

# DERRIDA, PICTOGRAPHS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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“Language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise —that which is common to you, me and everybody.”

- T. E. Hulme, *Speculations*, 1924

*The ideal language model of communication – the notion that communication is the seamless transit of concepts from one person to another – is put under trial by the hermeneutical scalpel of Derrida’s deconstruction. Communication is possible only because there is an arrival of meaning, but from where does meaning emerge? Is it not the case that any communication breaks open the floodgates of meanings? Who arbitrates? Pedestrian casual talk takes for granted the kaleidoscopic quandary of meaningful communication, especially since much is presupposed and there is no point in being too critical and hermeneutic. The patent but underlying problematic in communication emerges when the issue is expropriated beyond temporal strictures and spatial horizons, as in the case of reading pictographs of our early ancestors – or more near to us – communication’s task of bridging cultures. If there is meaning to communicate, do we need to speak the same language? In deconstructing language, is communication still possible?*

## I. READING PICTOGRAPHS

**O**n September 1940, four young men discovered a cave in Dordogne, France. It didn’t take long before the discovery of the Lascaux grotto attracted international attention as the cave contains one of the earliest known prehistoric pictographs. Plenty of studies have been made to understand these pictographs, yet the more light is thrown into its mystery, the more puzzling they become. Carbon-14 dating suggests that these pictorial representations belong

to the late Aurignacian Period (ca. 15,000 – 13,000 BCE).<sup>1</sup> One might readily conclude that these pictographs are some form of creative leisure work by certain cavemen who eventually, perhaps by a stroke of luck, discovered cave painting by the use of colored substances and some primitive skills of graphic representation. Yet, one is bothered to ask: why did they paint? Pictographs are generally regarded as the earliest form of writing. To state that these paintings *are* pictographs is an anachronistic prejudgment, but this problematic is set-aside for now. The matter that concerns us here revolves around writing as a form of communication. Again, we state the question: why did they paint or write? Archaeological discoveries proffer varied evidences supporting multiple interpretations. If it were used as a mere display of skillfully done art works, why were they painted on inaccessible recesses of the cave not readily reached by others? The location of the paintings themselves renders to the primitive artist(s) great difficulty in the execution of the work, viz., painting on high ceilings or high upright walls. Another interpretation is that the paintings may have lent themselves to some primitive religious rituals or prehistoric magic to effect a good hunt or the healing of a wounded confrere.

A certain paradox confronts us: we recognize that these images are meaningful. They convey certain meanings or ideas (explaining why they are often referred to as pictographs), yet they also remain undecipherable. Nobody has effectively “read” these pictographs as Egyptologists have read and still read the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt, a more sophisticated pictograph of later millennia. Standing before the Lascaux pictographs one may validly inquire, is there communication going on? Beyond the pleasure of beholding ancient art, is there “something” exchanged linguistically in the process? How is communication possible amidst a wide temporal, spatial and cultural rupture? Is intercultural communication possible? Jacques Derrida and his project of deconstruction may shed some light in this linguistic quandary. But first, the following theses must be mentioned: (1) that (written) communication is *perhaps* possible; and

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1. See, for example *Time Frame: The Human Dawn* (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1990), 81-91. Or, visit Lascaux’s official website: <http://www.culture.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/> (accessed April 22, 2010).

that (2) there is no *need* to speak, or in the case of Derrida, to write in, the same language.<sup>2</sup> Two words are given emphasis here. For Derrida, communication is *perhaps* possible. In contrast to other philosophers and pedestrians, Derrida does not overlook simplistically the success of language in ordinary conversations or whatever mode of communication. At the beginning of his August 1971 address to the Congrès international des Sociétés de philosophie de langue française in Montreal, which has come down to us as the essay “Signature Event Context,” Derrida takes issue with the ideal language model, the notion that communication is the seamless transit of concepts from one person to another. He begins his whole discourse with a question: “Is it certain that there corresponds to the word *communication* a unique, univocal concept, a concept that can be rigorously grasped and transmitted: a communicable concept?”<sup>3</sup> The word “perhaps” I think captures succinctly the dynamic vagueness of the concept of communication and the play of meanings that characterize Derrida’s method of deconstruction. Furthermore, we have to emphasize that for communication to be (perhaps) possible, there is no intrinsic or compulsive *necessity* to speak the same language. The conveyance of meaning – if the word communication is heavily value-laden and object-oriented – is realized despite temporal and spatial breaks, as will be seen in the articulation of the phenomenon of writing in Derrida.

The foregoing theses are supported by the following elements that comprise this essay: [II] the “general graphematic structure of communication”<sup>4</sup> conveys that the form of writing is the architectonic structure of communication manifested in the subversion of utterance/word binary; [III] we need to rethink our notion of context and that there is no such thing as a “center” of discourse whereby meaning is arbitrated; [IV] iterability, and the identification of what Derrida calls “marks” rendering communication legible, is the breaking point in alleged “homogeneous space of communication”

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2. Cf. J. van Brakel and B. Vandenaabeele, eds., “No Need to Speak the Same Language: Working Notes,” (Leuven: Institute of Philosophy, Katholieke Universiteit, 2002).

3. Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 309.

4. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 327.

becoming writing's *différance*, the condition of its possibility and impossibility; and lastly [V] absence as constitutive "ground" of the graphematic character of communication.

## **II. UTTERANCE/WORD DECONSTRUCTED**

Western Philosophy is said to be characterized by certain dichotomies, dualities or binary oppositions like being/nothingness, true/false, inside/outside, present/past, etc. Though such dualities try to order conceptual categories that determine the possibility of our meaningfully understanding the world, such dualities also disclose hierarchical sequences where the meaning-identity of one necessitates the other. Binary oppositions in effect marginalize and exclude the member of the second order. Herein lies the whole agenda of Derrida's cause of deconstruction: to subvert and displace any hierarchical dualities that tend to affirm one at the cost of the other.<sup>5</sup>

These binary oppositions manifest themselves likewise in forms of communication, whether they are gestural, locutionary or written forms of communication. This is displayed to the extent that in every form of communication, taking on the ideal language model that communication is a vehicle that transports or conveys concepts from one mind to another in a specific discourse, there will always be something unsaid. To make a statement that "the cat is on the mat" is to convey an idea, yet in the process of this conceptual transaction, certain meanings are likewise marginalized or excluded in the very affirmation or even negation of a particular statement, written or uttered. Herein enters Derrida's deconstruction, specifically, of communication.

Derrida's strategy lies in the subversion of speech (*phonè*) and writing (*grammè*) in the economy of communication. His philosophic approach of subverting binaries affirms the feature of intercultural communication that utterance is basic, not sentence or word.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Cf. Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 329.

6. "According to the ideal language approach... communication is equated with conveying information in the sense of ideational theories of meaning, the semiotic 'code'-model of language, or a formal theory of information processing systems. However, the very content of speech can be understood only in terms of the action that the speech performs. Speech (and writing) are used to do, act,

Utterance here is understood, though, as the act or manner of speaking symbolized in the written word. It is interesting to note that Derrida's deconstruction of the duality between speech (*phonē*) and writing (*grammē*) is an overriding critique, and implicitly also, the subversion of the whole of the history of Western philosophy, from the ancients even up to Heidegger.<sup>7</sup> Ever since Plato describes truth as pure self-immediacy, where speech meaning is still identical with itself, and hence (more) "true," Western philosophy has accorded a hierarchical partiality of speech over writing. Yet, ironically, following Plato's own identification of writing as *pharmakon* (ambiguously it can both be "cure" and "poison") Plato undermines his own logic in that as writing alienates the meaning from its source, in effect introducing corruption to the truth, it likewise acts as the cure in order to maintain meaning's own immediate identity with itself, in the wider context of Plato's theory of knowledge as *anamnesis*.<sup>8</sup> Concretely, if Plato contends that truth of meaning needs to maintain its self-immediacy especially from the presence of its source, such can never be achieved if it has not been "put into sign" in the written text, where Plato's own intention maintains a certain relative immediacy with the meaning of the text. Hence, *pharmakon* is for Derrida, a *différance* because it is the condition of possibility of differences in its own ambivalence.

The question that we can ask now is: does this subversion of speech and writing undermine the whole agenda of intercultural communication? Not at all. In a strange manner, it actually concurs, in certain ways, the basic affirmation when we contend that utterance is basic, over sentence or word. I believe that this feature tries to balance between two poles: first, that we need to shy away from

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make, produce, achieve, and mean things. In some languages the nearest one can get to "What do you mean?" is something like "What is your speech?" Van Brakel, et al., "No Need to Speak the Same Language," 7.

7. "According to Derrida, there remains within Heidegger's immense laboring toward the destruction of metaphysics a certain noncritical privilege to the voice as the proper presence of Being. This is to day, Derrida locates in Heidegger a certain originary presence of Being in the voice, the *phonē*, accompanied by the derivative valuation of the *grammē*, the written cipher, as having fallen from this originary presence of Being." Alan D. Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1990), 111.

8. See Derrida's early essay "Plato's Pharmacy," in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

ideal language and ideal speech situations – both of which undermine the fundamental play of significations at work in the matrix of meanings of locally shared worlds – and; second, we affirm the evidences which coincide with the task of asserting the truth that we need not speak the same language. Derrida’s subversion of this binary opposition effectuates an inclusion likewise of utterance to written communication. Non-verbal communications are subsumed in the meaning-structure of a deconstructed word, because both gestural and locutionary communication are possibilized by their iterability, their capacity to be repeated-with-difference, their identification and recognition as marks making them “legible”, in the transformation of both as *pharmakon*.

### **III. RETHINKING CONTEXT**

On the issue of translating the word deconstruction into Japanese, Derrida said that deconstruction, “like all other words, acquires its value only from its inscription in a chain of possible substitutions, in what is too blithely called a ‘context.’”<sup>9</sup> The phrase “chain of possible substitution”, though mentioned alongside “blithely,” offers keen insight into how context is to be rethought in “communicative discourses.”

In “Signature Event Context,” Derrida articulates that the word communication itself, at least in French, is polysemic; it can have many meanings. And this situation actually threatens the very project of communication. This crisis of meaning is relieved by the notion of context. “It seems to go without saying that the field of equivocality covered by the word *communication* permits itself to be reduced massively by the limits of what is called a *context*.”<sup>10</sup> Ordinarily, the notion of context arbitrates meaning within a specific discourse. The word “pen” has a determined and specific signification when spoken by a student, but has another determined and specific signification when used by a farmer in the housing of animals. Yet, for Derrida, this context “is never absolutely determinable.”<sup>11</sup> So to

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9. Jacques Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 275.

10. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 310.

11. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 310.

speak, there's a form of fluidity in the rethinking of context in order to deviate from the reification of exact and composite signifier-signified relations that characterize ideal language and ideal speech situations. This fluency of discourses bars the reification of notions or ideas marking the objectivity and exactness of the ideal language syndrome. This fluency, furthermore, is a communicative character that lubricates "discourse-frictions" which result when emotional and moral attunements lie flat in frigidity. Only through this does interpretation emerge as an interdependent moment where meaning is held sway by revisions and contestations. Meaning is not reduced to "meaning-entity," values are not set opposed to "facts" and context not reduced to material domain.

Context itself is vulnerable to a "force of breaking"<sup>12</sup> dismantling its privileged position of adjudicating meaning in communication. Customarily, meaning-giving contextuality is predetermined by a preconscious consensus of even minded people who enter into conversation with relatively fixed goals and expectations. But this consensus of context is likewise normally reduced to the subject(s). And this Derrida dismisses. Every effort to topologically situate the production of meaning to a "center" (more often reducible to the subject) generates binary oppositions that need to be subverted in deconstruction. On this respect, the notion of subjectivism is done away by default. Context as a "set of presences"<sup>13</sup> then qualifies for the criterion of objectivity. The topography of meaning is not semantically localized but pressed against the grid of dynamic interaction of a "shared world" that constitutes a precondition of communication. Austin's proviso for a successful performative utterance necessitates correct context, but this quest for a correct context suffers from internal coherence as there's no context characterized by a transparency of intention on the exigency of what he calls a serious language.<sup>14</sup> To quote Derrida at length:

For a context to be exhaustively determinable, in the sense demanded by Austin, it at least would be necessary for the conscious intention to be totally present and actually

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12. Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 317.

13. Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 317.

14. See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

transparent for itself and others, since it is a determining focal point of the context. The concept of or quest for the “context” therefore seems to suffer here from the same theoretical and motivated uncertainty.<sup>15</sup>

The condition for objectivity does not appeal to some privileged independent reality but situates itself in the dynamic interplay of locally shared worlds. As there is no appeal to a reality outside the boundaries of specific discourses, this stance likewise abrogates the fact-value dichotomy. Facts and values are established from an appeal to a system of conventions that transcend the margins of a specific discourse. This dichotomy is an offshoot and will only be upheld if we do not deconstruct the hierarchical binary of subject and object. Facts and values are predicates but within a system of predicates in this “set of presences.” There is no delineation whereby we write off where facts end and values begin.

The introduction of this notion of context resonates with Wittgenstein’s notion of form(s) of life.<sup>16</sup> “The Wittgensteinian notion ‘form(s) of life’ should be understood, at the same time, in the singular *and* plural, as local *and* universal, as empirical *and* transcendental. There is *both* one and many human forms of life that crop up and disappear.”<sup>17</sup> Inclusiveness accentuates the notion “form(s) of life”, yet, one that does not suck communicative elements to the singularity of the *topos* of meaning, where meaning is arbitrated by a particular authority. This question of context will be more clarified as we turn to the notion of iterability on the next part.

#### **IV. ITERABILITY: FORCE OF BREAKING**

The notion of iterability takes central role in the articulation of the possibility of (intercultural) communication. As Austin suppresses performative utterance to non-serious language when utilized in a context improper to it (theatrical, poetic or in monologue), this very

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15. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 327.

16. See particularly, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), 19, 23, 241.

17. Van Brakel, et al., “No Need to Speak the Same Language,” 4.

aberration of serious linguistic discourse is taken by Derrida as constitutive of *every* possible discourse, regardless of its being serious or not. Herein Derrida introduces the notion of iterability in “Signature Event Context.” I believe that the introduction of this notion is more programmatic than derivative. There is a tacit purposiveness in the verbalization of repeatability within the overall dismantling of the semantic architecture of linguistics. The production of meaning is dislodged from the ordinarily understood context by the insinuation of iterability. Iterability is the “force of breaking” that usurps the presidency of context in the final arbitration of meanings. This notion actually appeals to common sense observable in any “successful” communication. The “success” of communication is relatively effectuated by my ability to recognize or identify marks and repeat them elsewhere in a different context. It is what makes writing writing, that it is legible. “This 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.”<sup>18</sup> Iterability gives birth to the possibility of meanings, yet it likewise demands the death or destruction of “original” frames of reference (addressor and addressee) that initiated writing (read: communication). Derrida provisionally follows Condillac’s central notions of representation, communication and expression in the interpretation of writing, yet demands that the latter underestimates the absence of persons to which writing, as a mode of communication historically considered, has been intended. The “absence” will be more fully discussed in the next section. What concerns us now is that iterability constitutes the germinal conveyance of meaning. It does not appeal to some foreign empirical codes in the hermeneutical project of disclosing meanings, but creates the open space for the *play* of meanings. Derrida explains this more succinctly:

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.<sup>19</sup>

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18. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 315.

19. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 316.

Iterability makes citation and grafting possible and sensible. Yet, it is not mere repetition, but repetition-*with-difference*. The expropriation of a single word from one context to another breaks open a tide of meanings that is not constricted necessarily by the specific contexts. A “written syntagma” may be lifted and inscribed to other “chains of possible substitutions” relatively perpetuating its vitality upon its use or inscription, and this with virtually a radical freedom: “No context can enclose it.”<sup>20</sup> This “rationale” I think underlies the problematic of translating straightforwardly the word deconstruction into Japanese (or to any language at that, in principle). The “Letter to a Japanese Friend” has an overarchingly “negative” ambience insofar as Derrida seems to circumvent the task at hand by elaborating on the *limits* of translation, adumbrating on the what’s-not than on the what-is. His own efforts to shy away from sentences of the ‘*s is p*’ type terminate in an ambiguous and ambivalent climax: “What deconstruction is not? everything of course! / What is deconstruction? nothing of course!”<sup>21</sup> The programmatic “principle” that cuts through all these ambiguity is inherent in the entire program of deconstruction. As he himself explains:

That is why this word, at least on its own, has never appeared satisfactory to me (but what word is), and *must always be girded by an entire discourse*. It is difficult to effect it afterward because, in the work of deconstruction, I have had to, as I have to here, multiply the cautionary indicators and put aside all the traditional philosophical concepts, while reaffirming the necessity of returning to them, at least under erasure.<sup>22</sup>

The phrase “must always be girded by an entire discourse” accentuates the fluidity of meaning-significations. Clearly, Derrida is deviating from any forms of appealing to an ideal language. In certain respects, Derrida’s approach is pragmatic. He here subscribes to the contention that meanings are not “things.” Meaning-significations have constitutive vagueness and flexibility that mirror the flow or

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20. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 317.

21. Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” 275.

22. Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” 272-273, emphases added.

“essential drifting” in communicative discourses undermined by “infinite” factors that nuance the “grasping” of what words signify (affectivity, beliefs, desires, biases, etc.). In all these respects, Derrida is hoisting the flag of undecidability in the determinations of meaning-significations. Yet, amazingly, it doesn’t totally abrogate or destabilize the possibility of communication itself. The very conveyance of these in his “system of deconstruction” corroborates this.

## V. ABSENCE AND “PRIMORDIALITY”

Iterability is the condition of possibility and impossibility of communication. But in the discussion of Derrida, this iterability is embedded within his discourse on absence. Returning to his initial discussion on Condillac’s text, Derrida notes that the former failed to examine and render due credit to the shaping of discourse by this notion of absence. For Condillac, absence is both the factual or real absence of the addressee and the “progressive extenuation of presence.” It is not absence *simpliciter*, but rather a representative supplementing presence along the “homogeneous space of communication.” According to Derrida, this absence then is not absence itself, for, taken as what it is as such, this will entail the “risk of introducing a certain break in the homogeneity of the system.”<sup>23</sup>

To follow in a Kantian vein, the inquiry into the condition of possibility (and impossibility) of iterability itself would yield to a consideration of absence itself. I believe that absence is the rock bottom of any “graphematic” communicative discourses. Risking an oversimplification of absence, we may illustrate the “primordially” of absence in intercultural communicative discourses by the ubiquitous “space” distributed in all forms of communication: gestural, locutionary or written. To illustrate: one “comprehends” meaning in the reading of this text because of the “spaces” that fasten together all the marks of a written text. Likewise, the sheer inscription of a word or even a letter in an empty page is yielded by the “primordial” absence that comes prior to any communicative discourse. Furthermore, in spoken language, my words – my language

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23. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 312.

– become intelligible, by the “spaces” or the “pauses” interrupting the continuous flow of my utterance. The intelligibility of my communication is made possible by the identification of marks, its iterability, yet “prior” to this iterability is an absence correlative to the production and play of meanings. Derrida closely intimates this in his discussion of “spacing”: spacing–

constitutes the written sign: the spacing which separates it from other elements of the internal contextual chain (the always open possibility of its extraction and grafting), but also from all the forms of a present referent (past or to come in the modified form of the present past or to come) that is objective or subjective. This spacing is not the simple negativity in the service of meaning, *but the emergence of the mark.*<sup>24</sup>

Derrida does not take communication according to how it is commonly understood, but “reinvents” it, gives it a different shade of meaning. It is significant that in the conclusion of his “Signature Event Context,” he contends that communication, characterized by a “general graphematic structure”, is “not the means of transport of sense, the exchange of intentions and meanings, the discourse and ‘communication of consciousness’”, but the “more powerful historical unfolding of a general writing.”<sup>25</sup> Even the very notion of “reading” a “text” takes on an unconventional form. He continues that, stated simply, writing is read, and it “does not give rise to a hermeneutic deciphering, to the decoding of a meaning or truth.”<sup>26</sup> The meaning of a single word does not sit on a firm ground but is continuously shaken by “intervening forces” that reshape the unfolding of significations, that interrupts the play of meanings. This is intimated further in Derrida’s excursus on Husserl concerning the possibility

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24. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 317. Cf. the notion of supplementation as presented in the lexical absence of “to be” in other languages. Jacques Derrida, “The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy *before* Linguistics” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josue Harari (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 115, emphases added.

25. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 329.

26. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 329.

of the absence of a referent and of the signified. A pertinent discussion here is about the phrase “square circle”.<sup>27</sup> Derrida notes that here, both the referent and the signified are absent – but not the meaning. Pushing further the crisis of meaning, Derrida cites Husserl’s *Sinnlosigkeit*, of agrammaticality. Such phrases as “abracadabra” and “green is or” may not be acceptable within a purely logical grammar, but Derrida was quick to add that since these phrases do not constitute their own context, there is a possibility of citation and grafting, and the very inscription of these phrases unto other sets of provisional contextual substitutions render them “legible,” that is, as a text, a written text, they can be “read,” meanings are produced and conveyed to the reader.

Expropriating this notion (and the rest of the elements combined) in intercultural communication (though this marks a digression in Derrida’s discourse) does throw light into the possibility of communication and the non-necessity of speaking the same language. I believe that this is intimated especially in the “reading” of pictographs, like those of the Lascaux cave. We may be sure that in certain respects, the artists or writers of those pictographs have *intentionally* created them. One greatly doubts whether they were simply doodles of some hairy, scantily clad, club-wielding cavemen. Rather, the markings of the text, the pictographs, were intentionally executed for some purpose. Furthermore, these pictographs may have indeed served their purpose(s) (whatever it/they may have been). The addressor is now long lost, so are the addressee. The intention is totally absent to us now, yet as intentional marks, they still convey meaning. They “appear” to us meaningfully, as if communicating something intelligible, but paradoxically, remains ungraspable. The spatio-temporal “space” that forms an enormous divide between them and us did not dissipate or undermine the possibility of “communication” (read: *perhaps* communicating) that is inherent in the very inscription of words, in the very graphematic structure of communication itself. We can identify these primitive markings, and even repeat them. They have not lost *their* iterability, or perhaps we

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27. See Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. I, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1970), 200-203.

have not lost our ability to identify, recognize and repeat-with-difference these marks that appear to us. We need not know fully (as if such is a “real” possibility) what and how these pictographs are “to be read” during the Aurignacian period for that is a context specific to them. More importantly, we can “read” them as text, as written texts, as pictographs. They (perhaps) “communicate” to us; they convey to us “sensible” meanings. These meanings are intelligible, but not “completely” graspable.

## **VI. PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION**

The whole “project” of deconstruction may be called a de-essentialization of reified dogmatism in Western philosophy. However, Derrida pushes this to the extreme, even recoiling from the possibility of deconstruction itself becoming a “system” among the many systems at work in philosophical discourses, another logocentric certainty, among the many conceptual certainties of Western philosophy. To this, we can add the comment that in more ways than one, Derrida’s agenda push (almost) everything to the extreme end, sometimes one also doubts what motive he has in maintaining a position (or better yet a non-position) that ultimately undermines its own “ground.” Indeed, his insistence on undecidability and the derailing of language from its logocentric certainties and foundations virtually put meanings and significations, not only in determined yet relative contexts or “worlds,” but ultimately a letting lose of all meanings and their relation to certain forms of determinations. It is true that when a specific word is grafted on in another language, it takes on a different shade of meaning or signification, precisely because as what Derrida would say, the text kills its own author, the father-son relation is said to be disengaged, and the originary intimacy of meaning with the presence of the father is lost. In this way, we also see again a concurrence in Derrida’s “philosophy” with regard to the statement that meanings are not “things.” There is no fixed determined point on which to pursue a certain discourse in the manifoldness of the matrix of interaction, yet we do notice that in concrete “first contacts” we have – we do –

one way or another come to a certain understanding, and the condition of possibility of this mutual understanding will remain to be that “context” which ultimately escapes determination.

In all these respects, Derrida does (perhaps) offer insight, a nonetheless significant insight, into communication, in whatever way one may understand this. Post-structuralism, of which Derrida is the foremost proponent, is a radical and influential movement that, as (hopefully) mirrored or reflected in this essay, denies objective truth and meaning, or perhaps better formulated, expropriates the objectivity of truth and meaning. If there would indeed be a handicap to this system, it is due to what it has borrowed from structuralism itself: the negation of reference and realism.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Cf. Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 260-261.