



The Beyond-Meaning of the Middle-Most: Derrida, Deleuze, and Nagarjuna

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An Impossible Desire that Haunts the Postmodern

- ¶1. Insatiable are the postmodernists. The postmodern spirit of self-interrogation and self-mocking can be traced back to modernism, or even earlier, to the romanticism in Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Whitman. All of them share the paranoiac/schizophrenic, self-torturing inclination to attain the unattainable with the full awareness of its unattainability.^[1] The self-inflicted pain from self-contradiction took root in the attempts to reconcile binary oppositions into a delusory unity, attempts which have lured the mind into a mire of oscillating intoxication and despair. Modern writers like Dostoyevsky and Thomas Mann set out to make an austere but sober manifesto: that the century-old task of synthesizing the binary oppositions is an impossible dream. The nineteenth-century Underground Man's longing for the "beautiful and sublime," which ironically mocks the romantic desire for the transcendental Oneness, has paved the way for the twentieth-century postmodern stage on which all the concepts of truth, unity, essence, and God began to float away from the logocentric enclosure into an opened space of simulacra.

- ¶2. The postmodern spirit also finds its philosophical embodiment in poststructuralist theories. Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, all point out that the unbridgeable gap between opposing categories which lures the human mind to attain the inaccessible ‘unity’ presupposes a human instinctual drive towards logocentrism or presence.^[2] More perilous is the outcome of this self-generating desire for presence. Derrida maintains that “all dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar, are the unique theme of a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace.”^[3] However, the Derridean trace designated as ‘that which is not’ glimmers beneath all forms of conceptualization all the same. Accompanying the trace in the postmodern era is the striving toward it. The ‘location’ or ‘dislocation’ of this enigmatic trace contributes to another form of unattainability (the supreme transcendental truth has now given place to the elusive differential trace). In spite of the inherent distinction between these two modes of unattainability, as long as the unattainability exists, the anxiety remains. The postmodern unattainability of trace/différance in Derrida, together with his antagonism against the logocentric world, on the one hand, has generated a self-deconstructing (and self-mocking) mentality, a sense of apprehension juxtaposed with the sense of multiplicity, nomadism, and simulation which mark the very nature of postmodernity.
- ¶3. On the other hand, upon scrutiny, this postmodern trend in the West, through its subversion of the notion of structure, human subject, and binary oppositions, can be seen to move in a direction echoing some of the philosophical thought in the East. It is evident that the possibility of future convergence between the East and West has gradually gathered momentum. The process began to be discernible especially in Robert Magliola’s *Derrida On the Mend* (1984) which focuses on the intersections of Derridean ‘différance’ and Nagarjuna’s ‘devoidness’ (sunyata). I propose that the postmodern philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose ‘paralogical thought’ slides between/away from binary oppositions, can also contribute to the intersection with Eastern Buddhism. What all these thinkers East and West try to ‘attain’, despite their distinct terminology (‘trace’ in Derrida, the ‘body without organs’ in Deleuze, and the ‘devoidness’ of Nagarjuna^[4]), is the ‘crossed-out space’, the disseminated/dispersed field of nondiscursive forces, the ‘beyond-meaning’, which I will call ‘the middle path’.^[5]

- ¶4. In this essay, I will demonstrate that the three thinkers are akin to each other in the predominant feature of their thought, i.e. the thought of the middle-most. I call this thought the middle-most because it is both enigmatic and mundane, elusive and primordial. And I will demonstrate that, although they all can be claimed as deconstructionists,^[6] willy-nilly, the preservation of logocentrism (and the binary oppositions derived from it) has been reinscribed in their thinking routes, in the methodological presentation of their differential thought. The evidence is that all three methodologies are based on dualistic concepts that are grounded in logocentrism. By way of displaying their similar methodologies whereby they present their vision of the middle, I aim to demonstrate that the vision of the middle, the middle which is itself not logocentric, annuls both logocentric cravings for presence and Hegelian dialectics-between-opposing-extremes without excluding logocentric activities.
- ¶5. Logocentrism has been reinscribed in three ways: first, by the creation of binary oppositions; second, by exposure of the unceasing movement between them; and third, by pointing to the paralogical ‘sameness (the middle)’ which does not *ipso facto* invalidate oppositions and logocentrism. The reinscription of that which has been dismantled is not absurd. That all three thinkers utilize logocentric form as their point of entry neither indicates self-contradiction (there is no ‘self-contradiction’ for the differentialists) nor implies an intention to transcend the form after the ‘differential content’ is conveyed. The third stage of their presentation, the differential stage, has clearly preserved the logocentric polarities because the differential and the logocentric are ultimately not in the least different. The ‘overcoming’ of logocentrism, of organism, and the liberation from the constriction of the mundane is not in order to seek another ‘realm’ to inhabit. The overcoming enables a return to the lived world. Magliola maintains in *On Deconstructing Life Worlds* (1997) that the fourth lemma in its undistributed sense can point to “the paradox of the double-bind,” in which “A necessarily thwarts B and B necessarily thwarts A.”^[7] In light of the mutually-thwarting movements, the oppositions do not so much cancel each other as create a differential opening between target and result.^[8] The eternal return turns out to be elliptical. The differential and the logocentric are ‘the same’ without being self-identical.

- ¶6. Careful scrutiny reveals, however, that in spite of their affinity of the differential middle, there are some ontological variations between Derrida and Nagarjuna, and Deleuze. For instance, Derrida's 'beyond thought' seems always to point to the Dionysian flux, the perpetuating movement of the *différance*, the thing leaving itself. But the counterbalancing force pulling him back to the logocentric is constantly underway. The deconstruction deconstructs itself. As to Nagarjuna and Deleuze, the 'beyond thought' involves both the Dionysian dispersion and the Apollonian individuation which are ultimately not in the least different. Derrida also sees the two directions of the flow, but seems not to welcome the latter. On the contrary, in Deleuze and Nagarjuna, the affirmation of the 'same but not self-identical' marks an eternal return of the organic theories, the celebration of the mundane world. In the conclusion, I will also elaborate on the differences.

Converged Path toward the Middle

- ¶7. All the various terms (hymen, *pharmakon*, *différance*, supplement, *écriture*, trace, etc.) in Derrida's writings are employed to unveil the middle, the way of the in-between, or in Magliola's words, "a slipping between and away from binary categories."^[9] Derrida articulates the term "between" a couple of times: "It is the 'between,' whether it names fusion or separation, that thus carries all the force of the operation;"^[10] "The word 'between' has no full meaning of its own."^[11] The unnamable and unrepresentable "between" or "middle" is neither a concept, nor a being. Although the middle defies conceptualization, it is not "mystical." Simply put, the middle is the flux. Derrida claims that "we can only say that this flux is something which we name in conformity with what is constituted, but it is nothing temporally 'objective'."^[12] This assertion seems to transcend worldly phenomena by way of conceptual negation. But what must be kept in mind is that the middle does not reside outside the phenomenon but every phenomenon must have an outside, an openness. The Derridean middle is temporalization. Since every happening must be perceived in time, the movement of temporalization disintegrates the interiority of 'things' into a 'spacing', into a 'leaving-itself'.

- ¶8. The middle is also the driving force in Deleuze. It exists or sub-exists in a spaceless space between oppositions (body without organs/desiring machines, difference/repetition, plane of transcendence/plane of immanence, etc.) and it always overflows identity. It is the untimeliness of difference or of singular points of intensity—the already-past and the ready-to-come. But it never presents itself as “present.” In some places, the Deleuzian middle takes the form of “aleatory points,”^[13] which is a question not so much of entrapment as fluidity. Deleuze, from the viewpoint of the ‘in-between’ identities, views the empirical experience in terms of a sub-existence of an aleatory point which traverses between two series of singularities/difference. There is a sense in which every entity is constantly differentiating/displacing itself because of the redistribution of the singular points of intensity. Thus, the entity entails two ostensible sub-entities with an inexplicable bond between them—the aleatory point with double faces which produces an incorporeal sense of these ‘sub-entities’ as being ‘both one and two’ and ‘neither one nor two’. In light of the displacement of the aleatory points, identities are not undermined but seen through a different perspective so they are not representational and determinate. Things can be affirmed; concepts can be validated, all the while accompanied by a full awareness of their mobility/treachery.
- ¶9. Appeal to the notion of the Middle Way lays, in one form or other, the foundation of all Buddhist schools. The Middle Way, identical in Madhyamika with *sunyata*, was first explained in Vinaya, Suttavibhanga and reiterated in Nagarjuna’s Mahaprajnaparamitopalesa: “The two extremes of seeking sensual satisfaction and seeking ascetic self-torture prevent one from achieving Nirvana. Buddha explains in the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra the means to cut off both extremes from the Middle Path.”^[14] A rather metaphysical utilization of this term is found in the Samdhinirmocana Sutra, where in which the Buddha asserts: “‘Everything exists’ is simply one extreme, Katyayana, and ‘nothing exists’ is the other extreme. The Tathagata relies on neither of these two extremes, Katyayana; he teaches the Dharma as a Middle Way.”^[15] In light of Buddha’s elaboration, the Buddhist view of the world as a flux may be further developed into the paralogical understanding that ‘A is not equal to A’ because “everything is in a flux of momentary arising and disappearing.”^[16]

- ¶10. In Nagarjuna's Buddhism, this movement of the Middle Way can be construed as "two truths"—the conventional truth or the realm of existence and the ultimate truth or the realm of nonexistence, which affirm and negate things simultaneously. Magliola represents Nagarjunist 'middle path' or 'sunyata' by the word 'devoidness'.

'Devoidness' as a translation evokes negation (the Latin prefix *de* meaning 'completely', so we have 'devoid', or 'completely void'); and 'devoidness' also evokes constitution (the Latin prefix *de* meaning 'away from', so we have 'devoid', or 'away from voidness'). [17]

This devoidness is a middle path between oppositions of existence and nonexistence without their exclusion (they are provisionally functional but ultimately undifferentiated). The contracted off/meaning of 'voidness-and-nonvoidness' in the term *sunyata* refers, in most Mahayanist systems, to the Buddha mind which both lives in and away from the phenomenological world. In the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, Nagarjuna who usually speaks through negative reference emphasizes with an exceptionally affirmative tone that: "the proposition that nirvana is neither existence nor non-existence could only be valid if and when the realms of existence and non-existence are established." [18] The view of both affirming existence and non-existence can be seen as a factual reconstruction of identity, which resembles the Deleuzian concept of repetition, a repetition of that which differs. This 'new identity' in Deleuzian terms is a differential identity, the one of devoidness.

Unavoidable Path through the Oppositions

- ¶11. Derrida sets out to reach the middle by way of the Saussurean signifier/signified dyad. For Saussure, the sign is binary—an originating factor (signified) which recognizes itself through its expression (signifier). According to Derrida, the Saussurean notion of signified-signifier bond is rooted in an inborn human need of presence and self-identity, which, upon scrutiny, is delusory. The whole meaning-seeking process is a process of perpetual postponement in a temporal sense (deferring) and a process of differentiation in a spatial sense (differing). Following the Saussurean logic that each sign only finds its existence/definition in what it is not, Derrida reaches the conclusion that what determines the existence and the meaning of signs is the differential relations of the signs. Thus, the binary nature of a sign, the signified/signifier opposition is invalidated.

¶12. Like the Derridean dichotomous concepts of signifier and signified, Deleuze utilizes the seemingly oppositional concepts the ‘body without organs’ (*‘corps sans organes’*) and ‘desiring machines’ (*‘machine desirante’*) only in order to elaborate them in a non-dichotomous fashion. Madan Sarup observes that “the work of Deleuze and Guattari proceeds through conceptual dichotomies.[19] But Deleuze and Guattari “invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another.”[20] The Deleuzian terminology of desiring machine is based on the presumption that unconscious desire is like a machine connected with numberless other machines. By calling it a machine, Deleuze emphasizes its dynamic movement and its inseparability from the material world. According to Deleuze, the libido is not the language of repressed desires that can only be translated through dreams, as psychoanalytic theory claims. Neither is it only limited to the Oedipus-family structure. Libidinal desire is production and is immediately social. It is co-extensive with all material parts of the physical body and indistinguishable from all natural, social and intellectual activities. Desire is ‘will to power’, in Nietzschean terms, a free-flowing energy, the perpetual movements of singular intensities. Desire means ‘pure multiplicity’, irreducible to a unity.

¶13. The term BwO (Deleuze’s acronym for “body without organs”) is initially generated by the psychotic’s feeling that he inhabits an evacuated body. But Deleuze uses this psychotic experience to explicate the virtually existent space within the transformative process of all worldly activities, which are the immediate production of the libido. It is an instantaneous moment in which the process of desiring production comes to a ‘stop’, but which then is subsumed within the process of production.

Producing and product form an identity that constitutes a third term in the linear series: an enormous undifferentiated object.

Everything stops dead for a moment, everything freezes in place (and then the whole process will begin all over again.[21]

Bogue states that “the undifferentiated object is the BwO, the desiring-machines at a zero-degree of intensity, a moment of antiproduction constantly fed back into the process of production.”[22] By “zero-degree of intensity” is meant the dissolution of the organization of all entities into free-flowing points of intensity, an ultimate deterritorialized universe.

- ¶14. Nagarjuna, in expounding Buddha's teaching, attempts to reach on-going reality by the same strategic approach: (1) Create the oppositional pair, (2) Install the in-between movement, (3) Identify their internal undifferentiation. This para-logical progression is evident in one of Nagarjuna's propositions in The Twelve Gate Treatise:

There cannot be being with non-being (opposition);
nor can there be being without non-being (movement).
If there can be being with non-being (movement),
then being should always be non-being (undifferentiation).[\[23\]](#)

The same linguistic maneuver can also be found in Buddha's teaching. In The Heart Sutra, Buddha says, "Form (being) is devoidness (non-being) and devoidness is Form; Form is not different from devoidness and devoidness is not different from Form." "Form is Devoidness" generates the initial oppositional view of being (existence) and non-being (non-existence) because it treats all phenomenological activities as nothingness. In other words, this statement is a strong critique of the phenomenological world (taken logocentrically). In a certain sense, this first stage of thinking is a necessary point of departure in the development of a spiritual journey from an ordinary mind towards enlightenment. It is a Derridean-style negative critique of life in general as logocentric and thus, self-contradictory. The knowledge of the 'dependent existence' of all worldly objects throws us into a world of emptiness and destruction. It is a world ruled by pure becoming (energy and flow), in Deleuzian terms, the deterritorialization of all entities, the eternal flux where nothing that has been done is meaningful because it will eventually evaporate.

Perpetual Movements Between the Oppositions

- ¶15. In Derrida, the movement created between the oppositional signifier and signified is only to underscore the excessiveness of the former (signifier) and the elusiveness of the latter (signified). When a signifier attempts to mirror (move back) its signified, it immediately splits or alters what it doubles. When a signifier does so, it transforms the signified into the signifier. But by definition, signifier is only a reflection, so how can it become a signified? Thus the Saussurean linguistic model is broken up. The subversive relationship between signifier and signified can be explained by the following example. Chinese characters *hsiao zi* are classically taken to refer to children who are docile to their parents. But when we encounter this word in modern times, it can also designate parents who perform acts of servility to the child. Thus, the characters *hsiao zi* seem to generate a new meaning and obtain a status of a signified while the meaning it generates functions as a signifier. In addition, if one

tracks the meaning of this word, one can reach unending series of interpretations: to *hsiao* is to obey and love your parents. To obey and love your parents means to understand their feelings. To understand their feelings means to feel as they feel, and so on, ad infinitum. Thus, one can always find oneself trapped in the movement of signifiers functioning as a trace of signified. Since we can only capture endless signifiers along the chain of signification, meaning or signified is perpetually deferred by the movement between the oppositional poles of signifiers and signifieds.

- ¶16. The movement between Deleuzian BwO and desiring machines is marked by the instantaneous alternation of them. It must be noted that, to Deleuze, the desiring-machines are not machines in a technical sense. A technical machine cannot function when its parts break down. desiring-machines are defined by the breaks, the stops which stimulate further flows and can function well only when they co-exist with the BwO, or the virtual realm of pure deterritorialization. The disintegration of desiring machines into the BwO, paradoxically, motivates the on-going action or process. Deleuze and Guattari delineate this oscillating movement:

Doubtless there are astonishing oscillations of the conscious, from one pole of delirium to the other: the way in which an expected revolutionary force breaks free, sometimes even in the midst of the worst archaisms; inversely, the way in which everything turns fascist or envelops itself in fascism, the way in which it falls back into archaisms. [\[24\]](#)

The BwO can be thought of as an ultimate deterritorialized flux of forces which seems not to have an actual existence in space and time. It is just a virtually-existent primary unity, a real but virtual dimension of possibilities from which all the desiring machines are actualized. It is helpful to think of the BwO as a Dionysian flow whereas desiring machines constitute the Apollonian world of images. There is a sense in which the Dionysian undifferentiated flux generates Apollonian force through the self-differentiating process. Here the verb 'generate' means that both the BwO (Dionysian) and the desiring machine (Apollonian) cannot stay in their own state at any moment without already becoming the other extreme. There is a constant oscillation between the BwO and desiring machines just as there is between Apollonian/Dionysian impulses.

- ¶17. The second stage in Nagarjunist Buddhism is marked by the movement between the oppositions of being (existence) and non-being (nonexistence). The in-between movement is created by Nagarjuna's constant negation of both extremes:

If the refutation of existence were to entail nihilism by implication
Then why is realism not entailed
By the refutation of nonexistence?
The existence becomes nonexistent because
It either ceases (on its own) or is counteracted (by something else).
But since the 'existent' is impossible,
How could there be (its) cessation or counteragent?[24]

- ¶18. Inada's explanation of the Buddhist concept of *pratitya-samupada* or Dependent Co-arising (relational condition) which is another way of addressing *sunyata*, or the middle path, is illuminating:

The adjective 'relational' refers to the ontological representation of an event or subject as related to the whole situation, whether significantly or not, in a certain moment; while the noun 'condition' refers to the state of such an event or subject at that particular moment.[26]

- ¶19. That is to say, while the term 'relational' (or 'dependent') undermines the autonomous status of an entity, the term 'condition' ('co-arising') simultaneously takes turns to restore its significance. It is very much like a blinking light that intermittently highlights the two alternative areas: condition/relation, entity/flow, existence/nonexistence. But no matter which area is illuminated, both are subject to *sunyata*, the non-attachment to the conceptualization that inflicts pain on the mind.

- ¶20. This movement can also be interpreted as “form is not different from devoidness,” as asserted in *The Heart Sutra*. The meaning of ‘not different’ creates ‘neither the same, nor different’ and ‘both the same and different’—the inclusive sense of disjunction between form (being) and devoidness (non-being) without falling into the trap of a higher synthesis. Thus, an indeterminacy is generated between two polar extremes in the human perception/conception of the world. Inada points out that “the Buddhists have gone beyond the ‘either-or’ logic since ‘either-or’ only operates within the realm of reason.”^[27] The disjunctive relationship between worldly existence and nothingness functions to break the human mind away from its imprisoning binary structure. Logically, two things can be thought as either the same or different on the condition that they are entities. If they are not entities, they can neither be the ‘same’ nor ‘different’. Since form and devoidness are not entities, but disjunctive relations of cosmic flows, what follows from this understanding is an unending movement from one to the other in what Magliola calls the “slide of pure dependency.”^[28]
- ¶21. In Derrida, the best approximation of ‘the way things really are’ is the ‘pure signifier’ which must be put *sous rature*. This crossing-out act synthesizes the signifier and the signified by canceling both of them. The non-logocentric synthesis is the trace, the ‘virtual space’ of the in-between or the middle, which traverses both the realms of signifier and signified and the realms of absence and presence while itself does not constitute a realm at all. The oppositions are the ‘same’ but not self-identical. Traces “are the ‘same’ not because they share an entitative substratum or any other ontic or ontological continuity, but rather because they are all purely devoid of being....”^[29] However, although Derrida discerns the fact that the trace is the origin of the entity,^[30] at this point, he has not reached the recognition that the non-logocentric synthesis of the trace or the middle is not only occult, but also indistinctive from the entity, in an off-rational, paralogical way and at an infinitesimal moment.

- ¶22. In Deleuze's view, the BwO is opposed to desiring machines only when the two are interpreted by the human mind as logical entities constituted under the 'principle of self-identity' (to use a Derridean formulation). In this respect, the BwO, the absolute deterritorialization, is equated with the notion of absence, and the desiring machines equated with the process of re-territorialization, with the notion of presence. But this premise is existentially untrue. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze writes: "in repulsion as in attraction, the BwO is not in opposition to these organs-objects [that is, the Desiring Machines]; it merely ensures its own opposition, and their opposition, with regard to an organism."^[31] By 'organism', Deleuze here means the general tendency to treat worldly objects as entities (this is a table, that is a chair) subject to the principle of identity and unity. Here Deleuze attacks human logocentric activity on the basis of rationality and organism, for the reason that rationalism fossilizes the BwO and desiring machines into oppositional entities.
- ¶23. Most daring is Deleuze and Guattari's assertion of the paralogic contraction of the BwO and Desiring Machines. "The BwO is desire."^[32] This statement has the same effect as their other claim that the schizophrenic is both dead and alive. To caution their readers against falling into a Hegelian synthesis, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two kinds of BwO—the molar and the molecular:

The two sides of the BwO are, therefore, the side on which the mass phenomenon and the paranoid investment corresponding to it are organized on a microscopic scale, and the other side on which, on a submicroscopic scale, the molecular phenomena and their schizophrenic investment are arranged.^[33]

The schizophrenic BwO, which entails the destruction of entities and the liberation of the pure migrating singularities only forms a virtual domain of becoming which grounds all molar activities. The other side of the BwO proceeds alongside molar desiring machines and ultimately cannot be differentiated from them. Every desiring machine is constituted by a BwO, and more specifically, it is virtually a BwO itself. It is the case because every entity (desiring machine) is structured by differential relations of force or singularities, which at any given moment change their position and configuration when they are linked with other entities in an immanent field of self-differentiation. This minute transmutation designates both a slight internal transformation of the original entity and a formation of a new entity. Instead of forming a Hegelian synthesis (unity), the identification of the BwO and desiring machines discloses a fact that both of the poles are being dissolved into a provisional name for an unending process. But this process does not preclude the molar aggregation (the

logocentric, in Derrida's terms) as long as the name given to it is known as provisional. Both molar assemblages (entities) and molecular points of intensity (trace) are preserved so that one can establish one's sense of meaning and value without falling either into the trap of all traditional societal codes (organism), or into the total denial of them (nihilism).

- ¶24. In Nagarjuna's Buddhism, the third stage of interpretation of the relationship between form and devoidness is the non-dialectical synthesis: "devoidness (nonexistence) is form (existence)" (The Heart Sutra). Nagarjuna states: "The limits (i.e. realm) of nirvana are the limits of samsara. Between the two, there is not the slightest difference whatsoever."^[34] This non-dialectical synthesis is the Buddhist ultimate recognition of form (identity) as differential trace, recognition accompanied by the affirmative attitude of celebration. Like the Deleuzian BwO, Buddhist devoidness is opposed to logocentric form when it is interpreted as nihilistic nothingness. However, when realized as differential devoidness or the middle way, devoidness is form because every worldly form is affirmed and practiced in the awareness of its perpetual transformation. The logocentric form is reinstated without the attachment of the mind. Madhyamika Buddhism calls 'devoidness' also by the name of (Nagarjuna's) 'two truths', which comprise 'conventional truth' (being, existence) and 'ultimate truth' (non-being, or non-existence). The devoidness recognizes both existence and non-existence as 'truth' because to a differential mind, they are just the same. The world is seen as a differential becoming while still preserving the beauty of the worldly 'object' as the product of temporal-spatial conditions.

Conclusion: An Inmost Difference

- ¶25. What distinguishes Derrida and Deleuze, and Nagarjuna is not a matter of the vision of the middle, or the happenings, but how the mind reacts to it. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida makes the following declaration: "To make enigmatic what one thinks one understands by the words 'proximity,' 'immediacy,' 'presence' (the proximate [*proche*], the own [*propre*], and the pre- of presence), is my final intention in this book."^[35] To counterbalance the great synthesizing power of the mind to congeal identity, Derrida finds it more urgent to write in a constantly self-negating fashion. By this strategy it seems that his attention upon the trace is a little too much off-balanced. He turns out to recognize the inevitable return of the identity in the field of the trace with uneasiness. "Within the closure, by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed, it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse..."^[36] However, he also asserts that the trace is crossed-out but eligible. The eligibility of

trace, though not an official recognition of the affirmative presence of the identity, insinuates the return of the identity in a differential way. When Derrida asks: “Does it not renounce the present and the proper in order to master them better in their meaning, in the ideal form of truth, of the presence of the present and of the proximity or property of the proper?”^[37] he has implicitly allowed the return of the logocentric not as a necessity but as a masterful pleasure.

- ¶26. To Nagarjuna and Deleuze, the middle reinstates the polar extremes in logocentrism while pointing back to the middle, but to Derrida, the middle refers to the ‘in-between’ while pointing back to the logocentric realm. But all of them assert that the movement of the middle is the primal. Both Nagarjuna and Deleuze have not only acknowledged the ‘necessity’ but also the ‘beauty’, the ‘trueness’ of the logocentric because ultimately the logocentric and the differential are the ‘same’. The Derridean trace is empty but ‘marked’.^[38] But in Derrida’s writing, the joy is hardly felt because the affirmative attitude toward the logocentric is only dimly suggestive. In this sense Deleuze is one step closer to Nagarjuna, both of whom live/love the logocentric without mental attachment to it. Their love is the Nietzschean exultant acclamation: “It’s a dream; let’s dream on!”
- ¶27. If we accept Magliola’s observation that the West privileges ‘constructions’ and the East privileges ‘dissolutions’,^[39] we probably have to add that the West constructs through deconstruction (without being aware of it) and the East dissolves while coming back to what has been dissolved. What looks like self-contradiction, if seen through the perspective of the paralogical middle way, will not be regarded with disparagement, since eventually “there is only one ‘going-on’.”^[40] Magliola claims that “Derrida’s ‘logocentrism’ approximates the Nagarjunist notion of *samvrti satya*, and Derrida’s ‘differentialism’ (‘pure effect’, ‘pure negative reference’, etc.) approximates—at least conceptually—the Nagarjunist notion of *paramartha satya*.”^[41] I would like to argue that the Deleuzian notions of the BwO/desiring machines are pointing to the differential trace or Nagarjunean devoidness—at least conceptually. Moreover, while I concur with Magliola’s observation that Derrida needs a kind of “wisdom which is ‘other-than-from-reason-alone’,” and which “can only come from (1) non-clinging and (2) meditative practice,”^[42] I would like to claim that Deleuze seems to take a further step, beyond Derrida, towards the Eastern wisdom. Deleuze claims that “It [BwO] is not at all a notion or a concept but a practice, a set of practices.”^[43] It also seems that the West has joined the East on their spiritual journey toward an unknown space, a space which has been frequented by Buddhist practitioners through meditative activities. It is a space of Buddha Mind. Although it is uncertain that whether Deleuze has

attained “a liberating joy and security”[\[44\]](#) that marks Nagarjuna Buddhism, an illuminating passage in the introduction to the *Anti-Oedipus* by Mark Seem is found delineating a similar mentality:

Such is the anti-Oedipal strategy: if man is connected to the machines of the universe, if he is in tune with his desires,...he ceases to worry about the fitness of things, about the behavior of his fellow-men, about right or wrong and justice and injustice. If his roots are in the current of life he will float on the surface like a lotus and he will blossom and give forth fruit....The life that's in him will manifest itself in growth, and growth is an endless, eternal process. And the process is everything. [\[45\]](#)

Since Deleuze has brought his reader from a purely conceptual plane toward an affective plane, a Plane of Life itself, it is hopeful that his successors may embark on a spiritual experiment to practice what they believe. At any rate, the middle-most (i.e., the differential trace, the body without organs, or the devoidness), which is not in the least different from the world's happenings, is a way of life, an embodiment of productive desires that can empower human mind to live a joyful life and become a joyful energy.

END NOTES

1. If we assess the postmodern condition in conformity with Lyotard's definition of the postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives, we can infer that postmodernism had been long working its way through modernism. In relatively recent times, the postmodern suspicion of a unifying principle underlying the world of sense can be traced back even to the romanticism of Goethe's *Faust* where Memphistopheles exposes human nature as inflicted by irreconcilable self-contradicting forces. Emerson also confesses that A believer in Unity, a seer in Unity, I yet behold two. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: Minnesota UP (1984), xxiv, and Henry David Gray, *Emerson: A Statement of New England Transcendentalism As Expressed in the Philosophy of Its Chief Component*, New York: Frederick Ungar (1917), 138.

2. All forms of knowledge, discourses, social and cultural phenomena are constructed on the basis of this unquenchable desire for self-presence that gives rise to binary oppositions.

3. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1974), 71.
4. Born in Vidarbha, a place in South India, Nagarjuna (150-250 A.D.) was a brilliant and assiduous Buddhist monk whose biographical background is diversely documented. The Chinese name Long Shu for Nagarjuna-imitating the meaning of the Sanskrit name- involves the propitious term long (meaning dragon in Chinese), evoking his mythic adventure into the Palace of Dragon (where he gains access to the Huayan Sutra). The legend is also associated with the pervasiveness of the sea and the evasiveness of the dragon, pervasiveness and evasiveness being characteristics of life, according to Buddhism.
5. I shall take the middle path as designating neither the entitative nor non-entitative, nor a synthesis of the two. See Robert Magliola, *Postmodernism on the Brim: A Differentialist Manifesto*, *Proceedings of the Symposium on Postmodernism, Cerisy-la-Salle, France: Krisis*, 3 1985, 91-111, 92.
6. Derrida's exposition of the term deconstruction is as follows: "in spite of appearances, deconstruction is neither an analysis nor a critique. I would say the same about method. Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one." (*A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, New York: Columbia University Press (1991), 273) "Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity. It deconstructs itself. It can be deconstructed" (p274). In accordance with Derrida's own definition of deconstruction, we may say that Deleuze and Nagarjuna are deconstructionists, too, in that both of them base their thought on the activation of the passage between oppositions in a way that the principle of identity/entity dissolves into a fleeting movement of points of intensity (Deleuze) and devoidness (Nagarjuna).
7. Robert Magliola, *On Deconstructing Life Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), 171.
8. *ibid.*, 172.
9. Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press (1984), 87.
10. *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, New York: Columbia University Press (1991), 189.

- [11.](#) *ibid.*, 190.
- [12.](#) Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, translated by David Allison, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press (1973), 84.
- [13.](#) Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, translated by M Lester, New York: Columbia University Press (1990), 58.
- [14.](#) Nagarjuna, *Mahaprajnaparamitopalesa*, Taipei: Qi Hai (1979), 9.
- [15.](#) Samdhinirmocana Sutra, SN 33, 134.30-1355.19; and SN2, 17.8-30 SN ib. ed., Fr. Trans., Lamotte 1935, rep. C W. Huntington, Jr., *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indiann Madhyamika*, University of Hawaii Press (1989), 36.
- [16.](#) *ibid.*, 25-26.
- [17.](#) Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press (1984), 89.
- [18.](#) Nagarjuna, *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika* , translated by Kenneth Inada, Dehli: Sri Sadguru Publications (1983), 16 (Introductory Essay).
- [19.](#) Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, Anthens: University of Georgia Press (1983), 96.
- [20.](#) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie tome 2: Mille plateaux*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980). All the citations are taken from the English translation: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: Univeristy of Minnesota Press (1980), 20.
- [21.](#) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie tome 1: l'Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1972). All my citations are taken from the English translation: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley Mark Seem and Helen Lane, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press (1983), 7.
- [22.](#) Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, New York: Routledge (1989), 93.

23. Hsueh-li Cheng, *Nagarjuna's Twelve Gate Treatise, with Introductory Essays, Comments, and Notes*, Dordrecht, Boston, London: D. Reidel (1982), 85. Although in Chr. Lindtner's words, The Twelve Gate Treatise (Dvadasadvaraka) is classified under the category he calls decidedly spurious, Lindtner keeps on asserting that there can be no doubt that (nearly) all the verses were originally composed by Nagarjuna. See Chr. Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nagarjuna*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag (1982), 11-12.
24. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley Mark Seem and Helen Lane, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press (1983), 277.
25. Acarya Nagarjuna, *The Precious Garland*, translated by John Dunne and Sara McClintock, Boston: Wisdom Press (1997), 18, 20.
26. Nagarjuna, *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika*, translated by Kenneth Inada, Delhi: Sri Sadguru Publications (1983), 37.
27. *ibid.*, 25.
28. Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press (1984), 116.
29. Robert Magliola, *On Deconstructing Life Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), 152.
30. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1974), 47.
31. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley Mark Seem and Helen Lane, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press (1983), 326.
32. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1980), 165.
33. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley Mark Seem and Helen Lane, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press (1983), 281.

- [34.](#) Nagarjuna, *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika* , translated by Kenneth Inada, Dehli: Sri Sadguru Publications (1983), 20.
- [35.](#) Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press (1974), 68.
- [36.](#) *ibid.*, 14.
- [37.](#) *ibid.*, 143.
- [38.](#) Robert Magliola, *On Deconstructing Life Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), 140.
- [39.](#) *ibid.*, xvi.
- [40.](#) Magliola refers this statement to Mulamadhyamakakarika 25:20. See *ibid.*, 143.
- [41.](#) *ibid.*, 143.
- [42.](#) *ibid.*, 143.
- [43.](#) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: Univeristy of Minnesota Press (1980), 149-150.
- [44.](#) Robert Magliola, *Postmodernism on the Brim: A Differentialist Manifesto, Proceedings of the Symposium on Postmodernism, Cerisy-la-Salle, France: Krisis*, 3 1985, 91-111, 91.
- [45.](#) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley Mark Seem and Helen Lane, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press (1983), xxiii.

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