling which gives the body--the university body--life.

⁴Contemporary discussions of the university continue to suggest a return to a university spirit--to a time when the university possessed a higher meaning. These discussions always presuppose not only that there is an original university spirit (and its constitution can be known), but that it can be recovered, this recovery being the only chance at saving a university which is divested of its "original" meaning. In a recent essay "Hot-Button Politics on Campus," Peter C. Emberley suggests that Canadian universities are in danger of losing their status as places where the disinterested pursuit of truth still exists. Emberley's essay, however, is framed by two telling statements which reveal the irony inherent in his argument that the Canadian university is drifting from its "true" meaning. The essay opens with an epigraph from Matthew Arnold--"No one ought to meddle with the universities who does not know them and love them well"--and ends with a warning about the national consequences of a university that cannot compete, culturally, on the world market: "If this adventure is closed down in our country, Canadians risk regressing to a self-image as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' instead of equal participants in the ongoing renewal of world culture" (*Globe and Mail* 7/27/96). Emberley's argument here is no different from that of Nietzsche who, on the one hand, argued that the university must exist independently of the state and be guarded by those who were devoted to reflection upon the university, while, on the other, maintained that the German university is in fact responsible for fostering German nationality. What is the university for if it cannot restore German culture? If Emberley "knew" the university, he would realize that he is calling for a return to the same spirit that Nietzsche wanted to return to, and that Nietzsche, unlike Emberley, recognized as an impossible "return."

Derrida introduces the possibility of “respiring” the university in a 1985 interview with Peggy Kamuf. He responds to a question regarding deconstruction's double gesture of “overturning and displacing” by suggesting how this double gesture might be invoked not only as a strategy for re-thinking the university, but also as an “affirmation” of the university itself⁵. He explains:

Personally I believe--I *believe*--that we have to run the risk of raising even the questions that are most threatening for the university, for the institution, for the solidity of the academic institution, for the respiration of the university. (“Deconstruction in America” 7).

But where and how, exactly, does the word “respiration”--a word with so many metaphysical, spiritual and idealistic associations--figure in a Derridean discourse on the university? Recognizing the danger of imposing a meaning on Derrida's use of the word “respiration” --a meaning, moreover, toward which he might be resistant--I want to propose that the word “respiration” be interpreted not as the spiritual vapour which animates an otherwise lifeless body, but rather, as the basic bodily function of breathing. The privileging of a discourse of spirit in the university is the assumption that there is only one breath and that that singular and perfect breath can be held. But to “respire” the

⁵Derrida's use of the word “affirmation” recalls the title of Heidegger's *Rectorship Address*--“The self-affirmation of the German University.” In *Of Spirit* Derrida explores the implications of this title, noting, for example: “[E]very word of the title is, as we said, steeped in the exalting celebration of this spirit...the force of its imprint marks the self-affirmation, signing in the *same stroke* the being-German of the people and of their world, that is, its university as will to know and will to essence. It remains to confirm that the same spiritual imprint is inscribed in the academic organization, in the legislation of faculties and departments, in the community of masters and pupils. (38) Derrida's invocation of the word “affirmation” is at once a self-reflexive gesture indicating his awareness of the weight of such totalizing pronouncements, and a cue to read his “affirmation” as a departure from a Heideggerian affirmation of spirit.

university in this Derridean sense is to believe in the polluted breath--the breath which remains in the lungs long enough to sustain life, but whose composition is in continual flux. The "respiration of the university" then, is not a university restoration resulting from an inhalation of spirit--a supplementary breath. Instead, it is a rejuvenation based on the understanding that university life continues because of the process of inhalation and exhalation--a process in which air always escapes. Like Derrida's vision of the academic unconscious, the "respiration of the university" represents a displacement of spirit and an understanding of the university as a polluted and fragmented concept--as a body that is, far from an organic whole, always and already reconstructed from the fragments of its own memory. It is a body that lives through the inhalation of breath that is always and already supplemented.

For Derrida, the university *is* the unity of the concept in flux. The Derridean university project deconstructs the university *as concept* by questioning the binary oppositions of university inside and outside, host and parasite, literature and theory, spirit and body, thereby respirating and re-membering the university body. As Derrida suggests in "Mochlos," "There may be no possible inside to the university, and no internal coherence to its concept" (12). Derrida, of course, is not suggesting that there is no university, but rather that there is no inside, that what the university *is* is the subject of an ongoing negotiation and re-construction. The interrogation and subsequent collapse of the opposition inside/outside, both with direct and indirect reference to the university, can be traced through Derrida's essays "Plato's Pharmacy," "Some Statements about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms," and J.Hillis Miller's

“The Critic as Host.” By looking at these texts as representative of the Derridean understanding of the university, it is possible to chart the definitive movement from the conceptualization of the unified, impenetrable, autonomous university spirit, as envisioned by Kant, for example, to an always already fragmented, supplementary, monstrous and parasitized university body.

In “Plato’s Pharmacy,” Derrida deconstructs the inside/outside opposition through a rigorous re-thinking of the demonization of writing as a supplement to memory in Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Derrida’s discussion of Plato and the *Pharmakon* is, I will suggest, vital to an understanding of how the constitution of superficial boundaries between the university inside and outside becomes a regulating and exclusionary measure, that is, a policing and upholding of one particular vision of the university--of the inside. The ritual of the *Pharmakon*, I will argue, is enacted in the 1992 “Cambridge Affair”--an intellectual debate in which British intellectuals argued over whether Derrida should be awarded an honorary degree (and thus allowed entrance to the inside) or rejected (and thus, cast over the lofty and protecting Cambridge walls).

Socrates, having concluded his discussions with Phaedrus on the immortality of the soul and the nature of love, engages in one final dialogue on the “inferiority of the written to the spoken word” (95). The spoken word--the inscription on “the soul of the hearer,” must, Socrates admonishes, be privileged over the written word--the inscription on the tablet-- which conveys an ignorance and defiance of the distinctions between “dream and waking reality,” “right and wrong, good and evil” (278). The written word--the word of non-truth and non-knowledge--must not infect the polis. For Derrida, Plato’s resistance to

the written word exposes a (mis)conception of the world as constituted by identifiable and solidified oppositions:

Plato thinks of writing, and tries to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of *opposition* as such. In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside etc.) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply external to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition. (*Dissemination* 103)

This distinction between inside and outside was emphasized by the ritual of the *pharmakos*--the physical enactment of the tension between this binary opposition. The ritual of the *pharmakos* consisted of a cathecting of evil onto one subject--the scapegoat or representative--who would then be tossed out of the body proper of the city--that is, over the city walls--thus purifying the inside through their own sacrifice to the outside (*Dissemination* 103). But this ritual purification, and completion, of the inside is not limited to Plato's dialogues--it serves a constitutive function in the formation of the interior of the university. A striking example of this ritual construction is the 1992 Cambridge Affair.

In 1992, the ritual of the *pharmakos* was enacted when British intellectuals fought to prevent Derrida from receiving an honorary degree from Cambridge--a battle that was waged in the name of purification and preservation. In May of that year, letters poured into British newspapers from academics around the world, articulating the reasons why Derrida was undeserving of an honorary degree from Cambridge. Derrida became the scape-goat who was to be sacrificed for perceived challenges to philosophical and institutional thought since the 1960s. By rejecting Derrida, Cambridge would then

somehow be free of all nihilism and irrationality, and thus restored to a place of truth, reason and scholarship. In a letter to the *Times*, nineteen academics signed their names in support of a vote against Derrida. Charging him with “voluminous writings,” “sphere tricks,” “gimmicks” and “elaborate jokes” they describe Derrida as a kind of unsavory magician. Yet for them, he is a magician who fails to incite wonder and curiosity in the minds of his audience. Instead, he confuses, upsets, and disturbs the atmosphere of the circus. The conclusion of this more recent enactment of the *pharmakon* reads as follows:

Many have been willing to give M. Derrida the benefit of the doubt, insisting that language of such depth and difficulty of interpretation must hide deep and subtle thoughts indeed. When the effort is made to penetrate it, however, it becomes clear, to us at least, that, where coherent assertions are being made at all, these are either false or trivial. Academic status based on what seems to us to be little more than semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, truth, and scholarship is not, we submit, sufficient grounds for the awarding of an honorary degree in a distinguished university. (“Honoris Causa” 421)

Reflecting on the “Cambridge Affair” Derrida points out that it was not his work specifically that British intellectuals found so unworthy, but rather, his work as representative of a philosophical movement which they found intolerable-- “deconstruction.” Derrida explains:

[I]t is impossible here to single out and to analyze in detail all of the distorting and malicious presentations of my work (or similar work, because were it merely a question of myself alone, none of this would have unfolded in such spectacular fashion) (“Honoris Causa” 402).

Yet, as Derrida argues in “Plato's Pharmacy,” the possibility that the *pharmakos* could purify the inside by evicting one of its members into the outside is contingent on the very membership of the scapegoat, that is, on its being in the inside in the first place. Like the

written word, Derrida is formulated as the *pharmakon*--that which is constituted as the evil and the outside, the supplement that disturbs and destroys an ideal inside. But just as the expulsion of writing assumes its *a priori* existence within speech, Derrida must, in some way, have already been "inside" "Cambridge" in order for his rejection to have any purificatory function (Culler 193). In *Of Grammatology* Derrida argues that Plato dreams of a memory that needs no supplement, but as Derrida asserts elsewhere, "[T]here has never been anything but supplements (159), Plato's ideal memory was always already supplemented--it has always depended on mnemonic cues--it has always needed signs" (*Dissemination* 109). Thus, the perceived health of the inside depends on the expulsion of that which has always been a part of its own body, of that which was cultivated within its walls:

The city's body *proper* thus reconstitutes its unity, closes around the security of its inner courts, gives back to itself the word that links it with itself within the confines of the agora, by violently excluding from its territory the representative of an external threat or aggression. Yet the representative of the outside is nonetheless *constituted*, regularly granted, its place by the community, chosen, kept, fed, etc., in the very heart of the inside. These parasites were as a matter of course domesticated by the living organism that housed them at its expense. (*Dissemination* 103)

The city's "body proper," then, possesses only an illusory unification, a unity grounded in a definition of normalcy which is always accountable to an Other--parasitism, writing, outside, evil, Derrida. In the end, Cambridge awarded Derrida the honorary degree, thus indicating an awareness--however marginal--of the impossible boundaries they were guarding. Derrida proclaims:

Cambridge didn't try to conceal the spectacle of conflict, nor the gestures of rejection or censorship which shook its august body, and finally at the

end of the debate and a vote that were as democratic as could be, chose not to close its doors on what is coming. (418)

In "The Critic as Host," J.Hillis Miller further fractures the host/parasite, theory/literature opposition through an etymological breakdown of each term in its formulation, thereby creating a breach which harbours the chance for a re-figuring of this opposition. Within the words "parasite" and "host" are a series of associations which, as Miller points out, have been used to describe the relationship of theory to literature--a relationship which is contingent on homogeneous understandings of each term. As Miller explains, the word "parasitical" always tends to suggest an image of the host as the "obvious or univocal reading, as the mighty oak, rooted in the solid ground, endangered by the insidious twining around it of deconstructive ivy" (218). The "host" is the strong, unified body under attack, from a weaker, but resourceful enemy. Once "inside" this parasite feeds off of its host, killing it in the process, just as "criticism is often said to kill literature" (217).

A recent intellectual debate, stemming from the publication of physicist Alan Sokal's "phony" essay "Transgressing the Boundaries," in a journal of cultural studies, *Social Text*, has, on the one hand, forced a re-thinking of the host/parasite opposition, while on the other, encouraged an already pervasive belief in the parasitical relationship of theory to the university. Sokal submitted what he calls a "parody" of postmodernism to the editors of *Social Text* in order to prove the intellectual laziness of those scholars working in critical theory. In a letter revealing his reasons for submitting the essay, Sokal explains:

In the end, I resorted to parody for a simple pragmatic reason. The targets of my critique have by now become a self-perpetuating academic subculture that typically ignores (or disdains) reasoned criticism from the outside. In such a situation, a more direct demonstration of the subculture's intellectual standards was required. But how can one show that the emperor has no clothes? Satire is by far the best weapon; and the blow that can't be brushed off is the one that's self-inflicted. I offered the *Social Text* editors an opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual rigor. Did they meet the test? I don't think so. (*Linguafranca* 64)

Such a feat was all that was necessary to confirm the feelings of anti-theory academicians throughout North America. While some scholars might have been asking themselves such vitally important questions as “But what does Sokal mean when he suggests an ‘inside’ that ignores reasoned criticism from the outside?” and “Does the intention behind the essay matter--is it ‘phony’ simply because Sokal identifies as his intentionality the production of a parasite of parasitical discourse?” Others, such as Canadian journalist Robert Fulford, were celebrating what they perceived to be a harbinger of the end of “postmodernism”--“the most appalling academic movement of this period.” In a recent article in Toronto's *Globe and Mail* entitled “The Post-modern hoax offers a glimmer of hope,” Fulford reveals his opinion of theory in the university:

Wherever they go the propogators of critical theory distort education. Literature becomes a game played in a maze: self-enclosed, self-justifying and meaningless to anyone who has not learned the code...It's as if we hired arsonists to work on the staff of the fire department.
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Implicit in Fulford's statement is his belief in an original, uncontaminated, unified and perfect university--a university corrupted by “propogators of critical theory.” Theory is figured as the parasite that is working against its benevolent university host in an effort to destroy it. Fulford's dangerous comparison of critical theorists in the university to

arsonists on the staff of the fire department suggests an understanding of the university as a place in which all academic work is accountable to the public, that is, must be done in service to the public. Arsonists on the staff of the fire department would not be in service to the public, but, much rather, responsible for acting in direct opposition to the well-being and safety of the public, to the declared "mission" of the fire department. Fulford's analogy exposes his contention that while some academic thought is productive and useful, other work is useless, parasitical, counter-productive and, above all, destructive. For Sokal and Fulford, critical theorists disturb what they believe are the necessary, visible boundaries between university inside/outside, parasite/host. But, one of the points that Sokal's and Fulford's respective arguments attempt to preclude is the indeterminacy at the origin of an oppositional relationship between "host" and "parasite." Sokal's use of the word "parody," for example, presumes the existence of a definitive demarcation of parasitism; that is, it naturalizes the ground for a process of ridiculing derived from feeding upon another subject or text. Yet, the boundary between Sokal's "parody" and the subject of that parasitic attack remains unclear. In fact, the academic acceptability of Sokal's "parasitic" discourse--its very publishability--underscores the "parasitic" nature of all publishing conventions, as well as all conventions of reading, of understanding, of thought--that work is readable, always already understandable, in the absence of *both* its author's conscious and unconscious intentions--that the "work" a text performs is, in fact, radically other than the "consciousness" that purportedly produces the text as readable.⁶

⁶I am indebted to Will McConnell for this formulation.

In the final analysis, Sokal's "parody" signifies not a rigid distinction between healthy and destructive thought, truth and error in knowledge, host and parasite, but, rather, the disruption of the threshold between these supposedly separate entities.

Miller suggests that perhaps metaphysics is the parasite that has invaded Western culture for millenia, a parasite historically perpetuating, recreating, itself in privileged texts and languages in and as generations of parody (222). Such a reading would place Sokal as the subject of a parody by *Social Text*. By re-thinking the etymological roots of the word "parasite," Miller suggests that perhaps these distinctions are always blurred--there never was a distinction between parasite and host and if the relationship of parasite and host does exist, the boundary between the two is indeterminable:

[A] thing in "para" is not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and outside. It is also the boundary itself, the screen which is a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside. It confuses them with one another allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them and joining them. It also forms an ambiguous transition between one and the other. (219)

Miller concludes by suggesting that the place that we all inhabit is an "inbetween zone," a place of host and parasite, neither inside nor outside (231), and I would add, both the parodied and the parodist. Yet, to get to this place conceptually, Miller calls for a re-examination of other binary oppositions such as sickness and health, and the positing of nihilism as that which is, like the parasite, always the threatening outside, the invader:

Nihilism is somehow inherent in the relation of parasite to host. Inherent also is the imagery of sickness and health. Health for the parasite, food and the right environment, may be illness, even mortal illness, for the host. On the other hand, there are innumerable cases, in the proliferation of life forms, where the presence of a parasite is absolutely necessary to the health of its host. Moreover, if nihilism is the "heal-less" as such, a wound which

may not be closed, an attempt to understand that fact might be a condition of health. (227-228)

Derrida resumes the notion that health might really be sickness and parasitism a desired state of being in “Some Statements and Truisms about neo-logisms, newisms, postisms, parasitisms, and other small seismisms,” an essay in which he discusses critical theory as the primary example of what he calls the teratological nature of all things.

At a 1987 colloquium at Irvine in Southern California, entitled “The States of ‘theory’,” Derrida substitutes the word “jetty” for “theory” and begins a discussion of the theoretical monsters within the university, by which he means, theory which is always already parasitized, contaminated and mutated. Derrida uses the word “jetty”--a derivative of the french verb “jeter” meaning to throw, to toss out, throw out--to suggest the non-definable, non-static, nature of theory, theory which is always circulating somewhere in the *milieu*. He explains:

I will refer from now on to the force of that *movement* which is not yet *subject*, *project*, or *object*, not even rejection, but in which takes place any production and any determination, which finds its possibility in the jetty--whether that production or determination be related to the subject, the object, the project, or the rejection. (65)

Theory, Derrida asserts, cannot be organized into a taxonomic table, or rather, a “botanical table”--a table that is so much a part of university practices--because this is to deny the unclassifiable nature of theory itself, it is to place it in rigid categories of meaning beyond which it has already spread. Derrida concedes that terms such as “post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and New Criticism” are not “empty” or “meaningless,” but

he emphasizes that the most provocative “theories” are often those which embody theories which are “in theory” their ideological opposites:

[E]ach *species* in the table constitutes its own identity only by incorporating other identities--by contamination, parasitism, grafts, organ transplants, incorporation,...And you can imagine to what kinds of monsters these combinatory operations must give birth, considering the fact that theories incorporate opposing theorems, which have themselves incorporated other ones. (66, 67)

The incorporation of other theories to create news ones, is, Derrida explains, so normalized within academia that these teratological tendencies--these institutional monsters--are no longer recognized as monstrosities, and instead are serialized as unified, uncontested theories born out of a university of similar origins. Teratology is normalized and, hence, unrecognizable, *meconnue* (67). Derrida calls for re-thinking of contamination, parasitism and monstrosity. Do these states represent an unhealthy or abnormal body, an infected and disfigured university body? Or, are these states not precisely what constitutes homeostasis for the university and critical theory within the university? Derrida suggests an alternate em-bodiment for practices of knowledge production:

[I]nstead of giving in to normalizing and legitimating representations which, identify, recognize, and reduce everything too quickly, why not rather be interested in "theoretical" monsters, in the monstrosities which announce themselves in theory, in the monsters who, before hand, outdate and make comical all classifications or rhythms such as: after New Criticism comes an “ism” and then a “*postism*,” and then again another “ism,” and today still another “ism,” etc. (79)

Placing specific words, such as “theory”, “university” or “body,” in quotation marks draws attention to the “necessary general contamination, of the transplants and irreducible

parasitism” inherent in these seemingly unified concepts (78). The idea of the university need not be formed by excluding other systems of research and teaching(80), but rather, through the acceptance of transplants, exchanges of ideas and the perpetual shifting in the conceptualization of its own body. After all, always already a collection of body parts--a piecing together of prosthetic devices--the university was never an originary whole. To think, then, of the university as a monstrosity is to relinquish the idea that there is one truth, one origin, one “normal” body or idea of the university. It is a certain perception of the body--that is, an acceptance of the body of the university as disparate parts drawn but not necessarily bound together. Yet, the very possibility of this transplanting, this giving up and throwing out of body parts into the *milieu*, is dependent on a particular view of the university body--thus, productive of a specific body image.

“Where have you come from...and where are you going?”...echoes of *Phaedrus*. Perhaps now is the time, merely an other time--now that I have pieced together, dismantled, refigured and transplanted the organs from so many separate bodies, into a “new” body--to ask directly, and without embarrassment, “What is the naked state of the modern university?” or, as Timothy Bahti questions in “The Injured University,” “How healthy is the modern university?” (68) To ask after the body of the university is to remember Derrida's question in “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils,” “What can the university's body see or not see of its own destination...?” (5).

Through this corporeal restructuring I am attempting to suggest that the university's body as a "body" is always changing shape. By interrogating the binary oppositions which continue to inscribe the university's body--inside/outside, parasite/host, monstrosity/normality, theory/against theory--these texts advocate (and thus demonstrate) a new perception of the university body, that is, a new self-image. This Derridean university "body," I will suggest, can perhaps be better understood by inquiring into the explorations of some other "philosophical bodies," discussions which, while not explicitly related to the university, are central to an understanding of the Derridean university project. More specifically, by reading this university body--this body that is neither the outside nor the inside, but always the boundary, the dissepiment, between the two--through the "body" as figured by Julia Kristeva, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and John Caputo, among other recent writers, I want to suggest that the university body, as envisioned by Derrida, is not only supplementary, but also dejected and consumable.

The Dejected University

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay On Abjection*, Julia Kristeva defines abjection as that which "lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game" (2); it is "what disturbs identity, system,..the in-between, the composite" (4); it is, above all, ambiguity (9). The abject is the material that the body rejects in order to distinguish itself as a body that is clean, ordered and controlled--a body that moves amongst other similarly defined bodies. Yet, abjection allows for the development of a sense of a bodily identity not through the loathing, expulsion and separation of that which

is an “other,” but, rather, through that which is always already a part of the body, i.e., vomit, excrement and other bodily “waste.” In this sense, abjection is akin to the concept of the *pharmakos*, a link which Kristeva forges in her discussion of Oedipus the King. Oedipus, she explains, figures as both abjection and a *pharmakos*, “a scapegoat who, having been ejected, allows the city to be freed from defilement” (84). To read Kristeva's discussion of Oedipus alongside Derrida's “Plato's Pharmacy” would undoubtedly prove useful here, yet I must pass up this provocative connection in order to explore what seems to me a more revealing link to Derrida's understanding of the university: Kristeva's discussion of the deject.

For Kristeva, the deject--“the one by whom the abject exists”--recognizes that his identity is always provisional and that what seemingly constitutes the outside of the body is always constitutive of the inside. Consequently, the deject sees pieces of himself in fragments around him, and at the same time that he understands these abjections, and “includes himself among them,” realizes that his identity is always situational. Kristeva explains:

Instead of sounding himself as to his “being,” he does so concerning his place: “*Where* am I?” instead of “*Who* am I?” For that space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one*, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic. A deviser of territories, languages, works, the *deject* never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines--for they are constituted of a non-object, the abject--constantly question the solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a *stray*. (8)

The deject, then, unable to view his body as a solid, autonomous concept, must engage in an unending project of reconstruction--while compelled by it, he must “throw down” the

possibility of a fixed identity. Kristeva's use of "deject," as that which "cast[s] down, throw[s] down," is located in the same category of meaning as "jetty," the word used by Derrida in "Some statements..." There, of course, Derrida invokes the word "jetty" to figure theory as that which is "thrown" into the *milieu*--the action in which the possibility of meaning occurs. Yet, while *jeter* is a kind of throwing, *deject-tion* is a very specific kind of throwing down: the casting down of spirit. In this sense, the deject is not only cognizant of his fractured identity, but he is also lowspirited--dispirited even. The Derridean university then, as a figure of the deject, is *dejected* in the most literal sense of the word. Suspicious of a unifying, originary, university spirit--a "school spirit"--the dejected university casts off spirit and other metaphysical discourses which lay their claims upon it. This casting off of spirit--this dejection--however, is not a state of despair, meaninglessness or isolation. Rather, it is in the active throwing off of spirit that the freedom that preserves the future of the university is discovered. To better envision the dejected university, it might be helpful to look to the French understanding of the word "dejected"--in which it possesses more proactive and positive associations.

As a derivative of the verb *abattre*, meaning "to pull down, demolish; fell; slaughter; overthrow," the French form of the word "dejected" (*abbattu*) resembles more closely the Derridean gesture of "respiring" the university through the "pulling down" or displacing of totalizing definitions of the university. Thus, the dejected university not only "strays" from totalizing definitions of its body, thereby engaging in a process of constant re-evaluation of its body, but also understands its own dejection as a state of self-reflexivity--of awareness. By casting down spirit, the dejected university collapses the

Cartesian tradition's relegation of the body to a secondary phenomena in the vision of the ideal. The dejected university does not believe that its consciousness, its unity, its identity, is located in a Cartesian formulation of the soul, a formulation that relegates its body--the "material" garment of its flesh--to the unthought, the unthinkable. Yet, despite this dispiritedness, it would not be wise to underestimate the impact that this belief in the immortality of the soul has had on the university. Before moving on to a discussion of the consumable university--the university as "flesh" in Merleau-Ponty's sense--I think it is necessary to recall the influential lines of a text which declared the neglect of flesh a condition of respiration, of resurrection: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (*Corinthians* 15. 44); "[T]here should be no schism in the body" (12, 15); "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (15, 50). This vision of flesh as the carapace for the spirit manifests itself in the form of a resistance to the idea of a university that is resurrected not through the immortality of its soul, but through the ashes--the fragments--of its own flesh.

The Consumable University

"On such flesh, Spirit would choke"

-- John Caputo *Against Ethics*, 200

In *Desire in Language* Julia Kristeva proclaims:

Ethics used to be a coercive, customary manner of ensuring the cohesiveness of a particular group through the repetition of code. Now, however, the issue of ethics crops up whenever a code...must be shattered in order to give way to the free play of negativity, need, desire, pleasure

and *jouissance*, before being put together again, although temporarily and with full knowledge of what is involved. (25)

Before beginning a discussion of the consumable university--of the university as *flesh*--a cursory discussion of the question of ethics must, as Kristeva indicates, "crop" up. By ethics, I am suggesting the responsibility towards one's own body and to the bodies of others--but this produces a body in which one's own body is, while distinguishable from the other, understood in relation to other bodies. In this sense, ethics is an understanding of one's body among, and in contact, with other bodies in society, that is, as part of the social body. Derrida's questioning of the possibility of mastery over the concept of the university is analagous with examinations of the historical and ethical disciplining of the body. In "Canons and Metonymies," Derrida reflects on Kant's desire for control and mastery over the "conflict" within the university (and as I have suggested, within his own body). He explains: "We can no longer master (to do so was doubtless never possible) or even *think* of mastering those forms of opposition, at once 'conflicts' and 'war,' with the concepts, boundaries and criteria once available to us" (202). For Derrida, to *think* mastery over the concept of the university--over the body--is to answer *to* the call of reason, that is, to believe that thought can think the totality of either one of these concepts, that reasoning can bring these concepts to light. In "On the Genealogy of Ethics," Michel Foucault traces a genealogy of ethics from antiquity to contemporary society in which he points to a link between the disciplined body and the tyranny of reason, that is, the imperative to be a rational being:

[I]n the classical perspective, to be master of oneself meant, first taking into account only oneself and not the other, because to be master of oneself meant that you were able to rule others. So the mastery of oneself was directly related to a dissymmetrical relation to others. You should be master of yourself in a sense of activity, dissymetry, and reciprocity. Later on...mastery of oneself is something which is not primarily related to power over others: you have to be master of yourself not only to rule others...but you have to be master of yourself because you are a rational being. And in this mastery of yourself, you are related to other people, who are also masters of themselves. (357; 358)

In this sense, the principle of reason is also the “principle of mastery.” Thus, with Derrida's interrogation of the principle of reason there must be an analagous re-thinking of the university body, of a university ethics. Using John Caputo's argument in *Against Ethics* for an ethics of obligation, I want to posit, briefly, the need for a new university ethics, one which is not represented in any university mission statement, or course calendar: an ethics of *flesh*, the un-principle.

In *Against Ethics*, John Caputo suggests that the philosophical body from Plato onwards is an “active, athletic, healthy, erect, white male body, sexually able and unambiguously gendered, well-born, well-bred, and well buried..*le corps propre*” (italics mine 194). This philosophical body is regulated and disciplined by its own disembodiment, that is, the failure to think its body. This body represses the flesh while privileging spirit. Caputo notes: “Philosophical bodies by and large seem not to eat; or their meals are taken in private and go largely unnoticed by the ontotheo-logicians, who are, on the whole, taken up with thinking higher humanisms” (197). Caputo is suspicious of an ethics that views the body as a pristine, self-contained entity, that never eats or gets sick, and is certainly never eaten. Nietzsche's statement that knowledge is a certain

“cleanliness with respect to oneself,” adopts a re-newed importance when read in the context of Caputo's argument. On the one hand, Nietzsche suggests the need for a rigorous disciplining of the body, of a "cleanliness" that is linked to a higher level of intellectual thought. On the other, Nietzsche, signals the necessity for a certain honesty towards oneself--a care of the self. In this sense, “cleanliness” is a suspicion, a wariness of such totalizing discourses of spirit. The philosophical body, Caputo argues, has demonstrated an unwillingness to acknowledge the existence of something other than spirit--the existence of a body. Spirit is the unified, powerful, incorruptible force that while it consumes, is never consumed. He explains: “Spirit feasts on the flesh of others while remaining itself inedible...Flesh fills metaphysics with anxiety and makes the *Aufhebung* choke, inhibiting the breathing of Spirit” (200).

If metaphysics is a philosophy of “pure eating,” that is, a consumption without the possibility of being consumed (199), then flesh, Caputo argues, is that which recognizes that it not only consumes but is consumed. Flesh is a “vulnerable, dividable, undecidable, intransitive, un-principle. It is not a principle of unity but the un-principle which sees to it that unity is transient or impossible” (201). For Caputo, it is Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body that, while still too “proper” for Caputo, signals a re-newed desire to think the body. As Mark Taylor points out in *Altarity*, “For Merleau-Ponty human existence is *carnal*” (69). The body--that which is neither subject, nor object, but rather, a “gaping wound,” a “dehiscence,” a “third genre or gender, the ‘*milieu*’” (Taylor 70)--is not merely the material by which we define our existence, but rather, that which is our existence. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty states: “We must

not think the flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit--for then it would be the union of contradictories--but we must think it...as an element, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being (147;193). Flesh, like the abject, prevents the solification of a unified identity. By throwing the subject back upon itself, flesh forces a re-examination of the body--of the constitution and definition of the body. Like illness, which, as Julien S. Murphy argues in *The Constructed Body: AIDS, Reproductive Technology, and Ethics*, "throws us back upon our bodies, which we can no longer assume will be there for us," (77) flesh incites a self-reflexivity which disturbs Spirit. To think of our bodies as flesh is to think of them as that which will be parasitized, infected, and eaten. In *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Peter Sloterdijk argues that the contemporary age is one in which a "latently paranoid society" engages in "somatic espionage," upon the body. He notes:

Sickness necessarily appears as an invasion, and it is self-evident that the only way to deal with it is polemically, defensively, aggressively--not integratedly or comprehensively. The idea that a sickness--like any hostility--could also be an original and in a certain sense, "true" self-expression of the "subject" is already excluded by modern medicine's approach. (345)

Caputo argues that an ethics of the flesh systematically sides with "disastrous, disfigured, ill formed, ill fated, star crossed, damaged bodies" (194). With a Derridean discourse of the university in mind, I would add that this ethics of flesh also incorporates monstrosities.

The path that began with Kant and the metaphysical university, has now made a turn towards a body--towards a university em-bodiment. To think of the university as flesh--as consumable--is to think of the university body in a way that Kant found unbearable. Reminding his readers of their own mortality and consumability, Caputo

repeats the words that are, for Kant, an insult to rationality: "*Memento homo pulvis es: remember, man--and woman, too--that thou art flesh which turns to dust..*"(199). For the metaphysical university, these words represent the collapse of the strong, pure and self-perpetuating university spirit. For Caputo, these words speak a truth of the body. They also, I would argue, herald a new vision for the university. The embodied university would hear these words and think not of the collapse of the "institution." Instead, it would think of its always already contaminated, parasitized, monstrous, dejected, consumable body and its multiple and irreducible *reasons for being*.

Conclusions

"Have I said how one must not speak, today, of the university? Or have I rather spoken as one should not do today, within the university?" ("The Principle Of Reason" 20). These, of course, are Derrida's concluding words as he prepares to leave his Cornell audience. Now, as I conclude this thesis, I suppose that I too must ask how I have spoken of the university. By speaking of the university in the space of this thesis, I have tried to "avoid" speaking definitively, authoritatively, or conclusively of the university. Rather, I have, with the same desire as Derrida, wanted only to initiate a discussion which will continue to challenge and question specific ways of speaking and thinking about the university. First, by tracing Derrida's essay, I hope to have demonstrated how Derridean discourse on the university is both *theoretically and practically* a provocative means of (re)thinking the university. Through my exploration of Derrida's reflections and subsequent questioning of the history of the principle of reason, I have realized that the "modern" university can only guard what is most valuable to it--the opening toward its future--through a rigorous questioning of the principle of reason, that is, both the principle's past and its current demand to be rendered.

Second, by proposing a new university em-bodiment--the university in-carnate--based on this Derridean university discourse, I hope to have demonstrated the limitations inherent in metaphysical understandings of the university--limitations which will hinder the university as it moves into the next century. Informed by history, philosophy and current political and social issues, Derridean discourse on the university is representative of the university in-carnate. It is a parasitized, contaminated, gaping, re-constructed, monstrous body and hence, says so much more

about the possibilities for the university than a discourse of spirit--a discourse that assumes a knowledge of the university and thus forecloses on its future.

Finally, this thesis raised many questions which, like Derrida, I was unable to address within the temporal and spatial limits of my project. The most insistent question, however, is how to increase access and exposure not only to Derridean university discourse, but to other potentially valuable historical, political and social discourses on the university? How can these texts be incorporated into the university curricula? I envision a course on the university taught within the university walls, it might even be called "The University in the Eyes of its Pupils." This course would consist of a study of cultural, historical, philosophical and political thought on the university. Its aim would not be a synthesis of any of these discourses, but much rather, a chance to question and discuss with other students how each of these discourses informs, determines, and contributes to the past, the present and the future of the university. This course would not be situated in any specific discipline, rather, it would move from discipline to discipline--the discipline itself becoming an object of interrogation. With a course that would give students and professors the opportunity to question and debate the deontology of the institution that shapes them, the university would become the object of institutional debate rather than the place where debate is merely institutionalized.

Unsure how to stop speaking of the university, at least within the confines of this thesis, I find Derrida's words more suited to my purposes: "As for me, I must break off here, interrupt all this, close the parenthesis, and let the movement continue without me, take off again, or stop..." ("Living on Borderlines" 172).

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