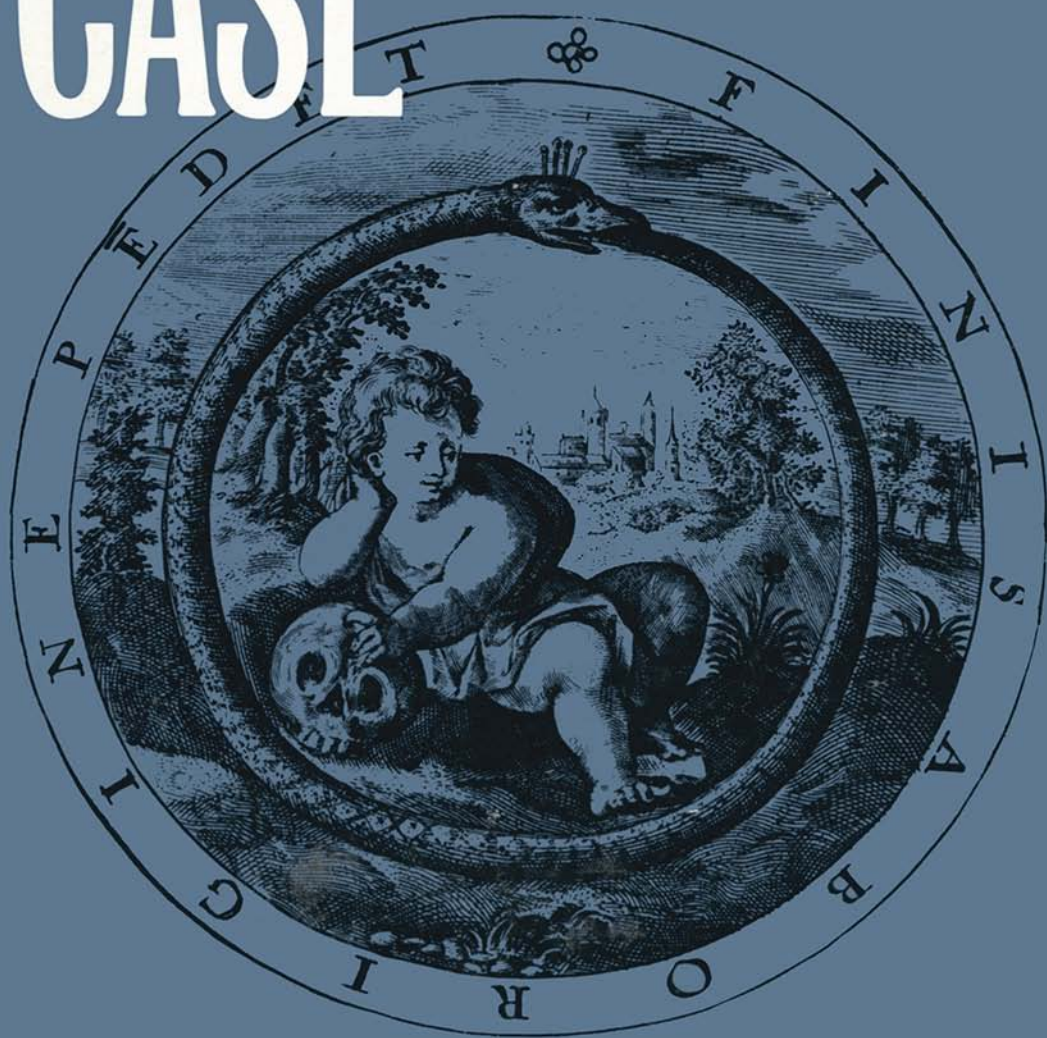


BERND MAGNUS, STANLEY STEWART & JEAN-PIERRE MILEUR

NIETZSCHE'S CASE

PHILOSOPHY AS/AND LITERATURE



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Bibliographic Note

References to Nietzsche's writings will be documented parenthetically in the text, with abbreviated titles followed by the number of the part of the work, then the title (if any) of the section, followed, finally, by the number of the partition within that section. Unless otherwise indicated, we quote from the English translations of Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale as indicated in abbreviated form below. In a few instances, we substitute our own translation. We have regularized i/j and u/v, eliminated meaningless italics and small capitals, and silently corrected obvious printer's errors. Beneath titles of Nietzsche's works we have, for the convenience of readers, arranged abbreviations of sections alphabetically rather than in the order in which they occur in Nietzsche's works.

Abbreviations

<i>A</i>	<i>The Antichrist (PN)</i>
<i>BWN</i>	<i>Basic Writings of Nietzsche.</i> Translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1968.
<i>BGE</i>	<i>Beyond Good and Evil (BWN)</i>
	"RN" "The Religious Nature"
	"WS" "We Scholars"
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music (BWN)</i>
	"Attempt" "Attempt at Self-Criticism"
<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecce Homo (BWN)</i>
	"WIAD" "Why I am a Destiny"
	"WIASC" "Why I am So Clever"

- “WIASW” “Why I am So Wise”
 “WIWSGB” “Why I Write Such Good Books”
- GM *Toward the Genealogy of Morals (BWN)*
 “GBC” “‘Guilt,’ ‘Bad Conscience,’ and the Like”
 “GEGB” “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad’”
 “NP” “Nietzsche’s Preface”
 “WMAI” “What is the Meaning of Aescetic Ideals?”
- GS *The Gay Science: with a prelude in rhymes and an appendix of songs.* Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974.
- HATH *Human All Too Human.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- PN *The Portable Nietzsche.* Selected, translated, and edited by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1983.
- PTAG *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks.* Translated by Marianne Cowan. New York: Regnery/Gateway, 1987.
- TI *Twilight of the Idols (PN)*
 “EP” “Editor’s Preface”
 “FGE” “The Four Great Errors”
 “HTWBF” “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable”
 “MA” “Maxims and Arrows”
 “MAN” “Morality as Anti-Nature”
 “PS” “The Problem of Socrates”
 “RP” “‘Reason’ in Philosophy”
 “SUM” “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man”
 “WGL” “What the Germans Lack”
 “WIOA” “What I Owe to the Ancients”
- UDHL *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life (UT)*
- UT *Untimely Meditations.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 1968.
- WP *The Will to Power.* Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967.
- Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (PN)*
 “AF” “The Ass Festival”

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"Awakening"	"The Awakening"
"CWK"	"Conversations With the Kings"
"Cry"	"The Cry of Distress"
"DB"	"On the Despisers of the Body"
"DS"	"The Drunken Song"
"IP"	"On Immaculate Perception"
"Leech"	"The Leech"
"Magician"	"The Magician"
"OA"	"On the Afterworldly"
"OFD"	"On Free Death"
"OHM"	"On the Higher Man"
"ONT"	"On Old and New Tablets"
"OR"	"On the Rabble"
"PB"	"On Passing By"
"RW"	"On Reading and Writing"
"Sign"	"The Sign"
"SS"	"The Seven Seals"
"TM"	"On the Three Metamorphoses"
"UM"	"The Ugliest Man"
"VB"	"The Voluntary Beggar"
"VR"	"On the Vision and the Riddle"
"Welcome"	"The Welcome"

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Acknowledgments

Any conscientious attempt on our part to acknowledge all who have influenced the content of this monograph would result in a list as long as this book itself. In consequence, while we silently acknowledge our indebtedness to all unnamed individuals, we have nevertheless elected to mention and thank a less expansive list of institutional support structures. We acknowledge with gratitude the generous assistance of David P. Gardner's University of California Humanities Research Initiative, without which our collaboration could never have begun; the UC Riverside Humanities Initiative Committee; UCR's Center for Ideas and Society; UCR's Senate Committee on Research; The National Endowment for the Humanities; the British Academy; the University of California Humanities Research Institute; Robert Schlosser and the Huntington Library.

Bits and pieces of Chapter I have appeared in predecessor versions in: *Reading Nietzsche*, Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen Higgins eds. (Oxford University Press, 1988); *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 19 No. 2, Fall 1991; and of Chapter 2 in *New Aspects of Lexicography: Literary Criticism, Intellectual History, and Social Change*, ed. by Howard D. Weinbrot (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972).

Finally, having declined to list individuals to whom we are indebted, we nevertheless cannot permit this occasion to pass without acknowledging the important, facilitating role played by our research assistant during the first two years of our collaboration. Without Dr. Shari Starrett's unstinting devotion to the success of our project, it might never have come to fruition.

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Pre(post)face: Confessing/Professing Collaboration

For humankind is more sick, uncertain, changeable, indeterminate than any other animal, there is no doubt of that—it is *the* sick animal: how has that come about?¹ GM (III, 13).

That there is once again a crisis in the humanities has become a cliché. The alleged crisis is a result of a changed and changing cultural environment, an environment characterized by radically conflicting general features. On the one hand, humanists have recently experienced a sense of increasing influence, responsibility, accountability, technological innovation, and “relevance” to other segments of our intellectual culture and society at large. The recent explosion in applied philosophy, in critical legal studies, in gender studies, in cultural studies, and in public humanities programs such as those funded by the NEH and other agencies—state councils for the humanities, library, film, and museum development programs and funding—all testify to this renewed sense of urgency. On the other hand, many humanists have at the same time experienced a loss of disciplinary authority; disaffection from disciplinization and departmentalization; the marginality of the humanities as cultural powers, when measured in terms of status (power, prestige, profit, perks); the simultaneous public and often highly visible criticisms of humanities faculty for the alleged abdication of their responsibility to the citizenry; the challenges of feminism and multicultural studies (including issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity), especially as these bear on questions of methodology and canon formation.

It is the best of times; it is the worst of times.

Two themes, among others, have emerged with regularity in this crisis atmosphere: (1) the inadequacy of current forms of humanistic knowledge acquisition, production, transmission, and dissemination; and (2) the name of Friedrich Nietzsche. Indeed, one highly visible critic, Allan Bloom, joined both themes by connecting “the closing of the American mind”—the misedu-

cation and misconstruction of America's public philosophy—directly to the hegemony of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Without endorsing Bloom's specific view either of the failure of the humanities or the connection of that alleged failure to Nietzsche, opinions with which we would in any case disagree, we have felt for some time that the prevailing paradigm of humanistic knowledge production privileges the solitary, individual, isolated researcher, and that this has become somewhat anachronistic, given the accelerated fragmentation of knowledge since the Renaissance and the emergence of sub-disciplinary "experts" in every field of human inquiry. In contrast, collaborative research has become a commonplace in the modern university in the natural and social sciences; but it has never become an accepted research genre in the humanities, except in narrowly defined domains such as editing texts. Multidisciplinary, theoretical research which deals with root questions of central importance to the humanities has seldom been undertaken collaboratively.²

This jointly-authored study of Nietzsche and his literary interlocutors—*Nietzsche's Case: Philosophy as/and Literature*—combines the perspectives of a philosopher and Nietzsche scholar, a critical theorist/Romanticist, and a Renaissance literary scholar. Conceptually, our book occupies the interface of philosophy and literature, bringing conventionally marked "philosophical" and "literary" texts into conversation with one another in a way never done before. Nietzsche's texts are brought into productive conversation with the New Testament, with the texts of Sidney, Bacon, Shakespeare, George Herbert, Milton, Spenser, Browning, Wordsworth, Blake, Shelley, Coleridge, Carlyle, Whitman, and Lawrence—to mention only a few previously unmentioned or seldom discussed texts/names with which Nietzsche's texts share an elective affinity—not only with the standard texts of the philosophical tradition and the tradition of criticism from Plato to Derrida. Because we hope we have established in the pages that follow a more robust and nuanced treatment of Nietzsche's texts than has been done by individual authors and commentators in the recent past, we expect our collaboration to illustrate and to help justify the need for collaboration in humanistic research and study, especially collaboration on theoretical topics in criticism. The deep, substantive diversity of our academic areas of specialization, which are nevertheless complementary for purposes of this project, became an instrument for multiplying perspectives in a way perhaps uniquely appropriate to a thinker like Nietzsche, a thinker steeped in the classical, Renaissance, and modern traditions in philosophy and literature, in religion and in science.

Despite the differences in our fields of specialization, our shared interests in Nietzsche and in theoretical issues of criticism constantly transgress (or transcend) disciplinary divisions of intellectual labor. These shared interests, plus a healthy respect for the importance of substantive differences in speciali-

zation and perspective, drew us to one another. Nevertheless, if there exist obstacles to meaningful collaboration in general and to joint authorship in particular, these pale when contrasted with deeply held and internalized disciplinary assumptions and constraints which tend to promote isolation and cross-disciplinary incomprehension. Finding a way of making the voice of the other one's *own* can be as difficult as it can be rewarding. This is especially true in a case such as ours, one in which our theoretical views and metaphysical convictions are already matters of published record. The voice which emerges in the pages that follow, therefore, is genuinely the voice of a four-year collaboration, a voice which is no one's in particular and yet is each of ours.

This difficulty of blending the voices of philosophy and literature mirrors the felt difficulty of fruitful collaborative inquiry into root questions within one's own discipline. In philosophy, for example, the mutual incomprehension between "analytic" and "continental" approaches has gained hegemony, with results that have been bemoaned by the Council for Philosophical Studies, on behalf of the American Philosophical Association, as follows:

For several generations the American philosophical community has been split in an artificial and counterproductive way between traditions loosely termed "analytic" and "continental." This is costly not only to philosophers and their students, but also to the many students in other disciplines who can or could profit from the study of philosophy. But the schism itself is so integrated into the institutional structure of philosophical education that it is self-perpetuating.

Whatever the cause, the analytic/continental antagonism has now become institutionalized. Representatives of the two persuasions usually do not communicate. Each side has its own departments, its own journals, its own annual conventions, and, most important, its own students. Mutual ignorance and mistrust are thus preserved and handed down. In one university existentialists and phenomenologists are caricatured as fuzzy-headed pompous obscurantists, who might better write novels or sermons than their so-called "philosophy." Down the street, however, Anglo-American "scholasticism" is denounced as a vast desert of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that *p*, saying that *p*, or dancing on the head of a *p*. Departmental curricula perpetuate this artificial, suspicion-blinded, and philosophically shallow categorization. The resulting narrowness has a stultifying effect on both teachers and students. (1982)

If the mutual shunning which has come to characterize philosophy in America has had undesirable consequences, the conflict in literary studies between those committed to traditional historico-critical methods and those pursuing recent developments in "theory" has been no less unfortunate. Indeed, the educational and political consequences of mutual shunning may have been and may continue to be as baleful in literary criticism as the analytic/continental split has been to philosophy.

To repeat (while stating for the first time) the two paragraphs which will bring this study to (self-circling) closure, current critical discussion of

Nietzsche in the English-speaking world has suffered—and our shared culture's imagination has, in consequence, been impoverished—not only as a result of the mutual shunning of “analytic” and “continental” approaches to philosophy in general and to Nietzsche's texts in particular, to the body of his thought. There is another, deeper, older, even more pervasively institutionalized mutual shunning so ubiquitous that it hides in plain view: the separation of “literary” from “philosophical” discourse. That mutual shunning is as old, as unquestioned (and hence as “venerable”) as Plato's decision to banish “poets” from the polis the “philosopher” is destined to rule. And it is only a slight exaggeration to say that this very shunning is the founding gesture of philosophy as it has been delivered over to us: “I, Plato, *am* the truth,” Nietzsche reminds us helpfully in *Twilight of the Idols*. The impact on Nietzsche has been lamentable, however, for each—“poet” and “philosopher” (or writer and thinker, critic and philosopher)—continues to regard the other with suspicion. As a result of this hermeneutics of suspicion philosophers—especially those inclined to what we will call “the Official View” in chapter 1—typically regard “literary critical” appropriations of Nietzsche as, at best, simple-minded misappropriations, or, at worst, practicing without a license. And for most “literary critics” the philosopher's carefully domesticated “Nietzsche” either looks hopelessly naive, uninteresting, or both; he looks hopelessly “thin”; he looks like someone to place in the wax museum of great dead (white male) “philosophers.” The philosopher typically looks for coherent meaning in Nietzsche's texts, and, above all, for evidence of rigor; the critic looks for novel new ideas, new insights, for fractures, fissures, and ambiguities in Nietzsche's texts, for opportunities or connections missed. Thus, mutual shunning of our literary and philosophical cultures continues.

This book marks our first attempt to contest this baleful shunning, or, to vary the figure, to suture the body of Nietzsche's institutionally dismembered literary/philosophical thought. To extend this figure, we have treated the body of Nietzsche's thought as thoroughly permeable and suturable, available to thoughtful intervention whether the means be marked “literary” or “philosophical.” Only in this way, in our view, can there be a genuine recuperation, a convalescence, a restoration of the body of Nietzsche's (institutionally dismembered) literary/philosophical thought that is both robust and nuanced. We have, to put it simply, attempted in the pages that follow a kind of suturing, even a kind of healing, but above all a kind of thinking that has a rigor of its own—a rigor which, one hopes, will have left mortis behind.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche tells his reader that every great philosophy is really only “the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir” (*BGE* 6). This leads his reader, naturally enough, to two questions expressible as one: What does the greatness of Nietzsche's philosophy consist in and what is it confessing? Further, of what—

or in what sense—is it an involuntary and unconscious memoir? And doesn't the admission that a philosophy is a personal confession undermine its aspiration to voice impersonal truth arrived at through lucid, disinterested reflection? Isn't an involuntary and unconscious memoir the very opposite of the God's-eye-view to which philosophy aspires?

Our book inhabits these questions yoked as one. Even the title of our book is itself intended to capture, underscore, and reinscribe these essential tensions, the essential ambiguity inscribed in the expression "Nietzsche's case." For "Nietzsche's case" means both the case Nietzsche prosecutes, his critiques of our shared tradition, as well as the case Nietzsche himself *is*. In the first sense, "Nietzsche's case" points beyond the philosopher's brief, even points beyond its author, to the objects the brief interrogates—traditional religion, philosophy, and morality. In the second sense, "Nietzsche's case" is token-reflexive; it interrogates its subject, the proper name "Nietzsche." To put this same point differently: if Nietzsche has given us a new sense of the genealogy of our shared tradition, then he has also insinuated a genealogy of that genealogy, one which points us back to its authorship. So, while unravelling the greatness of Nietzsche's philosophical achievement we aspire at the same time to unravel the unconscious and involuntary memoir it constitutes, by interrogating its voice, its authority, its authorship.

Such a reading does not replace more conventionally philosophical readings. Rather, it supplements them at precisely those points where philosophical discourse fails to connect satisfactorily with what and how Nietzsche actually wrote. Our goal is not to prosecute a project of literary *ressentiment* against philosophy but to establish a mode of intimacy that does not ultimately require us to make a choice between satisfying the disciplinary requirements of one or the other, that allows us to say something of value to both without trivializing either. Whether our project succeeds or not will depend, in part, upon our success in rendering no longer interesting or appropriate the question, Is it philosophy or is it literature?

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1

The “Problem of Style” in Nietzsche’s Philosophy The “Problem of Philosophy” in Nietzsche’s Style

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it).

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. —Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

The Body of Thought

In recent years “the problem of style” has moved from the margins to something more nearly like the center of concerns among Nietzsche critics. In instance, philosophers as varied in approach, tradition, and temperament as Arthur Danto, Jacques Derrida, and Alexander Nehamas have made the problem of style central to their discussions of Nietzsche.¹

It has not always been so.

To appreciate how much the philosophic climate has changed in the past two and a half decades, we need only recall that in his influential 1965 study, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, Arthur Danto was able to write:

In the course of his piecemeal elaborations he [i.e., Nietzsche] touched on most of the problems that have concerned philosophers, and he discussed them interestingly, and even profoundly. If one takes the trouble to eke his philosophy out, to chart the changes in signification that his words sustain in their shifting from context to context and back, then Nietzsche emerges *almost* [our italics] as a systematic as well as an original analytical thinker. This task is not a simple one. His thoughts are diffused through many loosely structured volumes, and his individual statements seem too clever and topical to sustain serious philosophical scrutiny. Nietzsche seems distrustful and almost officially defiant of philosophic rigor, and he has, in fact, often been the thinker *de choix* of men who find academic and professional philosophy too circumspect or meticulous for their bold and bohemian tastes. Moreover, Nietzsche’s not altogether undeserved reputation as an intellectual hooligan, as the spiritual mentor of the arty and the rebellious, and, more

darkly, as the semicanonized proto-ideologist of Nazism, has made it difficult *even* [our italics] for philosophers to read him as one of their own.²

This attitude, this philosophic pose or stance—which, incidentally, does not even capture Danto's current view twenty-six years later—this blend of philosophical chauvinism, of condescension coupled with political and moral disapproval, reinforced the view current at the time that Nietzsche is basically unsound—interesting though he may be to those unused to or incapable of the rigors of analytical philosophy. And it was *not* only self-congratulatory—“meticulous,” “circumspect,” “rigorous,” “serious,” that is to say English-speaking—philosophers who thought that there is something peculiar about Nietzsche's way of doing philosophy. The French philosopher, Eric Blondel, was puzzled by a similar attitude he found prevalent in Europe, in France in particular, and remarked on this in 1971: “Until now, most critics have insisted on considering Nietzsche's ‘poetic’ and metaphorical style of writing as either the simple and often tasteless ornamentation of philosophical prose produced by good-natured poets, or as the kind of decoration that is favored by ‘men of letters,’ but that philosophers try desperately to forget. . . .”³ To be fair, Blondel adds almost immediately the following important point: “Because of his deliberate use of polysemantic metaphors rather than neutral concepts it would seem more judicious, or perhaps even more philosophic, to ask if Nietzsche's ‘style’ does not necessarily embody a philosophic choice. . . .”

As the locution, “tasteless ornamentation,” suggests, Blondel initially shares with Danto the perception that Nietzsche's way of writing tends to get in the way of the philosophic point he is trying to make, that if Nietzsche had only been a different sort of writer—a serious, systematic, rigorous one—we would all have been better off, that *even Nietzsche himself would have been better off*. The difference between Danto's 1965 view and Blondel's in 1971 is that Danto endorses this opinion while Blondel finds it puzzling. This divergence in attitude is one central difference between much English-speaking and non-English-speaking philosophy over the past two decades. The attitude implied in Danto's remark won out in America towards those whose style of writing, those whose way of doing philosophy, does not conform to our own professional conventions, while, during the same period, serious reflection on the connection between style and content, expression and meaning, became a central topic of discussion in much European philosophy.

The picture of the relationship of philosophy to its expression, the prevailing picture in analytic philosophy, is a familiar one. It is that of sober, deep thought on a recognizable topic of concern to us entombed within unfortunate and distracting rhetorical devices and facades. One is reminded of Gottlob Frege's dismissive habit of calling style “mere coloration” (*Farbung*). On this model of philosophic anti-style, the distinction between a philosopher's

thought and the text which expresses it is to be treated on the analogy of the relation of wheat to chaff, kernel to husk, or diamond to coal.

It is this picture of philosophic thought—a model in deep bondage to a “scientific” picture of textual motivation and production—which led Danto to his extravagant surmise that Nietzsche's texts, published as well as *Nachlass*, are pretty much of a piece, that any tableau could pretty much substitute for any other:

Any given aphorism or essay might as easily have been placed in one volume as in another without much affecting the unity or structure of either. And the books themselves, except for their chronological ordering, do not exhibit any special structure as a corpus. No one of them presupposes an acquaintance with any other. Although there undoubtedly was development in Nietzsche's thought and in his style, his writing may be read in pretty much any order, without this greatly impeding the comprehension of his ideas.⁴

These extraordinary assertions are inattentive not only to the structure(s) and genres⁵ of Nietzsche's published texts but to the distinction between published and unpublished writings.⁶ Just as importantly, these remarks derive their energy—their presumed obviousness and their self-confident force—from Whiggish philosophical condescension:

In recent years, philosophers have been preoccupied with logical and linguistic researches, pure and applied, and I have not hesitated to reconstruct Nietzsche's arguments in these terms. . . . Because we know a good deal more philosophy today, I believe it is exceedingly useful to see his analyses in terms of logical features which he was unable to make explicit, but toward which he was unmistakably groping. His language would have been less colorful had he known what he was trying to say, but then he would not have been the original thinker he was, working through a set of problems which had hardly ever been charted before. Small wonder his maps are illustrated, so to speak, with all sorts of monsters and fearful indications and boastful cartographic embellishments!⁷

The conception of the relationship of philosophic thought to its expression which informed and motivated Danto's remarks in 1965 is of a piece with Russell's much earlier article which wore its thesis on its sleeve, its ideology on its title: “Logic As the Essence of Philosophy.” Ideally, philosophical propositions ought to be grouped like set-theoretic constants, in this scenario, like axiomatic deductive systems, or perhaps like arithmetic expressions, such as $5+7=12$, $8+4=12$, $-7+19=12$ and perhaps expressions such as $5+7=8+4=-7+19$. The thought of the number 12 can be regarded as captured equally well by any of these expressions. On the other end of the linguistic continuum, in sharp contrast perhaps, one finds certain sentences whose “thought” just is their expression, just *is* the style itself. Think of Browning's “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came,” for instance. Can we with critical impunity disentangle its form from its content, its thought from

its style? Or could it be that such terms as "form," "content," "thought," "style" and "expression," are in some contexts awkward and unhelpful—by which we mean only that they might be ineffective in elucidating the particulars of the text in question?

For present purposes, let us call this "the Official View." On this Official View, historians of philosophy are conceptual archaeologists, digging and sifting through remnants of the past for treasures which may help to illuminate our times. Or, to vary the metaphor, we are all digging for conceptual gold hoping to find a vein in otherwise filthy philosophical mines.

To get a sense of how much this philosophic scene has changed in the past two decades, to get a sense of the extent to which the Official View is now contested, one need only consider the transformations in Danto's own opinions on the topic under consideration, namely, that of the relationship between a philosopher's thought, on the one hand, and its mode of expression, on the other.

While delivering his presidential address to the American Philosophical Association's Eastern Division in 1985, Arthur Danto bemoaned the Official View, as the following quotation indicates, thereby distancing himself from a perspective he himself had once endorsed:

A lot of what I have read on Plato reads much as though he to whom the whole of subsequent philosophy since is said to be so many footnotes, were in effect a footnote to himself, and being coached to get a paper accepted by *The Philosophical Review*. And a good bit of the writing on Descartes is by way of chivying his argumentation into notations we are certain he would have adopted had he lived to appreciate their advantages, since it is now so clear where he went wrong. But in both cases it might at least have been asked whether what either writer is up to can that easily be separated from forms it may have seemed inevitable to be presented in, so that the dialogue or meditation flattened into conventional periodical prose might not in the process have lost something central to those ways of writing. *The form in which the truth as they understood it must be grasped just might require a form of reading, hence a kind of relationship to those texts, altogether different from that appropriate to a paper, or to what we sometimes refer to as a "contribution."* [our italics]

This observation of Danto's represents a virtual about-face in the course of twenty years. Danto's 1965 treatment of Nietzsche still expressed the Official View, still expressed the Whiggish one about which he later came to have doubts, the view that there is a single, paradigmatic form of philosophical discourse (namely "conceptual analysis") which we are fortunate enough to have discovered, one which would have been used by our predecessors in place of their crude dialectical instruments if only they had been smart enough or lucky enough to have been born in our English-speaking century. On the contrary, Danto now suggests, "it might at least have been asked whether what either [any] writer is up to can that easily be separated from forms it may have seemed inevitable to be presented in, so that the dialogue or meditation flat-

tened into conventional periodical prose might not in the process have lost something central to those ways of writing."

In what follows, a reflection is begun on what Blondel's remark and Danto's recent suggestions have in common—that to understand the truth as Nietzsche saw it requires a certain relation to the text, one in which Nietzsche's polysemantic metaphors are not perceived as distractions but are instead thought to be required by his very thought itself, indeed may perhaps be said to *be* the thought itself. In short, we want to convert Blondel's and Danto's assertions into a question by asking: What does it mean to say that Nietzsche's style necessarily embodies a philosophic choice? And how is this question to be understood? And what does it mean to say that to understand a past philosopher's text is to be related to it in a certain way, a way which gets flattened out in treating it as a precursor of the current Official View?

To gesture in the direction of a preliminary response to the questions just asked, in the pages that follow we shall be turning time-honored philosophical analyses inside out by refusing to read Nietzsche's written sentences as "the expression" of "his ideas," vehicles for the transcription of thought, embodiments of prior philosophical convictions. We shall refuse to read the written grapheme as the body of thought. This reversal may instead be read with greater profit therefore as an attempt to pose and answer a different question: How else would one expect someone who writes like this to think?⁸

Baiting the Hook: Digressing to Derrida

The writings of many philosophers and critics have contributed to the gradual transformation in recent approaches to philosophical writing itself, a transformation which is reflected in the changed tone and problematic of the two Danto quotes cited above which frame the argument of this chapter. Philosophical writing, qua writing, has recently become problematized in important and interesting ways, ways which will have to influence one's understanding of a writer and thinker as complex as Nietzsche. And no one has had a greater influence on the reconceptualization of the relationship of philosophy to its writing than has Jacques Derrida. So we digress to Derrida at the outset, since his writings play a role in the argument which constitutes the body of this text.⁹

There are more than ordinary obstacles to locating Derrida in interpretive space. That is because it is a part of Derrida's substantive strategy to call into question the notion that thinkers can either be neatly located or paired-off in conceptual space, to challenge the view that they represent "philosophical positions" (what Nietzsche called "a dance of bloodless categories"), to call into question the unstated but powerful assumption that there exists over and above one's interpretive practices a neutral ideal space which one's categories

of reflection merely exemplify: a kingdom of Platonic natural kinds never tiring of yet another instantiation. Further, Derrida's writings often suggest—as do those of Richard Rorty, who follows him in this—that the seemingly innocuous task of paraphrasing a thinker, or of attempting to characterize his work, is itself part and parcel of “the metaphysics of presence,” that one's critical procedures which may seem natural—even necessary and inevitable—are instead optional products of a specific institutionalized vocabulary, of, as Wittgenstein put it, “a form of life.”¹⁰ Derrida's writings suggest that the tasks of paraphrase and characterization of philosophical views are themselves the optional products of vocabulary choice.¹¹ Once chosen (either consciously by us or tacitly through our cultural traditions and acculturation) one's critical practices may come to feel natural, even inevitable; they carry in their wake the unspoken conviction that one's most fundamental interpretive strategies and categories are inevitable for any rational inquirer, that they derive this power from their essential correctness, from their correspondence to the way things (or texts) are in themselves. One begins to feel as if there were a fact of the matter about which vocabulary, taken as a whole, is the right one. In this way, Derrida's writings seem to insist that an optional vocabulary hides its origins from itself.

If Nietzsche's work resists paraphrase, and Heidegger's work suggests that paraphrase must purchase its success by obscuring the matter of thought—descending to chatter, to idle talk (*Gerede*)—Derrida's writings may be read as extended reflections on the impossibility of paraphrase and characterization. They may alternatively be read as an extended performance in which the received categories of literary and philosophical reflection are successively called into question. And yet—or perhaps “therefore”—the most neutral and apparently uncontroversial characterization of the conceptual space Derrida occupies can be made problematic, as is illustrated by his own remarks on the term “deconstruction”:

the word “deconstruction” has always bothered me. . . . When I made use of this word . . . I had the impression that it was a word among others, a secondary word in the text which would fade or which in any case would assume a non-dominant place in a system. For me, it was a word in a chain with many words . . . as well as with a whole elaboration which is not limited only to a lexicon, if you will. It so happens that this word which I had only written once or twice . . . all of a sudden jumped out of the text and was seized by others who have since determined its fate in the manner you well know. . . . For me “deconstruction” was not at all the first or the last word, and certainly not a password or slogan for anything that was to follow.¹²

Derrida's reluctance notwithstanding, one may usefully begin by relating his texts not only to those he explicitly discusses but to those he assumes have shaped his interlocutors' vocabulary as well. Saussure is one such absent pres-

ence, consideration of which is not without significance, since the movement from rigorous phenomenology in the Husserlian manner—with its stress on a perceptual vocabulary—to structuralism and semiology is mediated through Saussure. In contrast, Anglophone philosophy of language and German hermeneutics remained, at least initially, relatively untouched by acquaintance with Saussure. In marked contrast, Derrida's vocabulary shifted after 1967 from terms such as consciousness, intentional object, intentional act, and intuition of essences to the language of sign, signifier, and signified.

Saussure's *Course of General Linguistics* had claimed that "in language there are only differences without positive terms,"¹³ an insight which strikes at the heart of the representational picture of language apparently acquired with mothers' milk. Indeed, as Saussure observed, "there are only differences. Even more important, a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up."¹⁴ Yet just that is what is being set aside, displaced. How to think of language non-representationally—how to think of difference without presupposing identity—mirrors Nietzsche's difficulty of thinking "world" as will to power, thinking of "things" as families of events, as consisting *of* and constituted *by* no-thing in particular, thinking "things" as relations without relata.

Saussure's implicit challenge to referential semantics accords well with J. L. Austin's generative thought—to which Derrida frequently attends—that language, which was typically treated as descriptive and hence as the medium for bringing thoughts into correspondence with facts, might as usefully be regarded as a performative instrument and as the vehicle of a kind of action. So Austin is lauded (in "Différance") for combating what he called "the descriptive fallacy," for having exploded the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept. Nevertheless, the concept exploded is required to detonate the charge. Hence, argues Derrida, performativity is parasitic on descriptivity after all.

Consider the standard example: When one says "I promise," one is not describing anything: one is *doing* something; promising consists in *saying* "I promise." However, we have in effect just said "I promise" without making any promise at all, merely showing instead with which instrument of language it is done. Thinking primarily of stage-actors, Austin dismisses such citational cases as themselves parasitic. But Derrida insists that if an action is to consist in saying something, then there must be a rule which transforms the saying into doing; and the rule must *cite* the expression: therefore, no citation, no performance. This elegant example of "deconstruction" can be understood as a demonstration that a thesis actually requires as one of its conditions the very thing it means to reject; and focus on this conundrum is a recurrent feature of Derrida's work.¹⁵

This self-deconstructing parasitology, this mutual dependence of action

upon citation and citation upon action (or speech upon "writing"), is but a single instance of a broader tendency: Derrida's general transformation of our sense of the stability and autonomy of the world itself into a textual exigency, as if self and world were themselves inscriptions.

Within the received view, within what Heidegger had called the ontotheological tradition, Derrida invites us to think of the dream of philosophy as inhabited by three unwobbling pivots, consisting of (1) the world (or becoming, appearance, *hyle*, *res extensa*, object, phenomena, etc.), (2) the philosopher (or subject, person, observer, theorist), and (3) the in-principle correct account of the world, Reality's Own Vocabulary. Nietzsche had argued that (3) is a function of a self-deceptive will to power. And Heidegger had agreed with Nietzsche that no discourse can be reality's canonical self-description. Philosophers cannot play the role of Charlie McCarthy for reality's Edgar Bergen. However, this now places Derrida in a position to say that "there is nothing outside the text," that notions of truth, meaning and reference only make sense when the dream of philosophy—the ternary "metaphysics of presence"—is assumed, only when there exists something *more* than interpretations, only when the word/world connection can be stitched together again: but we "cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward the referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychobiographical, etc.) or toward a signifier outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place outside of language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to that word, text."¹⁶

Put differently, Derrida is able to thematize the end of philosophy, conceived as the theory of accuracy of representation, as an event within writing, by recognizing that its dream of three unwobbling pivots applies to reading and writing as well. For think now of a book as a ternary relation between (1) a text (an inscription), (2) a reader, and (3) the meaning of the text (the in-principle correct interpretation, the Text's Own Self-Description). Invoking Saussure's linguistic insight and Nietzsche's perspectivism, Derrida asserts that (3) is undecidable, that there can be no such thing as the univocal, canonical, absolute meaning of a text. Even divine inscriptions require optional encodings. Indeed, under the pressure of Nietzsche's perspectivism, all we are left with is "the text" and texts "about" texts. "The idea of the book," in contrast,

is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality. The idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing. . . . If I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book as it is now under way in all domains, denudes the surface of the text.¹⁷

This somewhat oblique entry into Derrida manages to underscore the claim that we are left with a Nietzschean domain of intertextuality only, a perspecti-

val space, a domain in which no spectator standpoint is available to distinguish the conceptual from the literary, a domain in which literal speech is understood as dead metaphor, metaphors we have forgotten were metaphors, desiccated poetry, a framework in which philosophy is [just] one more literary genre.

Nietzsche here as elsewhere anticipated Derrida when he wrote—in answer to the question, What is truth?

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed and embellished poetically and rhetorically and which after long use seem final, canonical, and obligatory to a people; truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.¹⁸

Derrida shares with Heidegger and Nietzsche the view that the history of philosophy is a narrative of presence, closure, and totality—the dream of a unique, complete, and closed explanatory system—fueled by binary oppositions. Each agrees, in his own way, that the dream at the heart of philosophy begins paradigmatically with Plato. And just as Heidegger absorbs Nietzsche into the history of philosophy as the closure of nihilism rather than its confrontational overcoming (as Nietzsche would have it), Derrida's strong misreading (his misprision) absorbs Heidegger within the metaphysics of presence too. Heidegger's magic inscription—*Sein*—betrays his vestigial yearning for unmediated vision (perhaps better: for unmediated hearing) beyond intertextual discourses: "There will be no unique name, even if it were the name of Being. And we must think this without *nostalgia*, that is, outside of the myth of a purely maternal or paternal language, a lost native country of thought. On the contrary, we must *affirm* this, in the sense in which Nietzsche puts affirmation into play, in a certain laughter and a certain step of the dance."¹⁹

Derrida's relation to Heidegger can therefore be characterized hyperbolically as castration of the father-figure and a reassertion of the grandfather Nietzsche—reassertion of a perspectivism which is not a concealed yearning to be more than perspectivism itself—or as patricide. And just as Heidegger reverses our ordinary work-a-day conception of the relation between primordial and founded, basic and derived, host and parasite, Derrida also applies this tool, whether it be in suggesting the priority of writing over speech-acts, the metaphorical over the literal, *bricolage* over engineering, or signifier over signified. But unlike Heidegger, and crucially we think, Derrida's reversals are not offered to establish or to argue that the derivative *is* primordial. Derrida's reversals always appear to be strategic, concerned to reverse the dominance relation between opposed concepts, as in the male/female reversal in *Spurs*, to annul the privileging of presence itself. Heidegger's profound linguistic and