



Introduction

Guest Editors*

The first English translation of Jacques Derrida's *La Voix et le Phénomène* (1967) translated as *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* is completing its 50th anniversary in 2023. This is "an event, perhaps" (Salmon, 2020). This book was translated again in 2011, this time with the title *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*. Derrida's view on translation "as transaction and as transfer" (2011) is too well known not to think of this series of translation events as, at least, "dubious". We are using "dubious", of course, to underline the fact that this International Conference, which is being organized to commemorate *Speech and Phenomena*, may not be celebrating the "original" book, let alone celebrating *Voice and Phenomena*. Therefore, the question of authenticity and originality is not putting too fine a point on it, an aporia.

In this thematic section of the issue of *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, we use this aporia of original, translation, and multiple productivity of texts to investigate and contribute to the contemporary debates on artificial intelligence, machine learning, writing, ChatGPT, and several other concerns emerging from the current time of the "algorithmic self" (Pasquale, 2015). This investigation is through interrogations of Jacques Derrida and the series of "events" that his three books of 1967 helped initiate: *De la grammatologie* translated into English as *Of Grammatology* (1976); *L'écriture et la différence* translated into English as *Writing and Difference* (1978) apart from *Speech and Phenomena* this conference is celebrating.

We are using "interrogation", fittingly to the aims of this issue, in the way Oxford's *A Dictionary of Computing* (2008) defines the term.

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Interrogation, in this sense, is “the sending of a signal that will initiate a response. A system may interrogate a peripheral to see if it requires a data transfer. The response is normally a status byte. When several devices are interrogated in a sequence, the process is called polling.” The papers in this thematic section of the issue, therefore, are, in a way, sending “signals” to Derrida and the texts associated to that proper name, especially *Speech and Phenomena*. We want to investigate if these texts signal back and to what extent, on the questions of language, thinking, and writing that first animated Derrida and which now need a serious revisit, reformulation, and reconsiderations.

With the advances being made in AI and computing, we need a better understanding of how these technologies are changing (or not changing) how we understand language, thinking, and writing. This seems to be one of the urgent tasks of philosophy and theory. The optimism of Hilary Putnam (1995) that “AI has so far spun off a good deal that is of real interest to computer science in general, but nothing that sheds any real light on the mind” (p.392) to the Chinese Room Argument by John Searle (1980) where he claims that “no program is sufficient for intentionality” (p.424) have tried to wrest some ground of thinking from computation and algorithm but the field remains highly contested and contentious. Works such as *Alien Phenomenology* (2012) among many others have shown interesting ways in which interactions and thinking may happen within and between objects. Similarly, with natural language processing (NLP), which enables a predictive model of writing generating signifiers based on big data and algorithms, the very notion of “writing” is perhaps undergoing a radical change. If we take Derrida’s claim that “writing thus *comprehends* language” (1976, p.7), it is now an urgent task to see if probabilistic writing is or is not transforming the concept of writing all over again. Derrida’s task of revealing the ethnocentrism that controlled the concept of writing, which was seen as the “phoneticization of writing” (p.3) needs to be taken up in the light of the promises and ambitions of “predictive writing.” If Derrida indeed deconstructed the logocentric nature of ethnocentric writing, does predictive writing “liberate” us finally from the stranglehold of the logos? Is algorithmic also logocentric or is it not? There are suggestions that it may just be the case and that what Derrida and others were theorizing about language and writing may have

ultimately been triumphant (Underwood, 2023). This conference will think about these questions deeply and hopefully will result in certain insights that will give us newer ways of conceptualizing thinking, language, and writing.

These papers have varied perspectives and aims. They take into their ambit the enterprise of literary theory, the inherent bias of AI and the question of ethics, identity in cyberspace and digital identities, the problem of post-truth media, and newer modes of reading and literary criticism. We hope these papers will be generative to a more compelling understanding of what reading, writing and thinking mean in the age of text generation.

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