# Introduction

A profound and unsettling self-consciousness has infected contemporary philo-
sophical discourse. In the philosophical community there is an almost
obsessive preoccupation with the question concerning the type and aim of
discourse appropriate for the philosopher's task. Is philosophical discourse to
be understood primarily as referential, expressive, persuasive, narrational, po-
etical, or possibly as a combination of all of these? Are philosophical speech
and prose exemplifications of a particular genre, or do they fall out as a panoply
of *mixed* discourse? The current republic of professional philosophers, in its
various quarters and conclaves, has recognized the importance of language and
communication in an unprecedented way. This has opened opportunities for
lively exchanges with the sister disciplines of linguistics, literature, rhetoric,
and communication. It has also, however, occasioned a measure of disquietude
in the philosopher's struggle to understand what he is about when he speaks
and writes.

It would seem that philosophers talk and write because they intend to say
something *about* something. Their discourse is understood as being in some
manner referential. Yet, it is not all that clear what the referenced something of
philosophical discourse is. We have all been taught various lessons on the
inscrutability and indeterminacy of reference. Cognizant of these instructions
can we still maintain that philosophical discourse is about things in the world
and about what they are like? Or is philosophical discourse about "problems"
that arise from our experience and knowledge of the world? Or is it about
"problems" created by other philosophers? G. E. Moore had already pricked
our sensitivities on the matter at issue in his autobiographical musing: "I do not
think that the world or the sciences would ever have suggested to me any
philosophical problems. What has suggested philosophical problems to me is
things which other philosophers have said about the world or the sciences."[1]
Now what is it that these "other philosophers" have "said about the world or
the sciences"? Was their discourse somehow originatively referential? Or were
they somehow deluded in thinking that they were saying something about the
world but in fact were not, and only managed to create problems for subsequent
philosophers who then inherit the task of dissolving them? It is precisely this
saying of something "about" something that appears to be the Chinese puzzle,
particularly when matters of philosophical discourse are at issue. We seem to
be forced into a circle of discourse, a discursive closure, in which writing,
philosophical or otherwise, is simply writing about writing. This is a conclusion
which Jacques Derrida and some of his followers are happy to accept. Philo-
sophical writing, we are told, is simply writing about what other philosophers

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[1] *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore,* Paul A. Schilpp, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1968), p. 14.

have written, from which all references to "presence"—be it the presence of objects, sense-data, or being-itself—should be deleted.

The current self-consciousness of philosophical discourse has also produced an increased awareness of the role and relevance of the hearer in philosophical speech and the reader in philosophical writing. Specific attention has been focused on the speaker/hearer and writer/reader contexts. Philosophical discourse, both spoken and written, it has been urged, is not only *about something;* it is also *for someone.* Rhetoricians and communication theorists have for some time emphasized the importance of the audience and the reader. Philosophy seems at last to have learned something from them. In this shift of concern from the reality talked about in discourse to a concern with the persons addressed there is a concomitant shift from discourse as referential to discourse as persuasive. Here also rhetoricians have been willing to lend a helping hand in refining the art of persuasion. The new emphasis on language and discourse has, not unexpectedly, led to a resurrection of the medieval trivium in which grammar, logic, and rhetoric were accorded their respective and combinatory functions. But the question as to the rhetorical "who" of the audience and reader still remains a matter of some puzzlement. Is this "who" someone to be determined in advance of the discourse? Are hearers and readers discovered in the events of speaking and writing, or are they somehow constituted by these events? What role does the hearer-reader, either as particularized addressee or generalized other, play in the meaning of that which is spoken and written? These are unavoidable questions which arise as discourse seeks to place the audience and the reader within their proper contexts.

Traveling with these questions are those concerning the "who" of the speaker and the author. Discourse is *for* someone. It is also discourse *by* someone. Is the speaker-author properly located anterior to the discourse, after the fact of discourse, or somewhere within the interstitial space of the discourse? What role does the speaker-author play in the achievement of meaning? Is he the central character on stage, or does he remain behind the scenes as the play of meaning goes on? Where within the play of the "conversation of mankind"[2] is the speaker-author announced? What manner of self-implication occurs in the event of speaking and in the labors of textual formation? The question "Who is speaking?" needs to be asked somewhere down the line. According to Foucault this was one of Nietzsche's central questions, to which Mallarmé responded with a "glittering answer" in his reply: "The Word is speaking."[3] Sustained reflection, however, might show that Mallarmé's reply was more like a "littering" answer, heaping up much that needs to be kept distinct and sorted out. Correspondingly, there is the irrepressible question "Who is writing?", and one is invited to reflect with Derrida on the indeterminability of self-reference in an author's signature. Does the signature indicate

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[2] The phrase is Michael Oakeshott's, but it has been invested with a considerable amount of philosophical capital in Richard Rorty's revolutionary treatise on *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), in which philosophy is portrayed as neither more nor less than a voice in the conversation of mankind.
[3] *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 382.

some species of signification of the presence of authorial intention and design? What manner of "subject" is implicated in the speaking and writing that comprise the ongoing conversation and *écriture* of mankind? And what shape would discourse about this subject assume? The tendency in the traditon has been to use the intermittent allusions to a speaking and writing subject as illustrations of expressive discourse. As referential discourse is harnessed with the rather awesome demand of hooking up propositions with reality, and as persuasive discourse points us to the audience-reader, so expressive discourse has been assigned the task of delivering the subjectivity of the subject. Unfortunately, the traditional form of this expressive discourse has not achieved the requisite elucidatory power to enable one to see how such a demanding task can be successfully performed.[4]

Yet another facet of the intense self-reflection of philosophers as they ponder the question of what philosophers should think about and how they should proceed with the speaking and writing about that which they think pertains to the pervasive metaphoricity of philosophical language and the insinuation of narrational discourse. Whereas in the past the protocols of the trade have dictated that one assign the topic of metaphor to those doing literature and rhetoric, whose alleged profession was thought to be that of getting things straight on the mechanics of epideictic locution, currently there has been an accelerated interest in the weight of metaphor in philosophical writing as the "transporting" *(meta-phere)* of philosophical thought. There is an original meaning of metaphor that extends beyond its mere epideictic function. Metaphor does not simply adorn our discourse; it *carries* it. In current philosophy and in the new rhetoric alike there has been a recognition of this more substantive role of metaphor in relation to the content of thought. Witness, for example, the weight of the metaphoricity of "revolution" in Kuhn's philosophy of scientific discovery, the thought play in the metaphorical extension of "game" in Wittgenstein's approach to language, and the preeminent role of the metaphor of "textuality" in the hermeneutical reflections of Gadamer and the post-structuralist thought of Derrida. More pointedly, metaphor has become a specific topic as it relates to the nature of philosophical discourse and the problems of reference and meaning in the extensive study by Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*.[5] This recent concern with the role and rule of metaphor is itself part of a wider interest in the proper placement of narrational discourse in philosophical writing. The flourish of interest in the long-neglected works of Vico and the attention given to the approach to language in the later Heidegger and in the writings of Foucault and Barthes highlight the poetics of narrational discourse as an intrinsic rather than simply extrinsic feature of philosophical speech and writing.

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[4] James L. Kinneavy in his volume *A Theory of Discourse* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), appropriately highlights the need for a new "logic" of expressive discourse. However, somewhat disappointingly, he marks out the approach to such a new logic by remaining rooted in the traditional prejudice of viewing expression as the externalization of internal subjective states and intentions. See particularly chapter 6, "Expressive Discourse."

[5] Trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

This unsettling state of affairs relating to the type and aim of philosophical discourse is closely allied with another concern that has moved to the forefront of the contemporary philosopher's self-understanding of his discipline and task. Reflecting on the nature of his discourse he is also compelled to reflect on where and how he is to start. So large looms this issue before the visage of the contemporary philosophical mind that one author has seen fit to caption his lengthy and detailed probing of the nature and uses of dialectics in philosophical thought with the title *Starting Point: An Introduction to the Dialectic of Existence*.[6] Another writer has made the topic of "beginnings" a unifying thematic in his exploration of the language and thought that inform our projects of writing, reading, and interpreting.[7] Still another lays upon us the requirement of "accepting the contingent character of starting points," urging a constant vigilance that keeps this contingency from taking on alleged features of necessity.[8]

Our starting points seem to borrow heavily from the language and corpus of literature in the tradition in which we stand, as well as from involvement and reflection on the endless spate of personal and social experience. We thus rather quickly learn the truth that we never stand at a beginning but are always somehow already begun, held within a web of delivered discourse, social practices, professional requirements, and the daily decisions of everyday life. It is thus that we do well to recognize the ineradicable situationality of our starting points and avoid the all too facile transformation of them into foundational principles. The urge to lay the foundations anew and uncover the unimpeachable premises of a perennial philosophy, which has been so notably pronounced particularly since the time of Descartes, will need to be curtailed. The resources to satisfy such an urge seem to be progressively deferred as one confronts the proliferation of philosophical writing and the unbounded range of human experience. What set of issues and problems one selects from the delivered literature and what chunk of experience one marks off for analysis have more than a tincture of chance. This in itself, however, need not be taken as counsel for despair. There is still a task to be done. There is something to be gleaned through an understanding of how one moves about in the plethora of discourse and experience, perhaps in some fruitful way. Philosophical reflection and writing may not put us in touch with the bottom of being or the ground of all meaning, but they can disengage us from the facticity of our involvements in word and deed and help us to understand the inscriptions at work in what we say and how we act.

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[6]Robert D. Cumming (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979). In this work Cumming offers a fresh approach to the play of dialectics as it proceeds from an existential starting point, resisting the threats of closure by conceptual schemes and the professionalism of academic life.
[7]Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975). Said is particularly concerned to distinguish the facticity of our beginnings from the necessity and absoluteness of the metaphysically weighted notion of origins.
[8]Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," Presidential Address at the seventy-sixth annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 53 (August 1980), p. 726.

Starting points are often closely allied with claims for primacy. There was a time when the claim for the primacy of sense-data was in vogue. Before that, going way back into the tradition, we were offered claims for the primacy of essences, variously construed. Whereas sense-data were coupled with the faculty of sensation, essences were construed as the proper objects of mind, in both its conceptual and its judicative role. The decision in favor of one or the other of these primacies was motivated mainly by the contingency of standing in the tradition of either the empiricist or the rationalist way of doing philosophy, an option which often was proffered as a forced option in the history of modern philosophy. Since the halcyon days of sense-data theorizing other claims for primacy have made their presence felt. The more recent linguistic turn in philosophy has occasioned the elevation of language to a position of privilege, often in such a way that it is called upon to solve the pesky problems of epistemology that have preoccupied philosophers since the time of Descartes.[9] In still more recent times human action has become a contender for a position of primacy, and we have been urged to view the human self in its agency as being more proximate to the foundations of philosophical reflection. Twentieth century Continental philosophy, in both its existentialist and its phenomenological expression, has displayed its own predilection for primacy in the guise of primacies of existence, perception, and embodiment.

These various claims for primacy have not only provided convenient starting points; they have taken on the more formidable armor of philosophical positions within somewhat arbitrarily defined regions of subject matter—philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of action, philosophy of existence, philosophy of perception, and certain combinations thereof. This invitation to position-taking, although at times subtle but overtly consequential, has been a principal factor in the temptation to convert a contingent starting point into one that gradually accumulates the weight of necessity. The tradition, both of the ancients and of the moderns, has nurtured within us a certain fugitive philosophical hope for the security and certainty of a stable Archimedean point, from which our reflections might proceed and to which they could return for the measure of their justification. If we could only assume the proper position on matters of mind, language, perception, or action, then we would finally be able to get things right on the big issues of knowledge and reality. Our deepest epistemological and metaphysical yearnings, we have been told, will achieve fulfillment if we find that correct position or standpoint from which all things become visible.

However, in the more recent past we have also been counseled to assume a more critical attitude toward the traditional "quest for certainty" (Dewey) and to be suspicious about epistemological/metaphysical frameworks of inquiry (Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Derrida, and Rorty). The ensuing radical critiques, deconstructions, and reflections on the "end of philosophy" have occasioned a crisis of philosophical consciousness, in which the present-day philosopher, like the bewildered Barnabas in Franz Kafka's *The Castle,* is no longer certain about his vocation. The proper response to this crisis, we urge, is not a new

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[9] See particularly Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* Ch. VI.

Cartesian effort to establish an unblemished beginning so as to secure the unassailable foundations of knowledge about ourselves and the world, but rather that of achieving an understanding of the interplay in the ongoing forms of life and thought in which we are always already situated. We can indeed talk about the suspension of belief, the bracketing of metaphysical claims, and philosophical reductions, but in doing so we need to be wary about the easy commitment to a new philosophical foundationalism and a new posture of position-taking. The bracketing and reduction at issue, borne by the current consciousness of philosophical crisis, need to be more radical in their consequences. They need to put out of play or set aside not simply particular belief systems or existence claims but also the very notion of philosophy as a professionalized body of knowledge.

The question about the proper starting point is thus no longer a quest for unassailable axioms or unimpeachable epistemological principles but rather a pondering of how one can best enter the ongoing concretion of thought and action, interests and concerns, in such a way that their configurations and disjunctions, directions and misdirections, can be noted and described. Proceeding from such a starting point, the inscriptions of speaking and writing mark out not a constricted focus on elemental units of reality and the conditions for knowing them, but rather an attentiveness to the holistic space in which our ongoing thought and action, language and speech, interplay. We speak of this holistic space as the space of communicative praxis.

Our reflective entry into this holistic space may enable us to see the amalgam of thought, language, and action unfold before our very eyes and lead us to recognize the artificiality of epistemological position-taking in the postures of "philosophy of mind," "philosophy of language," and "philosophy of action." The space in which we move in our shared and singular projects can be said to be hermeneutical rather than epistemological. It is hermeneutical in the originative sense of the term because it is a play and display of understanding, of both a theoretical and a practical sort. Bernhard Waldenfels points us to this holistic and hermeneutical texture of pre-epistemological space with the suggestive title of his provocative book *Der Spielraum des Verhaltens*.[10] In this work the author sketches the comportment of human behavior within the social space of play that is older than either purified theoretical thought or abstracted empirical knowledge. Our holistic notion of the space of communicative praxis calls attention to this contextuality and interplay of thought, language, and action in the comportment of everyday life.

It is this interplay of thought, language, and action that elicits our philosophical interest and gives us a starting point. This interplay is indeed a global phenomenon, evincing similarities to what Heidegger calls the unitary phenomenon of "Being-in-the-world," which comprises his starting point in *Being and Time*. The interplay of thought, language, and action is always contextualized in a world, however vaguely and dimly this world may be understood. Yet, we do not present our starting point, and the hermeneutical requirement that it pro-

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[10](Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980).

jects, in the straightforward ontological fashion of Heidegger. This is partly due to certain suspicions that we have about Heidegger's "ontological-ontic difference," as it is orchestrated throughout his early works in particular. It is also due to the more explicitly sociopragmatic posture of our starting point, in which concerns revolve around not so much a "reminiscence of Being" as a reminiscence of communicative praxis as a form of life.

Through this reminiscence a more specific direction of questioning rather quickly comes to the fore. This questioning is directed to the space and stature of the subject as implicated in the forms of communicative praxis. What is there to be known of the speaker, the author, and the actor, somehow embedded in the praxis of speaking, writing, and acting? Factors in the philosophical situation of our day require that we ask this question. Even a cursory acquaintance with the current directions of philosophical thought will testify that the philosophical vocabulary of subject and subjectivity has fallen upon hard times. Neither the epistemological nor the ethical subject finds its services to be of much need in the current market of ideas. Kindred laborers in the vineyards of knowledge and morality—"mind," "ego," "consciousness," and "moral self"—are also experiencing problems of unemployment. This depressed state of affairs for those whose capital is invested in subjectivity is not a regional phenomenon in the current philosophical economy. The loss of confidence in the subject has made its way into many different quarters of contemporary philosophy and is now rather widespread.

Heideggerians and Wittgensteinians, structuralists, neostructuralists, and poststructuralists, critical theorists and hermeneutical philosophers of various stripes—have all voiced their suspicions about the philosophical uses of subject and subjectivity. Martin Heidegger's disenchantment with the subject in his wide-ranging destruction of the history of metaphysics is by now well known not only by the exegetes and interpreters of recent Continental thought but also by interested parties in other traditions. Ludwig Wittgenstein's recommendation that the "I" be thought of essentially as a matter of grammar continues to be urged upon us by latter-day Wittgensteinians. Claude Lévi-Strauss's call for a "dissolution" of the human subject so as to make the human sciences possible as sciences is respectfully heeded by the believing remnant of structuralism. The celebrated pronouncement of the "Death of Man" by Foucault, which he sees as the unavoidable sequel to Nietzsche's proclamation of the "Death of God," continues to be referenced in the literature. Roland Barthes has been responsible for making the phrase "the Death of the Author" part of the rite of initiation into certain intellectual circles. Jacques Derrida, the high priest of poststructuralist thought, proposes a deconstruction of the subject through a disassemblage of the metaphysics of presence. Richard Rorty, in his recent work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* extracts more than a pound of flesh from the philosophical life of the subject as an epistemological foundation for the philosophy of mind, and advises us to stick with social practices and the conversation of mankind.

These dissolutions and deconstructions of subjectivity admittedly issue from different inquiry standpoints. Lévi-Strauss's program is not that of Heidegger, and Derrida's interests are not all that consonant with those of Wittgenstein.

However, it is all the more remarkable that given the diversity of perspectives the result relative to the status of the subject should be so similar. The subject in these varied approaches loses the philosophical privilege that it has enjoyed for so long, and particularly since the time of the birth of modern philosophy.

In probing the perspectives of these influential twentieth-century figures we find that their variegated critiques of subjectivity are motivated by a renewed interest in language. They all exhibit, if you will, a linguistic turn, rather broadly interpreted. Lévi-Strauss traces the superstructure of kinship relations and social institutions back to an infrastructure that is modeled after linguistic science. Heidegger's turn toward linguisticality *(Sprachlichkeit)* initiates a move in a different direction—not toward the mathematical models of linguistics as a science but rather toward a pre-objective speaking *(Sagen),* most decisively illustrated in the voice of poetry. Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences culminates in a shift of focus from the being of man as historical subject to the "being of language." Wittgenstein's later interests revolve around language as a "form of life." Derrida's linguistic turn is grammatological in character, and Rorty's dismantling of philosophy culminates in a hermeneutics of conversation.

In all of these turns and tendencies we can discern the deployment of some species of deconstruction applied to subjectivity. The epistemological subject, either in the dress of a Cartesian thinking subject, a Humean sensing subject, or a Kantian transcendental subject, suffers displacement. The ethical subject as the source of moral judgments loses its efficacy. The existential subject, elucidated in the literature of existentialism, does not fare much better. It too is shorn of its primacy and privilege. Subjectivity in its multiple modalities loses its epistemic, moral, and existential space. The confluence of these deconstructionist critiques in the contemporary disciplines of philosophy and the human sciences has been poignantly referenced by Fred R. Dallmayr as occasioning a "twilight of subjectivity."[11]

It is in the thought of Heidegger and Derrida that this twilight of subjectivity is most sharply highlighted and the fate of the subject most scrupulously detailed. Heidegger charts the demise of the subject as a not unexpected expiration that occurs at the end of the history of Western metaphysics. The subject is portrayed as a residue in a metaphysical constructionism in which the question of being remains stuck in a categorial analysis that moves out from the pictorial view of being as "presence-at-hand" *(Vorhandensein).* In this constructionism the subject itself becomes peculiarly objectified, a substance among other substances, an instance of finite beings in general. In tracing the history of this conceptual construct Heidegger reminds us that the word *subiectum* is a translation of the Greek *hypokeimenon* and "names that-which-lies-before, which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself."[12] As such, Heidegger continues, "this metaphysical meaning of the concept of subject has first of all

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[11] *Twilight of Subjectivity: Contributions to a Post-Individualist Theory of Politics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).

[12] "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 128.

no specific relation to man and none at all to the I."[13] Heidegger proposes to disentangle this oxymoronic result of the subject becoming object, in the guise of an objective precondition or basis, by replacing it in his earlier works with *Dasein* and in his later works with the "event of appropriation" *(Ereignis)*. This replacement is required because of the misdirected consequences of man becoming the first or inaugural *subiectum,* that existent in which all existence is grounded and through which it achieves its representational truth. Man becomes the center from which existence as a whole is viewed. It is thus that a pictorial and representational view of the world travels with the construction of man as subject. The world of nature and history alike are pictured and represented by a representing subject, inviting the "aberration of subjectivism in the sense of individualism."[14] Heidegger sees this subjectivism and individualism as the central ingredient of that anthropocentric humanism that has informed at every step the metaphysics of the modern age, expressed not only in the epistemological designs of grounding all knowledge in a cognitive subject, but also in the ethical designs of a domination and control of nature and history by a willful subject.

Derrida's project of "deconstruction" can be properly understood as a radicalization of Heidegger's "destruction" of the history of ontology as metaphysics.[15] As a consequence of this radicalization subjectivity recedes even further toward the indefinable edges of a twilight zone. Heidegger's project needs to be radicalized, according to Derrida, because his critical reflections still proceed from the logocentrism of a philosophy of presence. Derrida applauds Heidegger's project for having effectively deconstructed both the objectivism and the subjectivism of metaphysics, but he is of the mind that in Heidegger's effort to mark out the terrain of fundamental ontology as the proper ground of metaphysics he falls back upon the requirement for an elusive and fugitive presence—and no matter at this point whether one speaks of the presence of *Dasein* or the presence of *Ereignis.* In Derrida's reading of Heidegger the central question remains the *Seinsfrage,* and it is a pursuit of an answer to this question, says Derrida, that belies an uncritical acceptance of the primacy of presence, an accepted presupposition that has informed Western philosophical reflection from its very beginning. Heidegger has attacked only the aberrations resulting from a metaphysical picturing of presence. But this attack, according to Derrida, takes as its guiding motif the "forgetfulness of Being" and proceeds from a desire to regain a paradise lost, when a more *originative* sense of presence was in full bloom.

The heavily accented themes of "destruction" and "deconstruction" in the current philosophical literature, rehearsed by Heidegger and Derrida sym-

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[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 133.

[15] Although for the most part, and particularly in *Being and Time,* Heidegger uses the language of "destruction" *(Destruktion)* in defining his strategy for the dismantling of the history of metaphysics, in his *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* and *Zur Seinsfrage* he also speaks of "deconstruction" *(Abbau)* as an auxiliary notion. See *Grundprobleme* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), p. 31, and *Zur Seinsfrage* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1956), p. 36.

pathizers, have conspired to produce a veritable revolution of philosophical *Denkwege*—at least in the tradition of contemporary Continental thought. The impact of this revolution is noticeable not only in the discipline of formal philosophy but also in the various human sciences and in literary theory and criticism. That which interests us in this current revolution of deconstructive critique is both its positive achievements and its limitations. The deconstructionists have made us duly suspicious of the proliferation of metaphysical structures and epistemological givens, and they have heightened our sensitivity to the uses and misuses of language. They have called our attention to the self-arrogations of philosophy as a special discipline and the often exaggerated claims for what it proposes to deliver. Deconstruction, in its most radical expression, is a move toward the "end of philosophy," in which philosophy is construed as foundational knowledge of reality.

Yet, one cannot but notice that something funny happens on the way to the deconstructionist forum. In the various projects of the deconstruction of the subject a discernible trace of subjectivity remains, whilst the deconstruction is in progress and after it is completed. There are markings that point to an involved speaker, a situated author, and an engaged actor at work. After Lévi-Strauss has dissolved the finite, historical subject so as to make room for the infrastructure of universal mind, he still has to contend with the "identity of its occasional bearers."[16] Now Lévi-Strauss assures us that the social scientist remains "unconcerned" about the identity of these occasional bearers. But whether Lévi-Strauss's idealized social scientist remains concerned or unconcerned about them, their speech and action is not so easily displaced, and one is forced to ask about their peculiar inscriptions. In Heidegger's destruction-deconstruction of the history of metaphysics the subject is not so much eliminated as it is resituated within an existential analytic of man's way to be. We are apprised of this when Heidegger tells us: "Philosophy must perhaps start from the 'subject' and return to the 'subject' in its ultimate questions, and yet for all that it may not pose its questions in a one-sidedly subjectivistic manner."[17] Heidegger sets the challenge for recovering the subject while avoiding the metaphysical and epistemological snares of subjectivity. When Derrida was directly confronted on the issue of the role of the subject in the discussion that followed the presentation of his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," he replied:

> The subject is absolutely indispensable. I don't destroy the subject; I situate it. That
> is to say, I believe that at a certain level both of experience and of philosophical and

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[16] "If the final goal of anthropology is to contribute to a better knowledge of objectivized thought and its mechanisms, then in the end it does not make much difference whether the thought of Latin American natives finds its form in the operation of my thought or if mine finds its in the operation of theirs. What does matter is that the human mind, unconcerned with the identity of its occasional bearers, manifests in that operation a structure which becomes more and more intelligible to the degree that the doubly reflexive movement of two thoughts, working on one another, makes progress." Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Overture to *le cru et le cuit*," trans. J. H. McMahon in *Structuralism*, ed. Jacques Ehrmann (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 49.
[17] *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 155.

scientific discourse one cannot get along without the notion of subject. It is a
question of knowing where it comes from and how it functions.[18]

The point that interests us at this juncture is that in these varied projects of
dissolution, destruction, and deconstruction of the subject by Lévi-Strauss,
Heidegger, and Derrida, traces of subjectivity remain. We thus learn at a rather
early stage that the principal lesson to be gleaned from the strategy of de-
construction is that no complete deconstruction is possible. This, however, by
no means legitimates a hurried reinstating of some classical notion of self,
subject, or ego, saddled with the interrelated metaphysical and epistemological
requirement of providing foundations, accounting for identities, and supplying
elusive objects of self-reference. The trace of subjectivity that remains leads us
into another direction and into another space—a space opened up by commu-
nicative praxis. The emerging subjectivity within this space will be that of a
subject transfigured and transformed, a *decentered* subjectivity, bearing the
wisdom gleaned from the arduous venture of deconstruction as a task never
completed but rather to be performed time and again.

If the deconstruction of the subject is an announcement of the first revolution
in current philosophical and scientific thinking, the recovery and restoration of
the subject within the folds of the space of communicative praxis sets in motion
the second revolution, for which the time is now ripe. This second revolution
will make possible the recognition of the subject in the hermeneutical self-
implicature of the speaker and actor within a form of life as decentered subjec-
tivity, and will provide the directions for detailing its genealogy and its patterns
of individual and social formation. From all this we might be able to understand
just a little better its origin, its peculiar temporality, its interpretive history, and
the accretion and projection of its multiple profiles. In this second revolution
particular attention will need to be given to the figures, modes, and aims of
discourse for it is within discourse that the subject is implicated. But it is not in
discourse alone that the hermeneutical tracking of the subject takes place.
There is the extensive panoply of nondiscursive practices which also gestures
in the direction of an implicated subject. The space of subjectivity encompasses
not only discourse but also action. Subjectivity finds its birth certificate within
the wider space of communicative praxis, which includes not only language and
speech but also action, both individual and social.

Our emphasis on the amalgam of discourse and action in the space of
communicative praxis needs to be highlighted because it bears directly on a
widespread misdirection in contemporary philosophy. This misdirection has to
do with an excessive and self-limiting preoccupation with discourse and discur-
sive practices. There are two facets of this misdirection. One has to do with a
movement in the analysis of discourse itself. The other involves a neglect of the
intentionality of nondiscursive and nonlinguistic practices.

The turn to discourse, which seems to be a mark of the current age, has
gravitated into a crisis-situation of linguistic closure within the world of dis-

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[18] *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy*,
eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,
1970), p. 271.

course. Speech and language, as the polar ingredients of discourse, have been vying for ascendancy and a position of privilege since the time of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure, and subsequent structuralists, pushed into the direction of a linguistics of formal language. Speech act theorists moved in the direction of a linguistics of speech. In various philosophical neighborhoods disputation about whether language or speech is primary and foundational continues at an accelerated pace. Can language be properly viewed as the infrastructure that informs and regulates the superstructure of speech as a social phenomenon? Do the synchronic and timeless features of the formal aspects of language explain the diachronic and time-bound performances of speech as it is spoken? Is there an innate competence that informs the concrete speech act? Or are matters the other way around, affording a primacy to speech acts which have their intrinsic intentionality, and relegating the formal structure of language to a second order level of abstraction from the deployment of meaning in actual speech usage? Disputations on these questions have contributed to much of the tension between the structuralists and the empiricists, the formalists and the later Wittgensteinians, the transcendental phenomenologists and the Heideggerians. And then there is the genial mediator, Paul Ricoeur, who proposes an intersection of speech and language within a centered and unified event of discourse, proceeding from a speaking subject. This move on the part of Ricoeur is quickly countered by the poststructuralist master of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, who in his grammatological countermove decenters the point of intersection and disassembles the subject. The twists and turns in the ensuing poststructuralist debates tend to revolve around the inherited problematic of the speech/language dichotomy, circling within a linguistic closure of discourse.

The other facet of misdirection in the contemporary turn to discourse, closely allied with the first, pertains to the progressive isolation of discourse from nondiscursive human action and from the fabric of world-oriented experience more generally. This isolation has invited a species of linguistic dogmatism in which the hookup of speech and language, or the subordination of the one to the other, which is most often the case, provides the conceptual frame for settling matters on final grounding and ultimate epistemological foundations. Theory of discourse and linguistics are called upon to answer the riddles of knowledge for which traditional epistemology lacked the resources. Discourse becomes the Rosetta Stone, supplying the key to decipher the hieroglyphs of epistemology. Like the metaphysical dogmatism which Kant critiqued, and the empiricist dogmatism of positivism which Wittgenstein attacked, this linguistic-epistemological dogmatism also requires critical assessment. Our critical assessment will proceed via a move to a more encompassing and global space than that which is defined by the foundationalist markings of linguistic science as an epistemology. We name this encompassing space the holistic, hermeneutical space of communicative praxis. It is thus that our effort to articulate the amalgam of discourse and action is guided by our methodological decision to explore the terrain of communicative praxis. In this exploration we will avoid the reduction of nondiscursive practices to the models and metaphors of discourse. We will take into account the important role of speech and language in the life of communicative praxis, but we will also attend to the intentionality

of human action and institutions as expressive behavior. In this exploration we will from time to time accentuate the experiential features of discourse and action alike, but this appeal to the experiential will need to find new forms of description, because the limitations of the empiricist notion of experience have by now become evident to all.