

## “Politicizing Deconstruction”: On Not Treating *Specters of Marx*

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Since its inception, much has been made of deconstruction’s relation (or lack thereof) to contemporary Marxist thought. Indeed, the title of this essay, “Politicizing Deconstruction,” is borrowed from a formulation by Nancy Fraser precisely in order to evoke this history. Over fifteen years ago, while overviewing the positions developed at a 1980 conference dedicated to Derrida’s work, Fraser accused the so-called French Derrideans of replacing “the project of politicizing deconstruction with the project of deconstructing the political” (1984, 137). At that time, Fraser charged that theorists such as Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe were afraid to dirty their hands by entering into a dialogic arena of political contest; instead, she said, they tended to retreat into the relative invulnerability of “meta-political philosophical reflection” (148 f.).

What is most instructive about Fraser’s text, however, is not merely that she has done an admirable job of surveying a series of complicated debates about Marxism, deconstruction, and the philosophical interrogation of politics.<sup>1</sup> Rather, what is most interesting is that Fraser has mistakenly framed the issue of deconstruction and politics in terms of a choice between what she calls a “transcendental safehouse” (154) of philosophical discourse on the one hand (i.e., deconstruction) and a normative, empirical, ethico-political engagement on the other (i.e., political contestation). Of course, given this choice, Fraser does not hesitate to position herself on the side of politics, in direct opposition to what she has posed as an ethos of deconstructive disengagement (142).

And now Derrida has published his long-awaited *Specters of Marx*, which his more politically minded readers, at least, had expected to mark the end of an ostensibly “strategic” silence<sup>2</sup> on the question of Marxism, and which was to propel Derrida onto the hitherto unknown terrain of actual political engagement. As anyone who is familiar with the book will undoubtedly agree, this expectation is largely destined for disappointment. For although Derrida’s focus *is* here, finally, on Marx rather than on Freud or Lévi-Strauss or Blanchot or Levinas, and although Derrida has here, more than ever before, “given priority to the political gesture” (a most decided position-taking) at “the expense of philosophical exegesis” (Derrida 1994, 32),<sup>3</sup> he has nonetheless *also* continued—it should come as no surprise—to do what he does best. Once again Derrida has read in such a way as to bring a text’s own undecidable elements to bear on and against it, in this case such elements as the ghost, the “just,” and a “certain messianic spirit” of what is “to come.” With Marx no less than before, Derrida has once again rehearsed his characteristic affirmation of *différance*, that logically impossible condition of possibility that was always, already, there. So if we are to be referred now merely back to that same insistence Derrida has maintained all along—at the very least since an interview he gave in 1971—if we are to be referred now to the claim that such an affirmation of an enabling *différance*, such a practice of deconstruction, is not politically “neutral” but “intervenes” (Derrida 1981, 93), this will undoubtedly come as cold comfort to those who had hoped, finally, for something in this work, at least, that would prove to be a little more politically exact.

But here again the terms of the disappointment are what are most instructive. Recall, for a moment, Nancy Fraser’s casting of the matter of “politicizing deconstruction” in terms of an unambiguous difference between deconstruction and politics, between metaphilosophical reflection and empirical/normative debate. Recall that for Fraser, the deconstructionists’ ultimate failure is the failure to enter the political arena and to engage in the context of particular struggles—the failure, in short, to specify. And now consider a few more recent responses to Derrida’s “Marx.” Kate Soper asks,

1. These debates, which were first sharpened and brought into focus at the Cérisy conference, were subsequently developed in an institute that was its outcome: the short-lived Center for Philosophical Research on the Political (see Fraser 1984).

2. Nancy Fraser summarizes Derrida’s claim to have “deliberately not produced a discourse against revolution or Marxism in order to avoid contributing to the ‘anti-Marxist concert’ of the *circa* 1968 period.” Fraser comments, “So, for the sake of the traditional leftist aim of not splitting the left, Derrida . . . refrained from a frontal attack while marking a series of ‘virtual differences or divergences’ from the revolutionary project” (1984, 133–4).

3. On this point, see Derrida (1995) in which he explains that the keynote address he gave at the Whither Marxism colloquium in Riverside, California (the address on which *Specters of Marx* is based) was “a discourse that would have liked to be something other than a Marxist discourse, something other than a discourse *on* Marx or a reading *of* Marx, in the conventional, academic, or exegetical sense of this word. What I try to make understood there corresponds first to a political position-taking” (32; his emphasis).

Given that this is a Marx whom [Derrida] deems presentable . . . only if we suspend our credit in his literal meaning, a Marx who in a sense is not only “not a Marxist” but not Marx either, we might ask why—why Marx? When, in short, does working merely in the *spirit* of Marx cease to be Marxist and become, say, left liberalism, or the “radical democracy” of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who make no bones about describing themselves as “postMarxist.” (1996, 28)

In marked congruence, Gayatri Spivak complains that “the ghost of Marx that Derrida is most haunted by returns to the bosom of Abraham, shorn of all specificity, mark of a messianism without content, carrier of merely the structure of a promise which cancels the difference between democracy and Marxism” (1995, 66).<sup>4</sup> And Alex Callinicos, too, will join this chorus. “Without the substance of Marxism as well as its spirit,” Callinicos writes, “Derrida’s ‘ethical turn’ is likely to amount to little more than an avowal of left liberalism, and a rather weak one at that” (1996, 41).

Most significantly, what these three commentators (among others) share is a fundamental misunderstanding of the ethico-political implications of deconstruction—a misunderstanding whereby it is said that Derrida’s Marxism is good as far as it goes, but that it fails to go far enough. Thus, just as Nancy Fraser accuses the French Derrideans of “recoiling” from genuine political engagement—a kind of “*politicus interruptus*,” as it were—so these reviewers of *Specters* lament that Derrida’s messianic openness amounts to nothing more than, at best, a vague liberalism that inclines to the left and, at worst, an opening onto the possibility of fascistic totalitarianism.

“Derrida here explicitly recognizes the necessity of adopting a certain prescriptive stance,” Kate Soper writes, “and this is an important concession to those who have for some time been pointing out . . . an inconsistency between . . . ethical indecisionism . . . and . . . an emancipatory political agenda” (1996, 27). But ultimately, in Soper’s view, the fact remains that “[w]e cannot change the world, however minimally, if we stay obedient to the injunction not to ontologize” (28). Indeed, she concludes, not only does one *not* “necessarily avoid the horrors of a messianic totalitarianism by refusing to ontologize,” but, “One might even be leaving more space for them” (31). Even Ernesto Laclau, who himself bears the brunt of some of Kate Soper’s comments, suggests in an otherwise insightful essay that “[p]recisely because of the undecidability inherent in constitutive openness, ethico-political moves different from or even opposite to a democracy ‘to come’ can be made . . . [A] case for totalitarianism can be presented starting from deconstructionist premises. Of course,

4. It should be noted that this reading is not entirely appropriate, given that Derrida is explicitly critical of the pre-name (*prenom*) that an “Abrahamic messianism” possibly prefigures. At issue is precisely the question of a messianic *without* messiah or even messianism, a “desert,” “there where no figure of the arrivant, even as he or she is heralded, should be pre-determined, prefigured, or even pre-named” (1994, 168). Thus, Spivak is being less than fully rigorous when she figures the Derridean messianic as a simple return to Abraham, as she is in her ensuing argument that the invocation of Abraham’s name in this context precludes the inclusion of women. (In fact Derrida deliberately refuses to specify the gender of the “arrivant,” mentioning only “he or she.”) On the question of the relation of deconstruction to Marxist-feminist analysis, see also Valverde (1995, 331).

the totalitarian argument would be as much a non sequitur as the argument for democracy: either direction is equally possible given the situation of structural undecidability” (1995, 93).

Yet surely, of all the readers cited here, at least Laclau must recognize that far from undermining the Derridean position, the risk of totalitarianism, for example, is what lends deconstruction its peculiar moral force. Surely Laclau must understand that a *structural* undecidability can mean nothing else: that the decision, for good *or* for ill, is not *yet* taken. This aspect of Derrida’s thought is virtually unmistakable. As it is no less difficult for being so insistent, however, a brief explanation may serve to clarify.

The decision—that this *is* good, or that this *is* evil—can only ever come to pass by virtue of what Derrida calls a traversal of the “ordeal of the undecidable” (1994, 87). What he means by this is not that a decision does not happen; even less is it a matter of advocating indecisionism, as Kate Soper (among others) implies. It is simply that, from the perspective of an event’s *possibility*, the decision *is* not yet (has not yet come into being and, hence, is undecided and undecidable). Derrida characterizes such possibility as a “messianic” opening.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the messianic dimension of the decision is said to “tremble on the edge of an event”; indeed, it *is* this hesitation. However, he insists, “the messianic hesitation does not paralyze any decision, any affirmation, any responsibility. On the contrary, it grants them their elementary condition. It is their very experience” (169). In other words, it is precisely the traversal—the opening of and passage through a possible futurity—that enables or renders the presence of the present such that I can say (can decide) it “*is*.” Experience as such is, in a sense, this saying.

Why call this a possible futurity? Because the point of Derrida’s analysis is that the event, the coming to pass of what occurs—which is nothing less and nothing more than the saying, the decision, of what is—this coming to pass must not or cannot already have occurred if it is to be possible. *First* it must be possible and thus, not yet. That is its condition. A condition in the form of a promise. This will be. And yet it is only ever afterward, only when the event has always already happened, that we may say “it is.” We must have already decided, having inscribed the presence of the present, in order that the *is* as well as the *is not* take place. And this is because Being is none other than the presence of the present, at least for us who can experience it—which is to say, who can experience at all—only on this condition. That is why the future is also impossible. It is what must take place now, as *future*, but which we can know as “now” only when it has passed. In this sense, the future—one should say, “futurity”—is (always already) no longer; it is a specter, a trace, neither being nor nonbeing but, to put it in a word, the movement of *différance*. *Différance* is this promise, the promise of what is to come.

5. Alex Callinicos rightly underlines Derrida’s close affinity with Walter Benjamin in this regard, particularly with the “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (see Callinicos 1996, 40–1).

This thought, this thinking of *différance* as a trace or a possible futurity, is precisely the site of Derrida's intervention in Heidegger's consideration of the "gift"—a notion that is central to the *spirit* of Marx that Derrida elucidates. Specifically, it is important to note that in his discussion of the classical Western notion of "justice," Heidegger links the disjoining of the present just outlined (the impossible future inscribed in the present as such) to a notion of excess and, more specifically, to a notion of excess as the incalculability that characterizes the gift. According to Heidegger, Derrida says, the disjunction of the present with itself—the inescapable out-of-jointedness of time—entails a debt. That is to say, the necessary disjointure of the present entails the injunction or duty to *give back* jointure, to establish an accord. And it is to give back what one does not have. As Derrida summarizes, "giving rests only in presence, it does not signify simply to give away (*weggeben*) but, more originarily, to accord, that is here, *zugeben* which most often indicates addition, even excess, in any case that which is offered *in supplement, over and above the market, off trade, without exchange*" (1994, 26; my emphasis). It follows, says Derrida, that for Heidegger "justice" in its classical, Greek sense means "jointure"; justice is the *accord* that consists in giving to the other, over and above what one does not have and does not have to give, beyond what is owed, exchanged, or reducible to a market economy—what is "proper" to him or her. To leave the other this accord is the "giving" of presence, and that "gift," in a word, is "justice" on Heidegger's reading of Western philosophy. Yet here Derrida intervenes with a question that bears quoting in full.

Once one has recognized the force and the necessity of thinking justice on the basis of the gift, that is, beyond right, calculation, and commerce . . . is there not a risk of inscribing this whole movement of justice under the sign of presence, be it of presence to meaning of the *Anwesen* [Heideggerian "presencing"], of the event as coming into presence, of Being as presence joined to itself, of the proper of the other as presence? . . . Beyond right, and still more beyond juridicism, beyond morality, and still more beyond moralism, does not justice as relation to the other suppose on the contrary the irreducible excess of a disjointure or an anachrony . . . some "out of joint" dislocation in Being and in time itself, a disjointure that, in always risking the evil, expropriation, and injustice (*adikia*) against which there is no calculable insurance, would alone be able to *do justice* or to *render justice* to the other as other? (1994, 27–8)

A number of points bear underlining with regard to this intervention in Heidegger's analysis. The first is that the question of the gift that opens *Specters of Marx* and establishes its entire problematic is for Derrida an unflinchingly political one. What is at stake, here as always in Derrida's work, is the question of the just relation to the other, against the violence of a "totalizing" politics that would effect presence at the expense of exorcising or erasing the condition of undecidability. Second and even more important, however, it should be noted that Derrida mobilizes a distinctively *Marxist* analysis in this discussion of justice, in the sense that the meaning of the gift is explicitly characterized as that which exceeds, that which cannot be contained within the market-based circuit of economic exchange. Indeed, Derrida's elaboration and development of Heidegger's analysis of Western metaphysics is intended as a cor-

rective to Heidegger's own tendency to return justice to a "totalizing horizon" of "adequate restitution," a tendency whereby juridico-moral rules risk being *reinstated* precisely as the possibility of an economic return (28). It is against an economic tendency in Heidegger himself then—whereby the singular and incalculable nature of justice risks, finally, being violently reduced to capitalism's ideological order of the "Same"—that Derrida intervenes.<sup>6</sup>

And third, this explication of justice in the Marxist corpus as incalculable "gift" is directly implicated in—even if in a certain sense "prior" to (if one may speak temporally for the sake of expediency)—the decision of good or evil, of "socialism or barbarism." The issue for Derrida is that of a passage or an ordeal of undecidability that *must* have conditioned our experience in order that we choose. For Marxism or against it. The problematic of the gift is thus implicated as the very condition of this ethico-political choice.

Concomitantly, however, this means that there is no avoiding the risk of totalitarianism, no insurance to be had. On the contrary, the demand of justice is precisely that we chance it. As Derrida says, "To be out of joint, whether it be present Being or present time, can do harm and do evil, it is no doubt the very possibility of evil. But without the opening of this possibility, there remains, perhaps, beyond good and evil, only the necessity of the worst. A necessity that would not (even) be a fated one" (29). The risk of totalitarianism, then, or the risk Derrida identifies as that of an absolute evil (175), would be tied to a notion of justice that is a structural feature of experience. Derrida writes:

[W]hat remains irreducible to any deconstruction, what remains as undeconstructible as the possibility itself of deconstruction is, perhaps, *a certain experience of the emancipatory promise; it is perhaps even the formality of a structural messianism*, a messianism without religion, even a messianic without messianism, an idea of justice—which we distinguish from law or right and even from human rights—and an idea of democracy—which we distinguish from its current concept and from its determined predicates today. (59; my emphasis)<sup>7</sup>

If an understanding of Marxian justice in terms of the gift—an inescapable moment of undecidability and disjuncture which conditions the ethico-political decision *for* Marx—is granted, perhaps it can be agreed that one can hardly take issue with the indeterminacy of Derrida's political thought. One can hardly have read Derrida closely and still be inclined to say, "Bravo that Derrida has finally taken a position. If only he could have been more precise." For this indeterminacy, the undecidable ordeal that constitutes experience, is justice's enabling feature. For the very justice Marxists advocate, one must take (one must have taken) a chance. And that much, at

6. Callinicos dismisses Heidegger as "a thinker who can [hardly] be treated as a reliable guide to the political" (1996, 41), and therefore apparently overlooks what Derrida is at pains to demonstrate: that Marx himself invokes the classical notion of "justice" that Heidegger describes, with all of the ambiguities such a notion entails. For this reason, Derrida's treatment of Heidegger would seem to be apt.  
7. On this distinction between "justice" and "law," see Derrida (1992).

least, Laclau would also concede. “The political and ethical significance” of deconstruction, he says, “is that by enlarging the area of structural undecidability, it enlarges also the area of responsibility—that is, of the decision” (1995, 93). Such a formulation may stand, provided we heed the proviso that it is particularly the *conditions for*, and not merely the *consequences of*, the ethico-political decision that is at stake in Derrida’s analysis.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, to return to the claim made above, it was an error on Nancy Fraser’s part in the early 1980s, just as it is a mistake on the part of Derrida’s readers today, to charge that the problem with deconstruction is that it pulls back just at the moment of contestation, that it refuses to take part in the struggle. It is engaged, in its own way, in nothing else. Indeed, from the point of view elaborated here, the deconstructive reading that exposes *différance* at the heart of any presence—that same practice that expresses not the refusal but the radical impossibility of an ontology that is, in the end, none too solid—is not a disengagement with the issue of politics but, on the contrary, would be its very conscience.<sup>9</sup> For Derrida’s text, I have argued, is concerned above all with a spirit of justice that is integral to the Marxist corpus and which is characterized by a political responsibility for the ultimately *unjustified* status of judgments that must, nonetheless, still be made in the name of justice. Such responsibility is surely something no position that calls itself “for Marx” would care to be without.

The point is not, then, as Tom Lewis suggests, that from the perspective of deconstruction, “revolutionary socialist politics today should be considered no more than terroristic rites of ideological exorcism,” or that “all future attempts to actualize the egalitarian ideals of socialism within material society remained doomed—a priori . . . because of the ‘impossibility of Being’” (1996/97, 31). Rather, the point is that the *condition* for any such attempts and for any such actualization (for any such ends) is a structural undecidability that must be *taken account of* rather than exorcised away if such socialist efforts are to be politically responsible.

Yet for this very reason—because it is incumbent upon those who claim to be for a Marxist vision of social justice to know whereof they speak—it is important to take the present discussion one further step. Specifically, it seems that the deconstructionist *may* plausibly meet the charge that discussions of a “messianic opening” do not entail a political quietism. And it may be argued too (at least one hopes for this) that the spirit of Marxism to which Derrida refers is one whereby the field of responsibility is enlarged. What remains unclear, however, is how we can escape asking after the possibility of a transition from a logical to an ethical injunction.

In other words, given the nature of deconstruction, we cannot avoid addressing an issue that Ernesto Laclau, in what is perhaps the most insightful moment of his review, formulates as follows: if the “messianic” in question is merely “the structure

8. For an interesting discussion of the difference between Derrida and Laclau with regard to the question of the decision, see Berns (1996).

9. Derrida (1987) has developed the notion of “conscience” as the absolutely singular.

of a promise which is inherent in all experience and whose lack of content . . . is the very possibility of justice and gives its only meaning to the democracy to come,” then one must be very careful not to make an “illegitimate logical transition” to the particular ethical contents of a classical emancipatory project (1995, 91, 92). Indeed, he continues, “from the fact that there is the impossibility of ultimate closure and presence, it does not follow that there is an ethical imperative to ‘cultivate’ that openness or even to be necessarily committed to a democratic society” (1995, 93). To put this in terms of the earlier discussion, the issue at hand is this: why would the disjuncture described above, even given that such undecidability takes place, be said to entail a debt that is *normative* or moral in nature?

Ironically, then, it emerges that the problem with calling deconstruction “just” is its very formality. The problem does not concern its contingency—the indeterminacy of deconstruction’s political *ends* (on which most of Derrida’s critics remark)—but rather the almost inescapable, structural nature of its *conditions*—which is to say, the purely logical status of *différance*. For, most important, to say a messianic moment can be discerned in the structure of all experience—that undecidability is a logically and constitutively inescapable condition of the decision—is not to say how or why this feature of signification makes an *emphatic* demand on me.

With respect to this question, what is most significant is that in order to link the *structure* of a messianic promise to the *contents* of an ethico-political call, Derrida refers explicitly to a spirit of “radical critique.” He says,

To continue to take inspiration from a certain spirit of Marxism would be to keep faith with what has always made of Marxism in principle and first of all a *radical* critique, namely, a procedure ready to undertake its self-critique . . . Such a critical “wanting-itself” [to be open to its own transformation] necessarily takes root, it is involved in a ground that is not yet critical, even if it is not, not yet, pre-critical. This latter spirit is more than a style, even though it is also a style. It is heir to a spirit of the Enlightenment which must not be renounced. (1994, 88; emphasis his)

In the first place, then, the “spirit of Enlightenment” that Derrida most cherishes in Marx is one he identifies as a spirit of “radical critique.” In the second place, however, Derrida defines “radicalization” as follows:

The point would be to do more or less than “radicalize,” or something other, for the stakes are precisely those of the root and its proposed unity. The point would not be to progress still further into the depths of radicality, of the fundamental, or the originary . . . One would try instead to go there where the schema of the fundamental, of the originary, or of the radical, in its *ontological* unity and in the form in which it continues to govern the Marxist critique, calls for questions . . . that are *not* or *not sufficiently* put to work in what dominates the discourses that call themselves Marxist. (1994, 184 n. 9; emphasis his)

On Derrida’s reading, what is demanded *by* Marx (by his spirit) is, in effect, a “radicalization” of the principle of reason *in* Marx, such as that principle was formulated by

Leibnitz in the seventeenth century. For on Leibnitz's view, it should be recalled, the principle of reason comprises the law of noncontradiction and the principle that, for every true proposition, reason can be rendered. Taken together, of course, these principles inform a classical Enlightenment conception of "critique." But significantly, to "go there where the schema of the fundamental, of the originary, or of the radical" *itself* governs a critique (the critique of Marx, to be precise) is to question the grounds of the injunction *itself*. "Radicalization" is thus formulated *as an injunction* to ask after the basis *of the injunction* to render reason. The demand to interrogate the schema of the radical, in short, is the demand to bring the principle of reason to bear on its own *raison d'être*; it is the responsibility to return reason to itself.<sup>10</sup>

What emerges here, then, is that the Marxist spirit of radical critique that Derrida elucidates entails the normative demand to *give* (reason) precisely what one does not *have* (reason). In this sense, it is not enough to say that a Marxist spirit of justice is rendered in terms of the gift; more specifically, the giving in question must be understood, in turn, as a response to the critical injunction to render, impossibly, the reason of reason itself. The ethico-political force of *différance*, therefore—its specifically normative bearing—is effectively tied to a notion of critique that Derrida finds in the spirit of Marx.

Importantly, this emphasis on Derrida's part is by no means limited to *Specters of Marx*. On the contrary, the theme of an injunction to question the ground, to go to the root, to question the law of the law, and so forth—this spirit of Enlightenment critique that "must not be renounced"—can be found in virtually everything Derrida has written. Indeed, those who are familiar with Derrida's work will recognize here precisely the gesture that opens the field of undecidability. Reason itself, Derrida finds, has no reason of its own, no such ground. That is its aporetic structure. But in terms of the argument here, what is most significant is that once the messianic openness of constitutive undecidability has been linked to the radical spirit of critique governing Marx's thought, the question at hand is why we are bound to such a spirit at all. *Why* do we feel, if we do, *why* do we experience ourselves, if we do, as impelled—in the emphatic or ethical sense of that word—to honor reason?

Now this problematic of a socially constituted *desire*, this critical "wanting itself" (to use Derrida's formulation) to provide grounds or to avoid contradiction, for example—the inquiry, in short, into my or our *stakes* in the principle of reason—this inquiry would lead toward an understanding of the peculiarly *ethical* nature of the messianic injunction.

With a view toward such an analysis, it is arguable that the deconstructive notion of an impossible justice—the ethics of deconstruction—is the most interesting aspect of Derrida's work in term of a political theoretical analysis. If deconstruction is to have a relation to contemporary Marxist thought at all, this may even be the most

10. As Derrida elsewhere writes, "Who is more faithful to reason's call, who hears it with a keener ear, who better sees the difference, the one who offers questions in return and tries to think through the possibility of that summons, or the one who does not want to hear any question about the reason of reason?" (1983, 9).

productive direction to take. In fact, on this basis I was initially inspired to make the case that so far as the ethico-political significance of deconstruction is concerned, Derrida’s text on Marx might even be ranked as among the less interesting of Derrida’s analyses. For there is no question that the relation between the project of deconstruction and the project of emancipation is far from direct and, to this extent, it may be argued that to look merely to what Derrida has said *about* Marx or *about* politics is not necessarily the most fruitful way to proceed. Indeed, given the danger of assuming too transparent a relation between deconstruction and politics, I thought the politically minded theorist might best be served by *not* treating *Specters of Marx*. However, it emerges that Derrida himself saw fit to take the occasion of writing on Marx as an opportunity to elaborate substantially on the ethics (shall we say the spirit?) of *différance*. And, ironically perhaps, for this reason above all the text may be seen as a valuable *political* intervention on Derrida’s part.

Of course, it remains that even if deconstruction can be explicated in terms of a “certain” justice that conjoins a “certain” spirit of Marxism (and it has been suggested that the burden of this proof remains), this would be to describe only a structural condition of possibility, in the philosophical sense of that term, for the deployment of any particular Marxist project. It would be what one might call a “necessary,” not a “sufficient” condition, for Marxist politics. On the view presented here, however, the naming of such a necessity is already a lot, for it links the deconstructive impulse directly to an ethico-political sense of responsibility that is distinctively Marxist. Deconstruction so understood thus represents far more than a retreat to a “transcendental safe house” even if it is not, perhaps, what Derrida’s more demanding readers were after.

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