I. Nietzsche, Critical Theory, Deconstruction

A. The context in which the paper emerged

1. My on-going question: what is the nature of power in contemporary society and what are the possibilities of resistance to power?

2. My answer to the question concerning the nature of power in contemporary society has been influenced by both Nietzsche and Critical Theory, specifically

a. critique of reason, deformation of reason to instrumental rationality to domination

b. its analysis of the culture industry

c. its critique of technology, both instrumental theory and as a progressive force in history

3. It has led me to an understanding of power as a system of total domination

a. power can no longer be conceived of only, or primarily, as negative, juridical: the capacity to coerce and manipulate

b. power has the capacity to produce individuals, to produce compliant subjectivities

c. Quote Marcuse

Domination is in effect whenever the individual’s goals and purposes and the meanings of striving for and attaining them are prescribed to him and performed by him as something prescribed. Domination can be exercised by men, by nature, by things—**it can also be internal, exercised by the individual on himself, and appear in the form of autonomy.**

d. In Neil Postman’s Amusing Ourselves to Death he frames this a question1984 vs Brave New World

As he says, “. . .in Huxley’s vision, no big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history . . .**people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.”**

e. The panopticon with a few changes, Act Three Waiting for Godot

4. The problematic of power: understanding of power, conceptualizing of power

determines possible resistances to power

a. Critical theorists were aware of this and answered it in different ways

b. psychoanalysis, the Great Refusal, negative dialectics, theory of communicative action

c. the answers still leave the question open to me.

5. It is within this context that I turned to work/writing of Derrida

B. The paper focuses on the Derrida’s answer to the problematic of power

1. Derrida claims that deconstruction is an intervention which is both ethical and political: “a response to a call,” “subversive,” “too political for some”

2. He argues that

a. philosophy is homogenous monologue embedded in system of domination

b. part of its institution, reproduction, justification

c. reflects exclusions (other), hierarchies, violence of the same over the other

d. reason, clarity, logic masks violence towards the other

d. Derrida’s question:

“How can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner”?

I am reminded of Benjamin’s claim:

“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism”

3. Derrida’s answer: it is absolutely essential for this interrogation that form be

consistent with the substance of the critique.

4. To understand Derrida’s claims that deconstruct ion both ethical and political one must analyze is work as a unity of form/content

C. Unity of form/content

1. Derrida’s thought in the tradition of what Habermas calls

the radical critique of reason

2. The will to misunderstood: Nietzsche and Adorno

a. Nietzsche

i. adopted unity of form/content in his critique of western philosophy, western society, ubermensch, will to power

2. parables, poetry, aphorisms, epigrams, parody, irony

3. he says he neither wants to be understood nor does he expect

To be understood by the common person,

4. he says he doesn’t want to be understood by scholars

5. critique of reason: assimilation, unique, individual and different to the same

6. To Whom Is He Speaking?

b. Adorno

1. “Defiance of society includes defiance of its language.”

2. Adorno adopts a style consistent with his critique, the style is designed to force the reader to be active/engaged in the process of understanding which is also a process of becoming

3. What he says about Schonberg’s music can be said of his own form/content.

“It requires the listener spontaneously to compose its inner movement and demands of him not mere contemplation but praxis.”

3. Derrida’s style and what he says about it.

He says about his style, it is analogous to Menippean satire, “or something like philosophic parody where all genres—poetry, philosophy, theater, et cetera—are summoned up at once . . .it is something like farce.”

“Perhaps the desire to write is the desire to launch things that come back to you as much possible in as many forms as possible. It is the desire to perfect a program or a matrix having the greatest potential **variability, undecidability, pluravocality, et cetera, so that each time something returns it will be as different as possible.”**

4. “Tympan” Introduction to Margins of Philosophy

a. two columns side by side

b. extensive footnotes

c. epigraphs

5. The logic of supplementarity

a. deconstruct exemplary texts of the western philosophic tradition

b. reveals the marginalization and exclusion of the other, but

c. reveals not just exclusion but presence of other in self-understanding of the same, the dependence on the other

6. unity of style and content result

a. a position or non-site which calls into question all, and including the boundaries of text and world

b. the calling into question reveals the presence of the excluded other

c. and opens us to hear the call of the other

d. position of undecidability from which one makes a decision

e. undecideability is the start of ethics and political

7. An irony, he wasn’t happy with his receptions, being misunderstood,

misrepresented, misappropriated by English departments.

D. Phase II: Form/content: ethic of hospitality, genealogy of tradition

1. Modifies his style as he “refines” his argument and develops an ethics and

a politics from the position of undecidability

a. Rogues

b. Specters of Marx

2. undecidability and the ethics of hospitality

a. it is not decisionism, nor existentialism

b. position that involves two poles

i. unconditional

ii. conditional

c. authentic decision is a **negotiation** between this two

poles

d. ethics begins in this **aporia of undecidability**

e. ethics of hospitality

i. unconditional desire to welcome the other

ii. conditional: reality of the situation

2. as politics

a. the aporia of undecideability creates an opening for

transforming the given

b. reflected in the dynamic of justice and the law

i. deconstruction is justice

ii. reveals the dynamic between justice and law

iii. justice is the openness to the other, the ethic of hospitality

which confronts the law, which conceals violence and exclusion

iv. justice is the dynamic at work transforming the law

v. judge

c. messianism and democracy for the future

3. Deconstruction refugees, crimes against humanity, terrorism, ghosts/specters

a. new methodology: genealogy of concepts

b. refugees in Cosmopolitanism

c. the question: refugee cities

d. method

i. looks at tradition, concepts etc

ii. discovers the aporia

iii. desire for openness to refugees

Appendix

1. If one conceives of power, as a system of total domination, are there possibilities of resistance to power? In the terms of Critical Theory: can we still conceive of an “emancipatory project”/a utopian moment?

2. Does Derrida’s deconstruction provide a way of conceiving possibilities of resistance to power, constructing an emancipatory project, does it recover a utopian moment? And/or is it a resistance itself, and intervention, both ethical and political? A shaking of the foundations?

3. Does resistance to power demand a style/form consistent with the content of the critique of power, a will to be misunderstood? What Adorno calls an attack on

society’s language, the language of everyday, philosophical discourse, ideology?

In other words, in a system of total domination what language can we speak that is not the language of power, which does not reproduce the system of power?