

AN APPRAISAL OF JACQUES DERRIDA'S CRITIQUE OF LOGOCENTRISM

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Abstract

Western epistemology has traditionally been rooted in logocentrism, a framework that emphasizes speech, presence, and stable meaning as the foundations of knowledge. From Plato's idealism to Husserl's phenomenology, this tradition assumes that truth can be accessed through immediate consciousness or rational discourse. Jacques Derrida's philosophy challenges these epistemic foundations, arguing that logocentrism conceals inherent instabilities and hierarchical biases within its structures of meaning. Derrida's critique destabilizes the epistemic certainty upon which much of Western thought depends. This leads to an essential dilemma: if meaning is perpetually deferred (différance) and there is no fixed, ultimate truth, on what grounds can we validate knowledge claims? Does Derrida's position lead to epistemic relativism, or does it open new avenues for understanding truth and interpretation? Derrida's critique of logocentrism fosters a framework that intentionally resists conceptual closure in philosophical thought. This openness birthed different ways of thinking from different directions, not necessarily from the logocentric tradition. The research employs both analytic and hermeneutic methods. The exposition of logocentrism by Derrida relies on indefensible binaries, undermining claims to immediate, transparent knowledge. The endless deferral of meaning complicates traditional epistemic justification, displacing the subject as the center of knowledge. While Derrida's project critiques epistemic absolutism, it struggles to provide an alternative framework for validating knowledge claims that does not depend on logocentric norms. This study argues that Derrida's unfinished project intentionally resists completion, preserving a fluid and adaptable critique that continuously engages with new forms of epistemic domination while remaining open-ended.

Keywords: Derrida, Epistemology, Knowledge, Relativism, Absolutism

Introduction

Western epistemology has traditionally been rooted in *logocentrism*, a framework that emphasizes speech, presence, and stable meaning as the bases for knowledge. Derrida contends in *Of Grammatology* that this tradition embodies the "metaphysics of presence," which defines being in terms of immediate access, whether as idea, perception, or consciousness. This critique traces back to Plato's *Phaedrus*, where writing is devalued as a secondary, unreliable medium.⁵²

⁵² Derrida Jacques, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 12.

From Plato's *Phaedrus*, where writing is dismissed as a dangerous supplement to living speech,⁵³ to Husserl's phenomenological reduction that aims to bracket existence in favor of pure consciousness,⁵⁴ Western thought has consistently valorized immediate presence as the guarantor of truth. The epistemic implications of this tradition are profound. As Saussure demonstrates in his *Course in General Linguistics*, even structural linguistics maintains this *logocentric* bias by privileging speech as the primary linguistic phenomenon while treating writing as merely derivative.⁵⁵ This creates what Derrida calls 'a violent hierarchy'⁵⁶ where speech is associated with authenticity and writing with corruption. The Cartesian *cogito* exemplifies this epistemic paradigm, where self-presence in consciousness ("I think, therefore I am") becomes the indubitable foundation of knowledge.⁵⁷

Derrida's deconstructive intervention fundamentally disrupts these epistemic certainties. His concept of *différance*, the simultaneous differing and deferring of meaning, exposes how "the center could not be thought in the form of a being-present."⁵⁸ This challenges not just linguistic theories but the entire epistemological project of Western philosophy. As Spivak notes in her translator's preface to *Of Grammatology*, "Derrida's critique shows how the Western philosophical tradition has always already been structured by what it excludes"⁵⁹ The epistemic crisis precipitated by deconstruction raises crucial questions about the possibility of knowledge after *logocentrism*. If, as Derrida argues, "there is nothing outside the text,"⁶⁰ how can we establish reliable knowledge claims? Habermas critiques this position as leading to a problematic "performative contradiction,"⁶¹ while Rorty suggests it might liberate philosophy from its epistemological obsessions.⁶² This study examines these tensions, exploring whether Derrida's critique offers an epistemic breakthrough or a philosophical aporia.

⁵³ Plato, *Phaedrus* trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Hackett Publishing, 1995), 275a-277a.

⁵⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigation in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. J.S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1973), 168.

⁵⁵ Ferdinand Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with the collaboration of Albert Riedlinger, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 23.

⁵⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Positions* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: university of Chicago press, 1981), 41.

⁵⁷ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* trans. Donald A. Cress, 3rd ed. (Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis, 1993), 19.

⁵⁸ 1978, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, n.d.), 280.

⁵⁹ Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, xvii.

⁶⁰ Jacques, 158.

⁶¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press, 1987), 185.

⁶² D Davidson, "Truth Rehabilitated," in *Rorty and His Critics* ed. B. Brandom (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 90.

Understanding Logocentrism

Derrida sums up the essence of philosophy in the West in a single word: *logocentrism*. *Logocentrism* refers to how the traditional prioritisation of reason in philosophy has led to everything deemed 'irrational' to be swept aside, treated as marginal and insignificant. Derrida claims the Western philosophical tradition is obsessed with being understood as presence (*ontotheology*), and with the universal nature of logic and rationality (*logocentrism*). *Logocentrism*, for Derrida, is tied to the assumption of a fixed, foundational principle which can be uniquely named⁶³ whether it be 'being' or 'God'⁶⁴ The *logos*, as the Greeks would understand it, can mean reason, account, word, justification, or the meaning of Being, it is the very determination of ideas in which meaning is made possible, it is also at the same time the *telos* of signs that governs the very movement in which a *grapheme* may take in its iteration. The term '*logocentrism*' implies the assumption of the centrality of the *logos*, of rationality, of logic, of the spoken word. Words in language can capture the meaning of objective truth and reality. The whole history of Western philosophy since the ancient Greeks has been circumscribed in "the epoch of the *logos*"⁶⁵.

Logocentrism supports "the determination of presence of the being of the entity as *presence*. The problem however, with *logocentrism* or any other form of *centrism*, as Derrida's interpretation of the Austinian notion of context itself would present, is that it is *eccentric*; it changes from one context to another, primarily because it can never be understood in *purity*. The effacement of the claims of *presence* then in a text, or even that of a speech act is riddled with the problem of consistency in its repetition⁶⁶. Derrida notes this problem in *of Grammatology*:

The movement of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. This is what the person who has begun the same work in

⁶³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 278–79.

⁶⁴ Dermot Moran, *Introduction to PHENOMENOLOGY* (Routledge, 2003), 448.

⁶⁵ Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, 12.

⁶⁶ Roland Theuas DS Pada, *The Context of Logocentrism in Derrida's Thought* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023), 8.

another area of the same habitation does not fail to point out with zeal. No exercise is more widespread today and one should be able to formalize its rules⁶⁷.

To recall the earlier distinctions made on *logocentrism*, Derrida indirectly implies the problem that is incurred within the notion of *logocentrism* itself. For on one hand, the unconscious or the *passive* way of inhabiting the text occurs as a zealous way of asserting a formal and pure *sense of meaning* that the text manifests; on the other hand, the active sense of *logocentrism* sees *logocentrism* as an invitation to inhabit the text for what it has to manifest, excluding, for the meantime, the imposed canonical notions of how the text itself should operate⁶⁸. The problem with *logocentrism*, as suspected, is that it is a mere supplementation of a lost presence, and in dealing with this eccentric center, one does not actually *know* the totality of the intention of what the text tries to manifest towards its recipient (be it towards an intended recipient or not).

As a consequence of convenience, language creates this problem of giving the *center* the character of permanence, viz., and the written *logos*. The center, moreover, is always already differing from itself upon its inscription. History, for example, is problematic, because the experience and the inscription of the events in time are unique in their appropriation⁶⁹; thus, there is a difference between the historian's experience of an actual event (based on this very own account) and what his readers would understand from the same account. Thus, one will see that the *logos* is double-edged, it conveys the no longer present for the convenience of others who were not there, while, at the same time, it obfuscates the account of presence that was once there. In Derrida's reading of Plato in *Dissemination*, Derrida would agree with Plato's notion of writing as a *supplement* or as a *pharmakon*⁷⁰. As a supplement introduced to the body, the *pharmakon* is both at the same time a medicine and a poison, to an internality, whose moral value remains ambiguous in so far as the intention of the body who uses it is indeterminate. By indeterminacy, it implies that the *pharmakon's* definition holds up to its ambivalence, precisely because its introduction towards the body is done from the outside⁷¹. One then, looks at representations, particularly the text, as an externality that supplements the ego or the self in its inability to make present a lost moment

⁶⁷ Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, 24.

⁶⁸ Roland Theuas S. Pada, "The Paradox of Ipseity and Difference: Derrida's Deconstruction and Logocentrism," *KRITIKE* 1, no. 1 (2007): 45.

⁶⁹ Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, 20.

⁷⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 127.

⁷¹ Derrida, 97–98.

in its totality. Derrida, would only disagree with Plato's notion of the *pharmakon* as a supplement, with regards to its exclusion as an impurity. Derrida notes this in his citations of Plato's dialogues:

The immortality of a living being would consist in it having no relation at all with any outside. That is the case with God. God has no allergies. Health and virtue, which are often associated in speaking of the body and, analogously, of the soul, always proceed from within. The *pharmakos* is that which, always springing up from without, acting like the outside itself, will never have definable virtue of its own⁷².

This claim of internal purity will somehow be questionable with regards to the epistemic validation of the certainty of the body of knowledge, for in stating that the inside must be pure from the outside, one already espouses a solipsism of some sort. The contamination of the center is always inevitable or, in other words, it is always already occurring. For example, to all the accounts of Derrida cited in this text, one might say that this study has merely contaminated the discourse on deconstruction itself. But is it really pure? To begin with, deconstruction focuses its own discourse on an eccentric center. One might say that deconstruction "originated" from the sixth section of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, or even that of its dismantling of Saussure's linguistic structuralism, but to all these claims, one can be assured that Derrida's discourse is always already contaminated. This always already recurs not as a mere gesture of assurance that what is being said is truthful, but as an acknowledgment that this work, or even Derrida's work, cannot be severed from its historicity⁷³. In other words, the purity of the discourse is a myth, for if it were to survive, or even be inscribed through its own self as its center, discourse itself would have become impossible.

Derrida also coined a term called *Phonocentrism* to mean privileging of speech over writing. Speech has the feature of presence where the audience and listener get the truth of what the speaker says. However, Derrida suggested that this truth or reality is built on the idea of center, *logos* or God, word. Derrida again referred to this as *logocentrism* or the metaphysics of Presence (the notion that there is a transcendental signified, a god- word that underlies all philosophical talk and guarantees its meaning). He notices the whole principle of Western philosophy as firmly grounded on this metaphysics of presence. Derrida further argues that God is a figure having some kind of truth, essence and origin which Derrida called

⁷² Derrida, 101–2.

⁷³ Pada, "The Paradox of Ipseity and Difference: Derrida's Deconstruction and Logocentrism," 41.

transcendental signified. But there is no transcendental signified because there is no fixed meaning⁷⁴. However, there always remains a trace (residual meaning)

One might think that Derrida's notion of *logocentrism* is *aporetic*, for in its impossibility of 'pure repetition', one finds oneself referring to nothing. If the *logos* of the text are no longer there, where then does the text refer to? How would one then be able to efface logocentric claims if one cannot determine a *logocentric* tendency within the text itself? In this case, a re-evaluation of Derrida's notion of *logocentrism* should commence to properly assess the limitation of ontology/epistemology in its assumption of presence. Thus, we must put the center into question. Derrida's critique of *logocentrism* could be seen in his treatment of *Differance* and Trace.

Differance

The term *différance* for Derrida (with an "a") critiques conventional understanding of meaning in philosophy. This concept is a deliberate fusion of the French words *différer* ("to differ") and *différer* ("to defer"), capturing the ideas of 'difference' and 'delay'. First, *différance* signifies that meaning arises not from inherent qualities but from differences between signs—words or symbols gain significance only in contrast to others.⁷⁵ For example, "light" has meaning because it is not "dark," "heavy," or "obscure." Second, meaning is perpetually deferred; no word can fully capture an absolute or fixed sense, as definitions depend on an unending sequence of other words.⁷⁶ This undermines the Western metaphysical tradition, which assumes language can directly represent truth or presence.

Derrida further emphasizes *différance* through its silent "a," which makes the term indistinguishable from *différence* in speech. This graphic pun highlights the presence of hidden but integral instability of language.⁷⁷ Unlike structuralists, who saw language as a stable system, Derrida argues that meaning is always provisional, shaped by context and open to reinterpretation. *Différance* thus unsettles hierarchies in philosophy, literature, and culture, exposing all systems as fluid and contested.⁷⁸ By revealing the gaps and contradictions in language, Derrida's theory invites critical engagement with texts, ideologies, and power structures that claim absolute authority.

⁷⁴ Susan Haack, "The Legitimacy of Truth: A Critique of Richard Rorty's Pragmatism," *Journal of Philosophy and Social Critique* 45(3) (2020): 12–28.

⁷⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* trans. Alan Bass (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 28.

⁷⁶ Derrida, 31.

⁷⁷ Derrida, 26.

⁷⁸ Derrida, 39.

Differance can be understood as a modification of Saussure's idea of linguistic value, which dismantles the categories of essence and existence. Linguistic value appears only in the context of other signs, and therefore has no stable essence or being. Derrida elaborates on the new non-concept of *differance* through the idea of graphic intervention, which refers to Saussure's idea that a change in the signal brings with it a change in the idea expressed.⁷⁹ Derrida's notion of *differance* extends beyond language and encompasses memory, perception, presence, consciousness, and meaning. He relates *differance* to Heidegger's ontological difference, arguing that it is the historical and epochal unfolding of Being or the ontological difference. Heidegger's idea of the 'oblivion of Being' refers to the difference between Being (*Sein*) and being (*seiend*), which concerns ways of Being and beings (entities). Derrida argues that this distinction belongs to the self-concealing essence of Being and is not a mistake of the philosophical tradition but rather the condition of the history of Being.⁸⁰

Differance is older than the ontological difference or the truth of Being, as it produces the categories of presence and absence. According to Derrida, being does not exist before the process of *differance*, as being is born by separating and differentiating from the rest. The point of separation is not readily defined, and only differences can be "historical" from the outset and in each of their aspects.⁸¹ Derrida criticizes the traditional Western philosophy of looking at and understanding entities as substances, as well as the perception of being as presence in the now moment. He believes that the presence of the meaning of some phenomenon is only one possible definition born in the process of *differance*, and something is always left in reserve. In philosophical tradition, epistemologists have aimed to base philosophy on an original and pure foundation, but rejecting *differance* has also meant rejecting the finiteness of temporality.

Trace

In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida introduces the concept of the 'trace' as a fundamental part of his deconstructive philosophy.⁸² The trace refers to the idea that every signifier (a word, symbol, or mark) is made up of the absence of other signifiers that it depends on for meaning. Derrida argues that meaning is never completely self-contained or fully present but is instead shaped by a never-ending network of differences and delays.⁸³ He writes, "The trace is not a presence but the

⁷⁹ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 108.

⁸⁰ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 8–9.

⁸¹ Derrida, 11.

⁸² Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, 41.

⁸³ Jacques, 43.

simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself."⁸⁴ This means that language functions through a system of references where each term contains the remnants—or traces—of other terms that are not explicitly there but are essential for its meaning.⁸⁵ For example, the word "light" only makes sense with its opposite, "dark," even when "dark" is not mentioned. The absent term leaves a trace that influences the meaning of the present one.⁸⁶

Derrida's concept of the trace challenges traditional metaphysical ideas about language, especially logocentrism, which favors speech as a direct expression of meaning and presence.⁸⁷ Instead, Derrida argues that all communication functions like writing, where meaning is delayed and relies on contextual relationships. The trace interrupts the notion of an original, stable meaning, showing that every sign is part of an infinite chain of signification with no fixed origin or end. As Derrida explains, "The trace is the *différance* which opens appearance and signification" (Derrida 65). This means that what seems like a complete or authoritative meaning is always haunted by what is left out, delayed, or suppressed.

The implications of the trace is beyond philosophy, but has its effect on other discipline. By exposing how meaning is constructed through absence and difference, Derrida's theory undermines claims to absolute truth or authority.⁸⁸ In literature, for instance, a text's apparent coherence relies on traces of other texts, cultural norms, and historical contexts that are never fully articulated. Similarly, in political discourse, terms like "justice" or "democracy" carry traces of conflicting interpretations and historical struggles, making their meanings inherently unstable. The trace thus becomes a tool for deconstructing hierarchies, revealing the hidden assumptions and contradictions within systems of thought.⁸⁹

The Defense of Realism against Derridean Critique of Logocentrism

The critique of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of logocentrism has gained renewed momentum in contemporary philosophy through the works of Markus Gabriel, Quentin Meillassoux, and Graham Harman. These thinkers, though differing in their approaches, share a commitment to challenging Derrida's textualism, the idea that reality is constituted through language and differential systems of meaning, by advocating for objective or material foundations that exist

⁸⁴ Jacques, 47.

⁸⁵ Jacques, 44.

⁸⁶ Jacques, 48.

⁸⁷ Jacques, 49.

⁸⁸ Jacques, 51.

⁸⁹ Jacques, 51.

independently of human interpretation. Their critiques collectively argue that Derrida's rejection of metaphysical presence leads to an untenable relativism, undermining philosophy's ability to engage with truth, science, and material reality.

Markus Gabriel, in *The Meaning of Thought*, positions itself against Derrida's *différance* by proposing a "new realism" that acknowledges the contextual nature of meaning while insisting on the existence of mind-independent realities. Gabriel argues that Derrida's focus on the instability of signification reduces philosophy to a "play of signifiers" without accounting for how thought engages with a world beyond language.⁹⁰ For Gabriel, this linguistic idealism neglects the fact that "fields of sense" (domains of meaning) are constrained by objective structures, even if they are not reducible to a single, logocentric framework.⁹¹ His critique is particularly pointed in its ethical implications: if all meaning is deferred, as Derrida claims, then normative judgments about truth or justice lose their grounding.⁹² Gabriel's alternative retains a revised notion of presence, not as a metaphysical absolute, but as a relational reality that emerges within specific contexts.⁹³

Quentin Meillassoux, in *After Finitude*, launches a more radical critique by challenging poststructuralism's linguistic turn altogether. His speculative realism argues that Derrida's focus on textuality ignores the "absolute" status of mathematical and scientific truths, which he claims exist independently of human thought or language.⁹⁴ Meillassoux's famous example of the "arche-fossil", a material trace of a world prior to human consciousness, aims to demonstrate that reality cannot be reduced to linguistic constructs.⁹⁵ By rejecting what he calls 'correlationism' (the idea that reality is always mediated by human thought), Meillassoux seeks to recover a pre-Kantian certainty about the world, one that Derrida's deconstruction explicitly dismantles.⁹⁶ His work thus represents a confrontation with Derrida's *logocentrism* critique, positing that contingency itself (the absence of necessity in nature) can serve as an absolute foundation for knowledge

Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology (OOO), articulated in works like *Art and Objects*, offers a third realist challenge to Derridean textualism. Harman argues

⁹⁰ Markus Gabriel, *The Meaning of Thought*, trans. Alex Englander (Polity Press, 2021), 112.

⁹¹ Gabriel, 145.

⁹² Gabriel, 221.

⁹³ Gabriel, 178.

⁹⁴ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 53.

⁹⁵ Meillassoux, 17.

⁹⁶ Meillassoux, 82.

that Derrida's focus on language and difference overlooks the autonomy of non-human objects, which exist and interact independently of human interpretation.⁹⁷ For Harman, deconstruction remains anthropocentric, as it reduces all reality to human signification.⁹⁸ His ontology of "withdrawn" objects, entities that exceed their relations and representations, provides an alternative to both *logocentrism* and Derrida's textualism by asserting that objects have a reality that is never fully captured by language or perception.⁹⁹ Harman's critique thus aligns with Gabriel and Meillassoux in rejecting the linguistic idealism he attributes to Derrida, though his emphasis on aesthetic and artistic engagement with objects distinguishes his approach.¹⁰⁰

Together, these thinkers illustrate a broader contemporary trend toward reclaiming realism in the wake of poststructuralism. While their critiques vary in scope and method, they converge on the claim that Derrida's deconstruction, for all its insights, risks collapsing reality into textuality, thereby neglecting the material and objective dimensions of existence. Their works represent not a return to naive metaphysics but an attempt to forge new philosophical pathways that account for both the constructedness of meaning and the stubborn independence of the real.

The Relevance of Derrida's Critique of *Logocentrism*

Derrida's critique of *logocentrism* reveals fundamental biases embedded in Western philosophical traditions, particularly their privileging of speech over writing and presence over absence. By deconstructing these hierarchies, Derrida demonstrates how Western metaphysics has systematically marginalized alternative modes of thought. For instance, the argument that African philosophy is inferior or nonexistent due to its oral tradition is fundamentally flawed, particularly when examined through the lens of Plato's critique of writing and contemporary decolonial thought. In *Phaedrus*, Plato famously warns that writing ossifies thought, whereas oral discourse remains dynamic and intellectually rigorous,¹⁰¹ a perspective that inadvertently validates African philosophical traditions rooted in orality. Scholars like Njoku challenge the textual bias in philosophy by arguing for the "textuality of orality," demonstrating that African proverbs, myths, and dialogic practices function as philosophical "texts" despite not being written.¹⁰² Similarly, Walter Mignolo's concept of "writing with words"

⁹⁷ Graham Harman, *Art and Objects* (Polity Press, 2021), 64.

⁹⁸ Harman, 91.

⁹⁹ Harman, 112.

¹⁰⁰ Harman, 135.

¹⁰¹ Derrida, *Dissemination*, 65–171.

¹⁰² Francis Njoku, *The Four Waves of African Philosophy* (CIWA Press, 2002), 45.

expands the definition of textuality beyond alphabetic script, recognizing Indigenous knowledge systems—including African oral traditions—as legitimate forms of philosophical expression.¹⁰³ The colonial insistence on written documentation as the sole marker of philosophy ignores the sophistication of African thought, from *Ubuntu* ethics to Yoruba *Ifá* divination, while replicating epistemic hierarchies that marginalize non-Western ways of knowing. By deconstructing the false dichotomy between orality and philosophy, it becomes clear that African philosophy not only exists but also challenges Eurocentric assumptions about what counts as legitimate knowledge.

Derrida's deconstruction dismantles the rigid binaries and fixed systems that have long dominated linguistics and philosophy. His concept of *différance*, which combines "difference" and "deferral", undermines structuralist assumptions about stable linguistic meaning, showing instead that signs derive their significance through endless referral to other signs.¹⁰⁴ This challenges Saussure's model of language, which maintains a strict division between signifier and signified, by revealing that meaning is never fully present but always contingent and contextual.¹⁰⁵ In philosophy, Derrida's critique destabilizes foundationalist claims, such as Husserl's pursuit of pure consciousness, by demonstrating that even the most "self-evident" truths are mediated by language and thus inherently unstable.¹⁰⁶ By disrupting these rigid structures, Derrida opens new avenues for thinking about knowledge, representation, and power.

Derrida's critique has profound implications for interpretive practices across disciplines, liberating texts and discourses from fixed meanings. In literary studies, deconstruction reveals how texts undermine their own apparent coherence, allowing for multiple, often contradictory readings.¹⁰⁷ For example, his analysis of Kafka's "Before the Law" demonstrates how the law's authority is simultaneously asserted and deferred, exposing its inherent indeterminacy.¹⁰⁸ In legal theory, Derrida's work challenges the notion of unambiguous legal interpretation, emphasizing instead the role of undecidability and context in judicial decisions.¹⁰⁹ Ethically, his concept of the "other" and the impossibility of perfect justice (Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas) has influenced thinkers like Judith Butler, who argue for an

¹⁰³ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke UP, 2011), 112.

¹⁰⁴ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 3–27.

¹⁰⁵ Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, 62–63.

¹⁰⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 54–56.

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (Routledge, 1992), 33–75.

¹⁰⁸ Derrida, 181–220.

¹⁰⁹ Jacques Derrida, "'Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority.''" *Cardozo Law Review* Vol. 11, no. 5–6 (1990): 925–73.

ethics grounded in vulnerability and openness rather than rigid principles.¹¹⁰ By expanding interpretive possibilities, Derrida's critique enriches critical engagement with texts, institutions, and moral frameworks.

Derrida's critique has been instrumental in shaping post-structuralist thought, feminism, and postcolonial theory, providing tools to challenge dominant discourses. Post-structuralists like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze extended Derrida's insights into power and knowledge, examining how truth claims are constructed through exclusion and difference.¹¹¹ Feminist theorists, such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, have employed deconstruction to expose the gendered binaries (e.g., male/female, rational/emotional) that underpin patriarchal systems.¹¹² Similarly, postcolonial scholars like Homi Bhabha and Spivak have used Derrida's work to critique colonial narratives, showing how Western knowledge production relies on the marginalization of non-Western voices.^{113/114} By influencing these diverse fields, Derrida's critique continues to inspire resistance to oppressive structures and the exploration of alternative epistemologies.

Conclusion

Derrida's critique of *logocentrism* was intentionally left open-ended, reflecting his belief that a complete account is inherently impossible. This very incompleteness constitutes its greatest strength - a persistent ability to challenge established dogmas and fixed systems of thought. Rather than substituting one dominant framework for another, Derrida's approach cultivates an ongoing critical perspective that resists finality across multiple domains. This perpetual openness to reexamination ensures that deconstruction remains vital and adaptable to emerging forms of intellectual domination. As modern confrontations with representation, equity, and environmental breakdown grow more urgent, Derrida's work provides essential tools for dismantling and reimagining oppressive conceptual systems. Derrida's unfinished project lies precisely in its refusal of completion, maintaining a dynamic, evolving critique that responds to new manifestations of epistemic control while avoiding the trap of becoming another rigid orthodoxy itself. This methodological resistance to closure keeps critical thought supple and responsive to contemporary challenges.

¹¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Fordham University Press, 2005), 136.

¹¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (Pantheon Books, n.d.), 131–32.

¹¹² Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* vol. 1, no. 4 (1976): 875.

¹¹³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* ed. Routledge, 1994, 23.

¹¹⁴ Spivak Chakravorty Gayatri, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 1–16.

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