

Derrida and the Flesh of Metaphorical Language

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How to cite this paper: Lyngdoh, S. S. (2021). Derrida and the Flesh of Metaphorical Language. *Open Journal of Philosophy, 11*, 466-481.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2021.114031>

Received: August 8, 2021

Accepted: October 16, 2021

Published: October 19, 2021

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt has been made to uncover the problem of metaphorical language in its relation to fleshliness and embodiedness as found in the critical reading of the texts of Derrida. The fleshliness of metaphorical language is embodied in our bodily activity in such a manner that sensible writing in the Derridean sense and corporeal body become intertwined notions. Metaphor and metaphorical language is a point of intersection between the body and sensible writing. This materiality/corporeality/fleshliness of metaphorical language can be understood as text. According to Derrida, writing and body have been viewed by the western philosophical tradition as exterior to speech and mind respectively, and he wants to deconstruct such hierarchical binaries. With this, writing (as *archi-écriture*) is no more a literary notion, but the generic form of symbolic practice, always already metaphorical and embodied. This paper is centered on the oeuvre of Derrida to uncover the thinking for the fleshliness of metaphorical language from within the texts of western philosophical tradition.

Keywords

Metaphor, Embodiedness, Writing, Body, Text, Corporeality, Materiality

1. Introduction

The problem of language is of importance to contemporary Continental thinkers. Echoing this, Jacques Derrida writes that “the *problem of language* has never been simply one problem among others, *but the problem itself*. But never as much as at present has it invaded...” (Derrida, 1974) (emphasis added). This problem invites contestation and disagreement as to what language is, how it functions, and whether language is homogenous having a literal or fixed meaning. Answering these questions, recent Continental philosophy claims that lan-

guage exists beforehand and human beings as the custodians of language—think and be in terms of language. No being can be encountered meaningfully outside language. Language encompasses our thought and bodily experience. It is the language that influences and constitutes thought and realities, but not vice versa. As the gathering of linguistic signs, language brings everything to the fore as text, *i.e.*, everything that we encounter in the phenomenal world. In other words, everything (immanent and transcendent reality) is inscribed in a textual/symbolic scheme of relations. Without their significance, realities are not encounterable. In this sense, language dynamically creates realities in their encounterable form. Language gives rise to the world of facts understood as such. It is always already there, and it is not possible to give a reasonable account of when a particular language or language as such came into being. Hence, although language exists in and through humans and without us it cannot come into being, it came before us as individuals and we cannot exist as selves without it. As Derrida remarks, “[l]anguage has started without us, in us, and before us” (Derrida, 1992).

As a central problem of twentieth century philosophy, the discourse of language has been heterogeneous. This excess of attention on language has led to the problem of misrepresenting and devaluating the nature of language. At the same time, Derrida argues that language cannot be imprisoned within a closed conceptual field precisely because, as Vicky Kirby notes, Derrida did not agree with the viewpoint that language “is an enclosed entity that can be separated from all that we take to be its ‘other’” (Kirby, 1997). Although the discourses of language misrepresent its nature, they also show the nonhomogeneous essence of language. The non-homogeneity characteristic of language highlights the fact that there is a constant flickering of the present and the absence in language, which always differs from itself. Hence, language cannot be described once and for all. As Christina Howells observes, for Derrida, “language is precisely the differential systems which masks absence with the illusion of presence, and whose mobility depends on its lack of centre” (Howells, 1998).

It was the centerless, heterogeneous, differential, infinitely excessive character of the signs that allows language to be viewed as always already metaphorical rather than as fixed, literal, permanent, and fully and infinitely present. Such features are the basis for language to be understood as metaphorical originarily. Thus understood metaphor is no more the “other” of language, no more the ornamental tool of rhetorical speech but language itself. If metaphor is that word that is made to stand for a thing that is not the thing that it usually stands for, Derrida argues that language is metaphorical originarily because this standing for a thing that it is not is the very function of linguistic signs always. In fact, the thing itself is the sign according to him. Metaphor has a special place in the text of philosophy because this standing for a thing that it is not or metaphoricity or the possibility of the profusion of meaning, Derrida argues, is gradually erased in the thick of the philosophical usage of terms as they gain the solidity/presence of a metaphysical concept. As the metaphysics of permanent presence and the so-

lidity of terms dictates the transactions of our language, intellectual culture and conceptuality, metaphors are central to the text of philosophy.

The metaphoricity of language in the above sense also implies its radical embodiedness. According to Jack Reynolds, although Derrida deals very little on the problem of the body and the hierarchical binary of mind-body, which in the metaphysical tradition is more pronounced than that of speech-writing, he seems to imply in his writings that “the mind can never be kept separate or purified from the influence of the body. Rather, mind and body, like expression and indication, are intertwined and inseparable” (Reynolds, 2004). Reynolds characterizes the Derridean understanding of mind-body relation, using the expression of the later Merleau Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible*, as “flesh,” which is the chiasmic intertwining of both the visible-sensible and the invisible-intelligible. Referring to a crucial passage in *Of Grammatology*, see (Derrida, 1974), Reynolds writes interpretively that “just as writing is not the “clothing” of speech, sensible matter and the body are not the clothing that prevents us from seeing an inaccessible mind” (Reynolds, 2004). Reynolds goes on to say that according to Derrida “inner and outer are irrevocably intertwined” just as in Merleau-Ponty’s notion of flesh, which is the chiasmic intertwining of the “self-sensing” power of my flesh (touching, seeing...) and the “sensible and not sentient” power of the world (being touched, being seen...), see (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Flesh is the reversibility inherent to perceiving and being perceived. Reynolds derives an extensive philosophy of the body in Derrida, basing on *Of Grammatology’s* relating of the problematic of the body to that of writing. He concludes that “the efficacy of the Derridean deconstruction should depend on a complex understanding of both ‘writing’ and the body, and a detailed appreciation of what the materiality of the written consists in” (Reynolds, 2004).

Signs are contingent, finite, differential and absent embodiments of meanings, bringing together indication and expression. Meaningful reality itself is embodied only in this play of signs; there is nothing outside it. Body, thus, means the not fully present, transient visibility of the sign. This is what writing is too. This embodiedness of language is especially brought to light in Derrida’s understanding of the metaphoricity of language. Metaphorical language is the point of intersection between the textuality of writing and the sensuality of embodiment. Textuality is the practical performativity of writing in a broadly Derridean sense whereby writing and/as text are integrated. The notion “text” has a Latin origin in the root “*texere*” which can be etymologically translated as “to weave.” This textile metaphor and the same meaning is applicable for us in our understanding of the sign/“text” (This textile metaphor of the sign will be discussed later). The woven text/texture, understood as the whole field of signs, describes one thing as another (thus essentially metaphoric), I shall argue, is the clue in Derrida’s work to understand language in its fleshliness, materiality and corporeity. The purpose of this paper is to argue this case in detail. This paper will lay bare this problem in three sections, followed by a concluding remark on the contribution of Derrida to the debate on the fleshliness of metaphoric language. The first sec-

tion will discuss the Derridean notion of writing, and the second section will show writing and the body as intertwined notions in Derrida and how both these notions can be viewed as “text”. Considering this entanglement of writing, body and/as text, an argument is developed in the third section of this paper regarding the embodiment of metaphorical language.

2. Derrida on Writing

Considering Reynolds’ suggestion that Derrida’s notion of the body is to be gleaned from his notion of writing, let us take a look at his critique of the hierarchical privileging of speech over writing in Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Heidegger, Husserl, Saussure and all the philosophers of language. He meticulously shows that in the centrism of *logos*, speech is believed to be crystallly pure and chronologically prior to writing and writing is a mere representation of speech. In the phonocentric tradition, “[w]riting,” Derrida argues, “is taken to be an interruption and violence that befalls this pristine purity of speech” (Smith, 2005). Writing acts as a “dangerous supplement” to the full presence of speech. In this sense, Gregory Ulmer argues that grammatology is an attempt for Derrida to destabilize such a hierarchy of speech over writing and this is the function of applied grammatology. He writes that “[a]ppplied grammatology is the search for a writing that recognizes and brings into balance this double value” (Ulmer, 1985). Hence, argues Leslie Hill, by situating himself within the tradition of western philosophy, Derrida “chose an already existing, arguably compromised word, ‘writing,’ to say something radically new” (Hill, 2007). For Derrida, the history of writing becomes a history of repression. For him, writing is the originary aspect of language, and the history of language is the history of writing. To put it in his own words, “[t]he question of the origin of writing and the question of the origin of language are difficult to separate” (Derrida, 1974). Commenting on this, Andrew Bennett writes: “[f]or Derrida, the ‘problem of writing’ is in effect more generally the problem of language” (Bennett, 2015). Derrida points out that “writing thus *comprehends* language” (Derrida, 1974). That is, writing in Derrida’s scheme of work is language in its totality—both writing, speech and the sign as such. Writing saves language from full presencing of meaning in the form of completeness of the book as a whole or in its totality.

The end of the book opens up writing (as language) to be understood as a text for Derrida. And, he announces that the end of the book is nothing but the death of full presence of speech or the end of the *epoch* of domination of the metaphysics of presence of speech; and the end of the book is a metaphor of the disappearance of the full presence of speech. With the end of the book, writing (as *archi-écriture*) begins to open up its horizon. Writing is no more a literary notion, it is not only pictography (alphabetical or mathematical writing) or ideographic representation or hieroglyphic writing; there can be athletic writing, body writing, cinematographic writing, choreographic writing, socio-political writing, musical writing, military writing and all discourses are of the various

tropes of writing (Derrida, 1974). (This is how grammatology or the science of writing cuts across differences and divisions.) As Vicky Kirby says: “a ‘writing’ that both circumscribes and exceeds the conventional divisions of nature and culture, *body and mind*” (Kirby, 1997) (*italics added*). It is writing, which desediments all forms of hierarchical privileging and conventional segregation of one form of textual writing from another. Writing is no more narrowly conceived as mere inscriptions or marks on a page. It is no more a supplement or an artificial and auxiliary form of speech; nor an aid to memory. Writing is always already part of philosophy and language; it is at the margin between the sensible and the intelligible, signified and signifier, margins and center. Derrida argues that “[w]riting did not ‘enter’ philosophy, it was already there” (Derrida, 2002). Writing as arche-writing displaced the transcendental signified from the center, for a signified has no meaning beyond differential signifiers. A signifier can have only a trace of another signifier in the play of a spatial-differing and temporal-deferring relation. “Derrida’s more generalized notion of writing, arche-writing, refers to the way in which the written is possible only on account of this ‘originary’ deferral and differing aspect of meaning that ensures that meaning can never be definitively present” (Reynolds, 2004). In the originary writing, there is only the play of supplements. In Derrida’s view, supplement operates in an exorbitant manner. It is neither addition nor subtraction, neither good nor evil, neither active nor passive, neither inside nor outside of the text, neither a negation nor an affirmation. Hence, arche-writing, in contrast with the vulgar conception of writing as a mere supplement to speech, has a wider connotation, conceptualized in the play of *différance*. In short, writing (archewriting and henceforth simply writing), which operates in absence, becomes text for Derrida.

But, this should not deceive us into accepting that writing is chronologically prior to speech. Derrida disavows all forms of binary opposition, whereby one of the poles is superior to the other. His aim is to destabilize, desediment and reinscribe such binary oppositions. He sees speech to be of no difference from writing and is already in writing. For Derrida, “writing is at the same time more exterior to speech, not being its ‘image’ or its ‘symbol’, and more interior to speech, which is already in itself a writing” (Derrida, 1974). They both operate in space and are situated in time as spatial differing and temporal deferring. *Différance* is in operation in both the written word and audible sound and hence they differ from themselves. It is *différance* that enables us to differentiate between two sounds and show how one word is not the same as the other word.

For writing to be made possible as a mode of communication, it must function even in the absence of the writer. Writing operates in the absence of the writer and even reader, and such a thing is not possible with speech, as the physical presence of both the speaker and listener is needed in speech situation. This is not the case with the vulgar conception of writing. Here, the shift is from what the author says to what writing reveals to her reader, or how the reader wants to interpret that writing. Speaking on this new interpretation of writing, Derrida lays bare that the text will continue to speak even though the author is

physically absent (unlike the presencing form of the classical conception of speech). (In addition, once writing operates in the absence of the writer, it places itself in a public space as sensible trace and marks.) In “Signature Event Context,” Derrida writes:

To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive, that my future disappearance in principle will not prevent from functioning and from yielding, and yielding itself to, reading and rewriting... For the written to be the written, it must continue to “act” and to be legible even if what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed, whether he is provisionally absent, or if he is dead... (Derrida, 1982).

Such kind of an absence (of writer) in writing makes Derrida introduce the notion of the play of iterability. For Derrida, iterability is the repeatability of language (as writing) even in the absence of reader and author. This is so because writing has to go beyond the author’s intention and what the addressee is supposed to mean by it. In this manner writing has no writer or reader, although a particular piece of writing produced at a particular finite time and space originally has both. In his own words, “[t]his iterability...structures the mark of writing itself, and does so moreover for no matter what type of writing...A writing that was not structurally legible—iterable—beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing” (Derrida, 1982). Simon Glendining observes that iterability becomes the condition of possibility of writing for Derrida in a radical manner as the constant presence and absence of meaning. Such iterability is repeatable in the manner of the non-identical salvages writing from falling into the trap of the logocentric idea of the transcendental signified as having a fixed meaning (Glendining, 2004). Meaning is found in constant repetition. The same word has to be used repeatedly in order to have a non-identical meaning in the sequence of time. In other words, a word as trace or mark has to be related to another word and not to a concept or a transcendental signified. In its iteration of its not fully present and identical meaning, it achieves its possibility literality or conventional meaning. Hence, Derrida writes: “[a]ll writing, therefore, in order to be what it is, must be able to function in the radical absence of every empirically determined addressee in general” (Derrida, 1982).

3. Body and/as Text

Taking the above account of writing, this paper attempts to argue that writing and the body are closely tied notions in Derrida’s philosophy. The discussion on writing in Derrida’s project ascertains that the body cannot be conceptualized outside the thinking of writing and they are intertwined notions. Derrida’s stance is that “writing and body are both placed on the margins of western philosophy and culture and considered as auxiliary to speech and mind/soul, respectively” (Lyngdoh, 2018). This line of argument in Derrida’s discourse on body is not that of Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology of the body or that of

Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, but a deconstructive reading of the conventional privileging of mind over body, situating this dualism within what he considers as the larger discourse of speech-writing binary. We have already noted that the body in Derridean terms cannot be understood outside the purview of writing in the above sense. According to the tradition, body, like writing, has been treated as less significant and exterior to the mind/soul. And, this makes Kirby argue that there is a somatophobia in western metaphysics” (Kirby, 1997). Body has been repressed through its exteriorization, and less attention has been given to the discourse on the body as a subject matter in the history of western philosophy. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida writes: “...writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos. And the problem of soul and body is no doubt derived from the problem of writing from which it seems conversely to borrow its metaphors” (Derrida, 1974). Reynolds sees the comparison between the denigration of writing and body in *Of Grammatology* as implying “a specific affinity between writing and body” (Reynolds, 2004). Further, to have a better understanding of the affinity between body and writing and on the view of the textuality of embodied body, the conceptualization of the “text” in Derrida is a matter of importance to this paper. Derrida’s notorious anthemic statement “[t]here is nothing outside of the text” (Derrida, 1974) is undoubtedly one of his most dramatic propositions and the most often misinterpreted one. Text is no longer a written textbook, but it encompasses all ways of meaning-making in its interconnected context. Speaking metaphorically, every text is a preface to another text, a footnote to some other text. This is like the interweaving and interlacing of weaving threads in a fabric where every individual thread is linked meaningfully and purposively to other threads. Texts are interrelated with other texts, and no text can stand in isolation from others. No text is completely enclosed, insulated within itself, nor is its meaning completely outside its texture; rather, a text is the interpenetration of both an outside and an inside, so much so the meaning of any absolute outside or inside becomes destabilized and thus questionable. A text has no pure origin or single dominant meaning. Its meaning, rather, is relationally tied to its “con-texts”.

Again, another way of understanding Derrida’s statement is to borrow the Barthesian idea of “death of an author”. With the arrival of modernity, which is the enthronement of the human subject, there is a *parousia* of the messianicity of the author(ship), authorial authority and authorial intention. According to Roland Barthes, the “author” is a modern figure, a byproduct of the recognition of the prestige of human autonomy and individuality (Barthes, 1977). The centrality of the human subject marks the arrival of the agent in stamping his/her signature on writing. The notion “author” constitutes the privileged movement of individualization of authority in the history of ideas. The authorial intention is taken to be the only valid meaning that the text is trying to convey. And, the author’s name manifests the appearance of certain distinct traits and styles of the

writer. However, how can one have the authority over one's own text after death?

Authorial authority, and the intentions, background and context of the author have been put on trial by thinkers like Barthes. To assign special authorship to the text is to impose a limit on the text. Is there really an element of final authority of the author on her/his texts? The birth of the reader is at the cost of the death of the author and, contends Barthes, as “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into its own death” (Barthes, 1977). It is *as if* (I say *as if*) the reader murders the author in a certain way. The author cannot have the same authority over the text as the reader does. This is to say, the *aporia* of the birth of the reader and the death of the author intersects within the text. Barthes argues that it is language, which speaks to her reader and not the author. Language performs an act of communication. In this manner, the removal of authorial intention transforms the mode in which the modern text speaks for itself. The modern text is made to be read in the absence of its author. In other words, the modern text can be conceptualized as authorless and the key meaning of the text can be conceived to be hidden from the author herself.

However, special attention needs to be taken so that the slogan “there is nothing outside the text” is not reduced to the simplistic idea that Derrida considered everything to be just language or text. Taking Reynolds's advice that “[s]uch a statement seems to have some obvious implications for the question of the body” (Reynolds, 2004), I would like to argue with Glendining that the notion of the “text” in Derrida is to be associated not with its general meaning in language or in the whole system of language, but with his new understanding of the body or sensible writing. Language is made possible not by the *phone* of speech, but by writing (Glendining, 2004). The argument receives its legitimacy only if we consider the fall of the hierarchical binary opposition of mind/body, speech/writing, inside/outside and other such privileged bipolarities. To argue for the corporeality of the body as text is to perceive the textuality of the body. Text means a sensible sign of a sign without a dominant origin.

Text—the sign and its visibility—has been a problem for western philosophy because as has been quoted above that for Derrida, “writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos” (Derrida, 1974). His resolution of this problem, deeply embedded in intellectual culture, does not go in the direction of privileging the sensible inscription (writing) and the body as the essence of things. He, rather, argues that “if writing is ‘image’ and exterior ‘figuration’, this ‘representation’ is not innocent. The outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa” (Derrida, 1974). The task of grammatology as the science of language is to recover this “natural” or simple and original relationship between speech and writing, which Derrida considers as the intertwining of the inside and the outside, thought and its sensible inscription in symbols.

The body, alluding from this grammatological thesis, also is thus the sensible inscription or text of the intertwining of the inside and the outside, whether in a human being or in animate and inanimate beings. Referring to the above passage, Reynolds writes that “just as writing is not the ‘clothing’ of speech, sensible matter and the body are not the clothing that prevents us from seeing an inaccessible mind. In both cases, Derrida argues that inner and outer are irrevocably intertwined” (Reynolds, 2004). Reynolds thinks that Derrida here is in line with the later Merleau-Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible*. There is no monological consciousness, meaning and sense hiding behind the exteriority of the body, awaiting hardearned disclosure, prevented by body, matter and flesh. Without the sensible sign and embodiment, meaning and sense cannot become visible. According to David Abram’s exposition of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of flesh, this concept underlines the fact that the sensible (that which can be sensed or touched) and the sentient (the one who can sense or touch) are intertwining as if in a chiasmic matrix. The flesh of the world, of which our own embodiment partakes, is that underlying matrix where the sensible is in the sentient and the sentient is in the sensible (Abram, 1996). Reynolds argues that Derrida’s inadequate concern with embodiment prevented his “detailed appreciation of what the materiality of the written consists in” (Reynolds, 2004). However, he also argues that Derrida’s texts clearly allude to the later Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the flesh as the chiasmic intertwining of the sentient and the sensible when he writes that far from being the concealment and clothing over meaning that is hidden inside the mind, writing and the body act in his works as the intertwining chiasm or flesh of the inside-outside, the spiritual-material and the intelligible-sensible. According to Merleau-Ponty, our experience of the intelligibility of anything is dependent on the intertwining of the sensible and the sentient prevailing upon the flesh; “the thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). This understanding of the flesh seems to correlate with Derrida’s allusions to writing as body, which would become further clear with the following section’s exposition of the embodiedness of metaphor.

With this understanding of Derrida’s notion of the body as already written with marks and traces, already inscribed with sensible-intelligible meaning, and thus everything embodied is to be understood as always already text because it is already meaning-engraved or to argue that writing as body and (or as) text, I believe an interpretation of the fleshiness or embodiedness of metaphorical language can be generated. The fleshiness of metaphor or metaphorical language has the connotation of embodiment as seen in the work of Derrida. The written sign or any sensible sign for that matter, a signifier, which can be sensed or perceived has the ability to stand for another signifier. This act of standing for something else as something is what metaphor has been understood as in the whole of western intellectual tradition since Aristotle. With this background, the following section of this paper attempts to ferret out the bodylines or fleshiness

of metaphorical language within the larger conceptualization of metaphor in the works of Derrida.

4. Writing and the Flesh of Metaphorical Language

It is important to reiterate that to understand metaphorical language as “flesh” in Derrida’s philosophy means to destabilize the accepted equilibrium of the triadic relationship between thought, speech and writing, and thereby to deconstruct and desediment the phonocentric privileging of speech over writing and of mind over body in the whole system of western intellectual culture. The stance taken by Derrida that language is not entirely speech paves the way to the argument of the “scene of writing,” according to which language is temporal, spatial and material. Language in its corporeality, sensibility (perceivability), cannot co-exist with body. Language (as arche-writing) is material and lends itself to embodied experience. However, this is not to reverse the binary hierarchies of speech-writing, intelligible-sensible, mind-body. The deconstruction of these binaries gave rise to the thinking of body and language (language as always already metaphorical), leading to the understanding of language as embedded in the play of sensible writing and the corporeality of the body rather than as limited and contaminated by writing and the body. Deconstruction has paved the way and enhanced the study of body politic and metaphorical language as deconstruction destabilizes all forms of equilibrium, hierarchy and act as a quasi-condition for the possibility of thinking of the other side of marginal pole. Derrida helps us transcend the arbitrary binaries of conventional language and see how the discourse of metaphorical language is interlaced with the corporeity of the body. In this way, language is seen not merely as abstract symbolism or as the merely physical emitting of sounds. Just as body is always already inscribed with meaning in its substanceless materiality, writing is always already inscribed with sense in its metaphoricity.

Three cautions with respect to other approaches to the body and language are to be noted in this discussion of the fleshliness-metaphoricity of signs in the Derridean sense: the nontextual Cartesian body, the Merleau-Pontian phenomenological body with reference to his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), and the cognitive approach to metaphor as found in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. As Francis Barker argues, “[t]he Cartesian body is ‘outside’ language; it is given to discourse as an object..., it is never *of* language in its essence” (Barker, 1995). The Cartesian body recognizes language (speech) as the property of the mind or the *psyche*. This implies that the mind manipulates the body according to its whims. In this case, the mind is taken to be superior, primary and pure, but dominated and contaminated by the body. Such understanding of the body and the exteriorization of body do not find a place in Derrida’s deconstructive reading of the body. For him the body in its sensibility is always already inscribed with sense or meaning (mind) and meaning is inexpressible without this writing upon. Derrida also disagrees with Mer-

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body in *Phenomenology of Perception*, which accepts without questioning the traditional theory of writing as the graphic representation of speech. Merleau-Ponty writes that "...speech, in general sense, is a being that comes from reason *and writing comes from speech*" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) (*italics added*). Derrida, on the other hand, does not privilege writing or body; he, rather, sees their irrevocable entwinement. Arche-writing is the structure of *différance*, not writing in the ordinary sense. Derrida also does not assume the *cogito*, which Merleau-Ponty does in *Phenomenology of Perception* but abandons in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Hence, Derrida's view of body as writing is a post-phenomenological view of deconstruction of the hierarchies of binary oppositions. John Protevi is of the view that Derrida's approach to language is post-phenomenological in orientation and post-psychological with respect to cognition (Protevi, 2001). His breaking away from the privileging of hierarchical binary oppositions and such modes of presencing shows that Derrida moves ahead of the always presencing physio-phenomenological body. Again, this understanding of the embodied metaphoricality of language is not to be taken in the same manner as the approach of Lakoff and Johnson on the body, cognitive mind and language, as found in their works *Philosophy in the Flesh* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) and more centrally in *Metaphors We Live by* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Their basic proposition is that humans think and conceptualize metaphorically. Theirs is a theory of cognition rather than of meaning and language. For Lakoff and Johnson there is a process of cross-domain mapping performed by the cognitive mind through the sensory body. Derrida's concerns are regarding the pervasive metaphoricality of language and the production of meaning through erasure of metaphorical meaning and the accumulation of abstract surplus meaning without, however, ever being totally able to surpass the trace of sensible meaning in the intelligible. Keeping these three precautions in mind, I will continue to explicate on the fleshliness of metaphorical language in Derrida.

In his essay "*La Parole Soufflée*" Derrida criticizes Antonin Artaud for his attempt to desacralize and destroy metaphor and metaphorical language (Derrida, 2001). He argues that writing and metaphor cannot be separated for they are both the originary aspects of language. Language is not only metaphorical, but is also writing (*arche-écriture*). Language is not about the referential character of the signifier-signified relation, but is a system of interrelated signifiers. The notion of "language" as a differential structure of signs means that it is a structure of signifiers that stand for other signifiers. No sign stands for the thing-in-itself or the transcendental signified; rather, every sign is a sign of a sign. Hence, Derrida remarks that "[t]he thing itself is a sign" (Derrida, 1974) and that "...the text in general is a fabric of signs" (Derrida, 1974) (*emphasis added*). Derrida viewed language not only as graphic written signs and phonic spoken signs but as that which encompasses all that we can consider as the "other" of language such as the graphical inscriptions of symbols, dance, rituals, music, etc. Lan-

guage is not merely linguistic but is an embodiment of perception and experience. In short, language is all that which points us to something as something. Such is the materiality and metaphoricity of the signifier.

In Derrida's reading, according to the traditional understanding of metaphor as the description of one thing as another, every application of the sign for something is already metaphorical. What is to be remembered here is only that there is no fully present "literal thing" apart from the sign that stands for/as it. The sign is a mediation of *différance* and as such metaphorical. It is this character of the sign spatial differing of one thing from another while standing for it and temporal deferring of its meaning without any allusion to achieving fullness that Derrida intends in the term arche-writing. In a passage that I have already cited, Derrida remarks that the problem of writing in his opinion is not considering the conventional and literal meaning of writing in the ordinary sense to be a metaphor; rather, it is to consider the literal meaning of writing, arche-writing, as metaphoricity as such (Derrida, 1974). In this sense, the sensible inscription of sign without being the totalization of the meaning of what it is standing for, the sign of sign, means embodiment. Just as the sign houses the meaning of what it stands for and without it, the thing cannot enter the process of mediation and meaning, the body houses its sense/mind. The body is the entwining of materiality and meaning, which according to Reynolds is equally applicable to Derrida's notion of body and Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh. Embodiment means the alreadiness of being inscribed with intelligibility, which is what metaphorization achieves. The intertwining of the sensible-intelligible, corporealpsychical—flesh in later Merleau-Ponty's sense—is writing as body, understood as the possible readability and visibility of the not fully present sign. The whole linguistic system thus becomes not only metaphorical but also embodied. This is why Derrida can be aligned broadly with the contemporary revolution in the theory of metaphor (as we see in the writings of Lakoff and Johnson, who take Merleau-Ponty for inspiration) with respect to embodied cognition, albeit with the important caveat that cognition or conceptual abstraction is never an absolute given, fully present transcendental signified; it never escapes the play of *différance*. Abstraction can never fly above the world of senses because it necessarily houses traces of what is supposed to be foreign to it: the sensible element. There is a symmetrical relationship between language and body. Language as writing involves the wholeness of embodiment in its expression and language as embodiment and expression is a bodily experience. As for Jean-Luc Nancy, the act of touching the body or touching itself happens in writing (Nancy, 2008). Writing (as the originary language) at its corporeality always touches upon the body in the form of scars, tattoos, engraving images; "[w]riting in its essence touches upon the body" (Nancy, 2008). Now, writing is able to touch the body only because it is itself already the touchable body. That is, in the later Merleau-Ponty's parlance, the sentient being and the sensible being are intertwined in the chiasm of the body of metaphorical language so that the space/gap or *écart*

for meaning to appear is thus created. Writing is never frozen, fixed and stable, and the same is the case with the body. Writing in its differential mediation is never closed or stagnant and hence it becomes metaphorical, always throwing up possibilities of meaning. Sensible inscription, just like body, always already and without any point of temporal origin acts as the incarnation of the intelligible. In our understanding of metaphorical language as fleshy, the Heideggerian model of knowing and interacting with the world as always engaging, as being-there in the world, as gripping and using rather than staring and contemplating, can be insightful. The *zuhandenheit* (handiness) model of Heidegger offers a different perspective in looking at the intercourse of body and language. Metaphorical language can thus mean peaceful dwelling as embodied, incarnated being in the world as Heidegger describes in the essay “Building Dwelling Thinking.” In the words of Lakoff and Johnson, “...metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action (*action as touch*)” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It is not the mind, which is the bearer of language, but body (and bodily sensations) as situated in the world. The body and its bodily experience are interlocked in a manner of producing knowledge about the world.

A close look at Derrida’s essay “*La différance*” can shed further light on the notion of the flesh of writing as not exterior to the purview of the movement of *différance*. What is meant here, according to Alejandro Vallega, is to address the question of the body and flesh.

In a manner that does not merely repeat the metaphysical identification and treatment of the body and flesh as things or essences separate from thought and words... In the unsettling of signification and the metaphysics of presence through our exposure to the temporalizing interval beyond presence, we find an opening towards the concrete undergoing of thought in the abyssal and disseminating play of *différance* (Vallega, 2009).

With the play of *différance*, there is a displacement of the hierarchical privileging of mind over body, intelligible over sensible, spiritual over material, speech over writing. It desediments the dominating power of one over the other. In short, it unsettles the dominant form of presence and permanence. There is a play of force in the philosophy of Derrida, which acts like a catalyzer. The concrete assemblage of meaning “has the structure of an interlacing, a weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together” (Derrida, 1973). The displacement of identity, time and others is possible with the intrusion of force in the form of the play of *différance*. In this manner, the play of *différance* is always already in operation in the intercourse between the fleshliness of metaphorical language and the fleshliness of the body (Derrida, 1973). When we think the fleshliness of metaphor in Derrida, “the concreteness, the body and flesh of the unique word (beyond the metaphysics of presence and the difference between sensible and intelligible—beyond body and mind) remains but an in-

sinuation, which must always effect a forced deferral in order to be thought through...” (Vallega, 2009). Derrida ends the essay “*La différance*”, stating that the question is “the marriage between speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name” (Derrida, 1973), referring to Heidegger’s statement “Being speaks always and everywhere throughout language” (Heidegger, 1975). Vallega argues that such an allusion to the alliance of language and being can be achieved in the Derridean sense only in the in ‘the concrete undergoing of *différance*’, which is what I mean by the fleshliness of metaphor, where the difference between the sensible and the intelligible, body and mind does not have any force.

5. Concluding Remarks

With this understanding of the embodiment of metaphorical language in Derrida’s work and the interconnectedness between writing and the body and/as text, a question can always be raised as to what is new about Derrida’s conception of fleshliness of metaphorical language. And whether such entanglement between writing and the material body is right. In bringing this paper to its conclusion, these questions demand my attention. And my intention here is to highlight the contribution of Derrida to the theme of this paper.

By distancing himself from various philosophical movements such as the existentialism of Sartre, phenomenology of Husserl, structuralism of Saussure, genealogy of Foucault, Derrida’s writings indicate his radical critique of the privileging of philosophy in traditional western thinking as the discourse about presence and permanence. In this way, Derrida is positively gesturing towards the impermanence, contingency and difference endemic to meaning and reality. He destabilized the inside-outside dichotomy, subject-object duality, and all forms of conventional binary concepts. His problematization of the fleshliness of metaphor points towards the most radical understanding of the non-foundational, non-logocentric, nonmetaphysical and not primarily the cognitive-mental character of language as a structure of signs.

Apart from this, Derrida is known for his invention of neographism, *différance*, and his robust deconstruction. The invention of the play of *différance* and other undecidable notions are taken to be so central in his writings. Here, it is important to state that without following Derrida’s rhetorical style of writing and reading texts, there will be difficulties in understanding Derrida’s works. Hence, his writings are unconventional and many main streams philosophers could not accept his works as philosophical writings.

With such a nuanced style of writing philosophical texts, we can see a different mode of engaging the texts of the *avant-garde* figures and other classical texts. This in turn helps us see the new way of approaching the problem of the fleshliness of metaphorical language as nonfoundational, non-logocentric, nonmetaphysical and not primarily cognitive-mental. The way in which Derrida sees the connection between writing and the body is not so common among other

thinkers. By deconstructing the speech-writing and mind-body dualisms entrenched in western metaphysics, Derrida is able to show how the notion of the body and writing are intertwined like flesh in Merleau-Ponty's sense. This is to say, writing and body are in the union as text without falling into linguistic monism and idealism.

In taking a look back at the argument of this paper, in conclusion, it can be said that writing as arche-writing is sensible and can be perceived as such. This embodiedness of writing implies that body and writing are intertwined as they both have been considered as the exterior in the philosophical discourse of the west. Derrida upholds the embodiedness of writing and the inscribability of the body, and thus their chiasmic intertwining made possible in his notion of metaphor, in his writings. This argument lays bare the metaphoricity of language, the fleshiness of metaphor, and the comparable signitive metaphoricity of the body.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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