



Derrida's Rethinking of Professorial Authority

ABSTRACT: *In this paper I argue that Derrida's writings on education contain a profound rethinking of professorial authority. I first outline the sources of professorial authority and describe how they were traditionally conceived in France at the time when Derrida was working. I then show how Derrida challenges and transforms these sources, focusing in particular on a new relation to knowledge, a new relation to the state, and a new understanding of charisma that emerge from his work.*

KEYWORDS: Derrida, education, teaching, authority

Introduction

On June 2, 1980, Jacques Derrida sat for the oral defense of his *doctorat d'État*. That Derrida would put himself in this position is somewhat strange. Already renowned in France and abroad, having published numerous influential books, why would he subject himself to the ordeal of being judged by a committee of six professors, asking for the traditional, institutional recognition of his achievements? One answer we might give is straightforwardly pragmatic. Derrida states in the defense that he had given up on the project of writing a thesis because such a move seemed incompatible with the extensive work he had done starting in 1974, both theoretical and political, in challenging the existing educational institutions in France. 'I thought, rightly or wrongly, that it was neither consistent nor desirable to be a candidate for any new academic title or responsibility' (Derrida 2004: 126). He thus seemed committed to remaining in his position as an *agrégé-répétiteur* at the École Normale Supérieure for the rest of his life, preparing students for the *agrégation*, the examination they needed to pass to win a post teaching philosophy in the lycée. However, Derrida tells the committee that he very recently had a change of heart and decided that he should perhaps prepare himself 'for some new type of mobility' (Derrida 2004: 127). He does not say what precipitated this abrupt about-face, but we learn from his biography that Paul Ricœur had recently retired from his professorial chair at the University of Paris X at Nanterre. Ricœur wanted Derrida to succeed him, and the *doctorat d'État* was a precondition of holding the position (Peeters 2013: 314–17). One might thus think that Derrida put himself in this rather humbling position because he made a certain calculation, wagering that his pride was worth less than the possibility of a better job.



Such an explanation has its attractions, insofar as it supports views of Derrida held by both his friends and his enemies. His friends can see Derrida as a rebel and an outsider who was unfortunately forced into conforming to a system that gave him no other choice. And his enemies can interpret this pragmatic reading as evidence that Derrida was never quite the rebel his friends claimed him to be. Both views, however, fail to appreciate the complexity of Derrida's relationship to educational institutions and their procedures of accreditation. Earlier in the defense Derrida makes this quite clear when, speaking of the change in his work starting from 1967, he states:

If, from this moment on, I was indeed convinced of the necessity for a profound transformation, amounting even to a complete upheaval of university institutions, this was not, of course, in order to substitute for what existed some type of non-thesis, nonlegitimacy, or incompetence. In this area I believe in transitions and in negotiation—even if it may at times be brutal and accelerated—I believe in the necessity of a certain tradition, in particular for political reasons that are nothing less than traditionalist, and I believe, moreover, in the indestructibility of the ordered procedures of legitimation, of the production of titles and diplomas, and of the authorization of competence. (Derrida 2004: 121)

It is this complex relation to university institutions, where Derrida believes both in the need for profound change as well as in the necessity of institutional order in processes of legitimation and authorization, that I examine in this paper. In particular, I focus on the issue of professorial authority, something especially pertinent for thinkers of Derrida's generation. In many ways the events of May 1968—or at the very least the events around this date that took place in France among students and in the university, if not in the wider movement of the nationwide strike—centrally involved a challenge to the authority customarily held by teachers. It is thus not surprising that in the decades following these events a rethinking of this authority would take place in the writings of a number of thinkers and philosophers, including Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-François Lyotard, Michèle Le Dœuff, and Jacques Rancière. My goal in this paper is to present one piece of what would be a broader analysis ranging across these theories, demonstrating the ways in which Derrida calls for a new understanding of the authority professors in the university ought to possess, even as he supports the traditional view in certain respects.¹

¹ Charles Bingham (2008) argues for a conception of teacher authority that is in part inspired by Derrida's work. My work here differs from Bingham's in that I am focusing on Derrida's education writings and on what they say directly (if not always overtly) about teacher authority. Bingham, by contrast, relies on other writings by Derrida (primarily *Of Grammatology* [1976] and 'Before the Law' [1992]) that provide concepts (the supplement and literary authority) not originally theorized in educational contexts, concepts Bingham then redeploys to discuss the authority of teachers. The vision of professorial authority I outline here is certainly compatible with aspects of Bingham's view, particularly with his central claim that 'authority is relational', but I see myself as pursuing a rather different trajectory. In a separate article, Bingham (2007) does discuss one of Derrida's texts

1. Four Sources of Professorial Authority

In order to understand Derrida's innovations better, I first outline what I see as the four sources of professorial authority and the way these sources were understood for philosophers in the French system prior to 1968. I propose that the first source of authority comes from professors having some kind of expert relation to knowledge. This relation is usually one of possession, where professors have the knowledge that is to be transmitted to students. In a more Socratic vein, professors can also be expert in guiding students toward knowledge even if the former fail to possess the content of this knowledge themselves. However, in both cases, professors are seen to be in a position *vis-à-vis* knowledge that students lack, and this position will help students to move out of their state of ignorance. Second, professorial authority derives from a higher power that authorizes professors to be professors. The immediate power is the institution in which professors work, but for institutions of higher education in Western industrialized countries in the last century or two (and in many other places besides), this authorization can be traced to the state as it is the state that certifies the educational status of these institutions. Third, professorial authority comes from the power of authorization that professors possess. By this I mean the power that they have to accredit students as having learned, usually through some kind of examination or assessment. This authority is related to the first two in that it relies on the relation to knowledge that professors have and is often included in the authorization they receive from the state. Finally, the fourth source of professorial authority lies in professors' charisma, which I take to be the particular personality traits and behaviors that, constituted through interactions with students, reinforce their authority. The features of charisma will vary depending on the cultural context and on the identities of the people involved.

In proposing that professors gain their authority from these four sources, I am not claiming that all professors are connected to all of them. There are professors who have knowledge but who lack charisma, professors who are charismatic but who lack the requisite knowledge, professors whose institutional position does not give them a role in assessing their students, and so on. But I am claiming that a professor has authority because he or she has a relation to at least one of these sources and that we can understand the features of professorial authority within a given education system by examining the role and function of these four sources.

Thus, to take the example that forms the context for understanding Derrida's work on education, France before 1968, we can see that the authority of philosophy professors derived from each of these sources in a very particular way, and the rigorously hierarchical nature of the faculty can be understood in terms of how this authority was differentially distributed. The dominant relation to knowledge traditionally privileged in France was that of possession, as seen in the importance granted to the magisterial lecture. Delivering these lectures was the primary activity of those at the top of the teaching hierarchy, the professors holding chairs in the universities, who were supposed to be the source of all legitimate knowledge. Other,

on education, 'Where a Teaching Body Begins and How It Ends' (Derrida 2002a: 67–98), but there Bingham's focus is not on teacher authority.

lesser tasks, such as preparing students for examinations by merely repeating this knowledge—what Derrida did as an *agrégé-répétiteur*—were assigned to professors further down the pyramid, with a reduced amount of authority granted to those performing such duties.

The next two sources of professorial authority, the higher power that authorizes professors to be professors and the power that professors themselves possess to authorize students as having learned, were intimately entwined in France because of the system of nationwide public examinations that were heavily regulated by the state. One could obtain a position teaching philosophy in the lycée only by passing one of two examinations, the *agrégation* or the CAPES, and the committees overseeing these examinations consisted of just a few members of the professorial elite, with the committee chair appointed by the Ministry of Education. The *agrégation* also operated as a de facto qualification for holding a teaching position in the university (there were exceptions to this, but most philosophers teaching in higher education were also *agrégés*). And as I mentioned in my introduction, the highest positions in the university, the professorial chairs, required that one hold a *doctorat d'État*, a degree whose sanction from the state is inscribed in its very name. Thus, the state was omnipresent in the processes of authorization of those philosophy students seeking to become professors. But even for those students not seeking to become professors, there was a similar concentration of power and influence of the state. The most important elements of assessment came in the form of public examinations, such as the *baccalauréat* and the *concours* for entry into the *grandes écoles*, which operated according to similar structures, governed by small committees of elite professors again sanctioned by the state. So here too the state was present and delegated its authorizing power to the most authorized of professors (for more on the procedures of authorization in the French system, see Schrift [2006: 188–208]; for accounts of the *agrégation*, see Schrift [2008] and Baring [2011: 224–39]).

As for the fourth source of authority for philosophy professors, that of charisma, this too took on a very particular shape in France. There was a long history dating back to the nineteenth century that enshrined the lycée '*prof de philo*' as a freethinking individual, a man (and the ideal was clearly marked as male) who exercised his autonomy by standing up to oppressive powers (Orchard 2011: 32–36). This philosophy professor is a solitary and unified figure—unlike for every other subject in the *bac*, a student has just one philosophy professor for one year of study, and the professor is given only a loosely defined curriculum of 'notions' to be covered during that year, rather than a detailed program that must be followed. Because of his freedom, the professor is seen to have the power to pass this freedom on to his students, schooling them in the practices of critique. And the timing of this lesson is crucial, taking place as it does in the final year of the lycée. Having been trained in other disciplines, students are held to be experienced enough to cast a critical eye across their studies, yet still young enough to be influenced by their teacher. In such a situation, authority accrues to the person at the front of the class, charismatic in his heroic stance against the powers that be.

When placed together, there is an obvious tension between the four sources granting authority to the French philosophy professor. How can one reconcile the immense presence and influence of the state in sources 2 and 3 with the critique of

the state that source 4 often involves (a critique that was usually tied to source 1, the professor's relation to knowledge)? We learn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1988) that the system resolves this tension by splitting professors into two classes. Those with 'academic capital' occupy the state-sanctioned university professorial chairs and the examination committees, and in my terms they have their authority primarily from sources 2 and 3. By contrast, those with 'intellectual capital' are denied positions of academic power, working instead outside the strict confines of the university in other institutions, such as the Collège de France or the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), and are the 'consecrated heretics' or intellectual rebels with authority from sources 1 and 4. On very rare occasions a figure might straddle this divide and have authority derived from all four sources, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, it was precisely such an exception that Derrida sought to become in 1980—already with the authority of knowledge and charisma, he sought the state-sanctioned authorization of the *doctorat d'État* so that he could supervise the work of others and so have the power to authorize in turn.

Now as it turned out Derrida did not succeed in becoming such a bridge figure. He passed his thesis defense, but he failed in his application for the position replacing Ricœur at Nanterre (Peeters 2013: 324–25). When Derrida did finally obtain a post that allowed him to supervise doctoral research, it was at the EHESS, and so he remained outside the main centers of academic power in France. Thus, even though Derrida was prepared in 1980 to drop his opposition to the system in order to enter it more fully, it seems that the system, for its part, was not so ready to welcome him in. And this was perhaps with good reason. For, as I now wish to show, Derrida's writings contain a profound reconception of how professorial authority ought to be thought, one that challenges core elements on which the institution of French philosophy was built.

2. Professorial Authority Reconceived

Most of Derrida's writings on education are gathered together in *Du droit à la philosophie* (Derrida 1990; *Du droit à la philosophie* was published in two volumes in English as *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?: Right to Philosophy 1* [2002a] and *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2* [2004]). This is a rich and complicated work, containing essays and documents written from the mid-1970s on, and many of these texts are related to two organizations that Derrida was involved with during this time, the Groupe de recherches sur l'enseignement philosophique (GREPh) and the Collège International de Philosophie (CIPh). *Du droit à la philosophie* totals more than 650 pages, and I cannot hope to present its many dimensions here (for an overview of the main themes see Haddad [2014]; for a comprehensive analysis of Derrida's education writings and of the history and actions of GREPh in the context of the teaching of philosophy in France, see Orchard [2011]). Instead, I read across this work to draw out the ways in which Derrida proposes, often implicitly, alternative understandings of the relation that professorial authority should have to its sources. I deal with each source in turn.

2.1 The Relation to Knowledge

Derrida challenges the view that professorial authority is grounded in the possession of knowledge in two main ways. The first appears in the 1976 text 'Where a Teaching Body Begins and How It Ends', where Derrida calls into question the way knowledge functions in the hierarchical distribution of authority (Derrida 2002a: 67–98). Here Derrida performs a rather classical deconstruction of the binary innovation/repetition. The system maintains that those at the top of the hierarchy, the professors holding chairs who deliver magisterial lectures, generate new philosophical knowledge, while those at the bottom, the *agrégés-répétiteurs*, such as Derrida himself, do not innovate at all but merely repeat the knowledge that already exists. Against such a view, Derrida argues that all teaching involves a kind of repetition, insofar as it is premised on a traditional understanding of the relation between signifier and signified. The professors at the top are thus also 'repeaters' of a sort. Further, Derrida points to ways in which the system fails to ensure that the *agrégés-répétiteurs* enact a perfect repetition of already existing knowledge—there can thus be no pure repetition containing nothing new, and so those designated to be mere 'repeaters' innovate as well. In this way, the distinction between innovation and repetition cannot be said to govern the professorial hierarchy coherently, calling into question one of the traditional means by which authority is allotted to those within this structure.

But Derrida does not only parasitically deconstruct the existing view of professors' relation to knowledge. His education writings also offer an alternative in its place. This alternative can be best understood by considering his engagement with Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* (Kant 1996). Derrida reads this text as foundational to the debates in the early nineteenth century that led to the establishment of the University of Berlin, which in turn served as the template for modern research universities across the world, France included. In the *Conflict*, Kant argues for a strict separation between the higher and lower faculties. Members of the higher faculties (theology, law, and medicine) are tasked with the training of civil servants, and so they are subject to censorship from the state. Members of the lower faculty (philosophy, by which Kant means what we would term the whole of the arts and sciences, although he sometimes uses it in a narrower sense approximating the discipline of philosophy as it is understood today) should be free from all state interference because they seek truth governed only by reason. Kant thus suggests that the authority of philosophy professors ought to be grounded in the knowledge that they access through their use of reason. This knowledge can be used to critique the higher faculties and thus indirectly to critique the state, but Kant maintains that these professors' authority does not give them the right to enforce these critiques even as he suggests that the state would do well to heed the lower faculty's counsel as it pursues its ends.

Derrida engages *The Conflict of the Faculties* in several essays, on occasion coupling it with the chapter on 'The Architectonic of Pure Reason' from the *First Critique*, and the overall result is a displacement of Kant's view. For example, in 'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils', Derrida argues that basic research governed by pure reason is not immune from the influence

of instrumental or ‘ends-oriented’ thinking and so cannot be sheltered from the influence of external powers, such as the state, or more broadly from ‘international techno-military networks that are apparently multi- or trans-national in form.’ (Derrida 2004: 141). And in ‘Mochlos, or The Conflict of the Faculties’ (2004: 83–112), Derrida suggests that Kant’s division of the faculties is premised upon the distinction between constative and performative utterances, placing the philosophy faculty in the domain of constative truth with its representation of knowledge and the higher faculties in the domain of performatives with their authorization of civil servants. However, Derrida argues, this distinction cannot be coherently maintained. The lower faculty cannot avoid having its discourse carry performative force, and so it cannot stay safely within the limits of the role of mere counsel to the state. The purity of the division thus cannot be preserved, and the faculty of philosophy finds itself inevitably caught up in conflicts that Kant seeks to avoid.

For his part, Derrida responds to these impurities by embracing the performative power of university discourse, placing emphasis on the interpretative rather than representative actions of professors. He does this by proposing in ‘Mochlos’ that this performative power is at the same time a founding power, suggesting that each interpretation advanced in the university be understood as a call for new communities of interpretation:

The interpretation of a theorem, poem, philosopheme, or theologeme is only produced by simultaneously proposing an institutional model, either by consolidating an existing one that enables the interpretation, or by constituting a new one in accordance with this interpretation. Declared or clandestine, this proposal calls for the politics of a community of interpreters gathered around this text, and at the same time of a global society, a civil society with or without a State, a veritable regime enabling the inscription of that community. I will go further: every text, every element of a corpus reproduces or bequeathes, in a prescriptive or normative mode, one or several injunctions: come together according to this or that rule . . . form this or that type of institution so as to read me and write about me. (Derrida 2004: 101; this displacement of a relation to constative truth to performative invention is developed further in Derrida’s late essay ‘The University Without Condition’ [2002b])

To propose an interpretation, Derrida here claims, is also to call for an institutional structure or community in which it can be understood. By virtue of this power to give rise to new communities of interpretation, professors thus become potential founders, able to inaugurate new institutions that would come about in response to their work. On this understanding, professorial authority is untethered from a professor’s possession of knowledge and from his or her ability to represent it accurately by following the dictates of pure reason. The first source of professorial authority, the possession of knowledge, is thus replaced in Derrida’s work by the performative power of foundation. Further, I would suggest that accompanying this

shift in activity is a transformation of the temporal structure of authority, where it moves from resting on something located in the past (the already established knowledge that the professor possesses and communicates) to something to come in the future (the communities to be formed in response to the professor's interpretations). But to understand the precise nature of this temporal form better, we must examine Derrida's challenge to the second source of professorial authority, the state.

2.2 The Authorization by the State

One might think that these claims about professors' power to found new institutions dispense with the second source of their authority, the higher power of authorization. If professors themselves can inaugurate new communities, why would they need to be endorsed by another power, such as the state? However, in the passage just cited Derrida speaks of 'a global society, a civil society with or without a State, a veritable regime enabling the inscription of that community' of interpreters. The higher power thus remains, even as it is opened up to the possibility of being other than the state. And reading Derrida's work with an eye on this second source, we find that professorial authority is in fact engaged in a more complicated relation to the authorizing power of the state.

This is most obvious in writings from the early 1980s connected to the Collège International de Philosophie (CIPh), the institution whose founding Derrida, François Châtelet, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt were commissioned by the French government to investigate (for more on the founding of CIPh, see Orchard [2011: 141–47] and Peeters [2013: 342–49]). In these writings, Derrida thematizes the peculiar relation that CIPh has to the structures that traditionally give authority to an educational institution. As Derrida describes in the opening essay of *Du droit à la philosophie*, 'Privilege: Justificatory Title and Introductory Remarks,' CIPh actively breaks with some of these structures. He writes that CIPh 'indicates in its very constitution that no title as such is required to participate in its research. That is, no academic title, no institutional accreditation', and that in determining CIPh's focus, 'priority should be given to directions in research, to themes and objects that *currently* are still not *legitimated* in French and foreign institutions' (Derrida 2002a: 10). CIPh thus eschews relying on the authorizing procedures of other institutions in the French education system (be it through these other institutions' granting of degrees or their support of research), themselves supported by the state, in deciding who and what should be included in its purview. At the same time, however, regardless of its pretensions to autonomy, CIPh remains dependent on the French state financially, legally, and symbolically, which supported both its initial foundation and its ongoing activities. CIPh thus might lay claim to be an autonomous institution, free from external procedures of authorization, but in fact it does rely on the state for its existence.

Now in this tension between autonomy and heteronomy, CIPh resembles all institutions that claim self-legitimacy. As Derrida analyzes at length in essays such as 'Declarations of Independence' (2002c) and 'Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'' (2002d), institutional claims to self-foundation cover

over an inevitable reliance on other sources (for more on Derrida's accounts of foundation in these two essays, see Honig [1991], Beardsworth [1996: 99–101], and Fritsch [2005: 139–44]). One of Derrida's main points in these analyses is that such covering over is crucial to the success of an act of foundation—this is one of the ways we are to understand the 'mystical foundation of authority'. However, what complicates things in CIPH's case, distinguishing it from other institutions, is that it takes the tension in its legitimacy as an object of investigation and reserves the right to critique its own foundation. In the text 'Sendoffs (for the Collège International de Philosophie)', which was a section of the initial report commissioned by the government, in the course of highlighting the need to interrogate the meaning of 'philosophy,' Derrida writes:

Philosophy *in view of what? Since and until when? In what and how? By whom and for whom?* Is it *decidable* and within what limits? In fact and by rights, these *topoi* will also be sites of the Collège's vigilant reflection on itself: on its own aim, on its destination (today and tomorrow) as a *philosophical* site, on what legitimates it and then confers on it its own proper power of legitimation, on what decides its politics and its economy, on the forces it serves and the forces it makes use of, on its national and international relations with other institutions. *Destination* and *legitimation*, thus, of the Collège itself: these are not problems to be treated secondarily or to be dissociated (in the space of a sociological analysis, for example) from the major interrogations on the essence and the destination of the philosophical. (Derrida 2004: 226; the complete report is published as *Le Rapport bleu: Les sources historiques et théoriques du Collège international de philosophie* [Châtelet et al. 1998])

Derrida here suggests that a part of CIPH's mission will be to examine critically the processes that support its own legitimacy. This follows from the philosophical nature of the institution. But we are then confronted with the following question: if, as Derrida argues elsewhere, an institution's authority depends on it denying the heteronomous nature of its own foundation, and if CIPH aims to bring this heteronomy to light, can it be an institution with any authority at all?

The answer is yes, and this also follows from CIPH's character as philosophical. For Derrida understands practices of self-interrogation and questioning, particularly when directed to an institution's foundations, as central to philosophy. Those who gather in the name of philosophy, he argues, must always

claim to be *justified* in putting into question not only every determinate knowledge (which researchers in other fields can also do) but even the value of knowledge and every presupposition regarding that which receives the name 'philosophy' and gathers them into a so-called or self-styled philosophical community. . . . No community will be called

philosophical if it is not capable of reexamining, *in every possible fashion*, its fundamental bond. (Derrida 2002a: 16–17)

That is, to be philosophical is for Derrida to be able to call the foundations of one's own community into question. As a consequence, the stability of CIPh's foundations is challenged—Derrida suggests that '*we will never be sure that there has ever been self-foundation*' (Derrida 2002a: 21). But he does not go so far as to deny the possibility of self-foundation altogether, instead arguing that it moves from being an event that can take place once and for all to something like a promise:

If something like *Ciph* is habitable, it is as the experience of this space of the promise. To this extent, the affirmation of a concern for independence, autonomy, and self-legitimation is not necessarily, and in anyone's mouth, a 'mere word,' even if no institutional reality is or can be adequate to it. The self, the *autos* of legitimating and legitimated self-foundation, *is still to come*, not as a *future* reality but as that which will always retain the essential structure of a promise and as that which can only arrive as such, as *to come*. (Derrida 2002a: 22)

To those who have read Derrida's later work, particularly on questions of democracy, this language of the 'to come' will sound familiar, and I would argue that it has precisely the same temporal structure in both contexts, in which the future of this to come is constituted through an inheritance of the past (I argue that the 'to come' in democracy is constituted through inheritance in Haddad [2013]). This would mean that the authority of an institution like CIPh arises through a similar entwining of past and future and so is supported by the dual sources of the state on the one hand—that higher power that does indeed authorize CIPh to be formed—and the promise of autonomy that remains as a promise to come. And since the authority of the professor derives from that of the institution, it shares equally in this dual structure.

Thus, I propose that we can read in Derrida's writing on CIPh a call to rethink the second source of professorial authority. The authority of the professor cannot be traced back in a straight line through the authority of the institution to the authorizing power of the state. This is because CIPh's authority does not flow directly from any single act performed by the state. Such state actions are important elements in CIPh's foundation and existence, but so too is the promise of a self-foundation to come, a promise that follows from the claim of the institution to be philosophical. The authority of the professor, at least in the case of the philosophy professor, would thus be similarly divided in this now doubled source.

2.3 The Professor's Authorizing Power

Regarding the third source of professorial authority, the professor's power of authorization through the confirmation that students have learned, there is much

less to say. Indeed, I would suggest that there is nothing in Derrida's education writings that reconceives this power along different lines. The foundational document of the Collège International speaks briefly of two possible degrees the institution might grant and sketches rather traditional procedures for their operation, with program directors to supervise and assess student research more or less in conformity with existing academic norms (Châtelet et al. 1998: 53–56). These degrees were never instituted—to this day CIPH remains an institution that has no power to accredit its students—but their initial projection does not cast the professor's power of authorization in a different light.

A second context in which one might look for such a reconception is the 1989 'Report of the Committee on Philosophy and Epistemology' (Derrida 2004: 250–82). This committee was cochaired by Derrida and Jacques Bouveresse, as part of a broader investigation headed by Pierre Bourdieu and François Gros that the French government commissioned to investigate reforming the education system as a whole. Among other suggestions, the report proposes changes in the *baccalauréat* examination, expanding it beyond being just an essay to also include short answer questions aimed at testing knowledge of basic philosophical concepts and argumentation. While appearing small, this suggested change formed a part of what was a forceful challenge to the dominant conception of philosophy in the lycée as a unified enterprise, culminating in the single act of writing the final essay encompassing all of a student's knowledge and talents. And it was received as such a challenge, being vigorously resisted by the philosophical establishment (for a heated debate over the report, see the published transcript 'Réflexion sur l'état actuel et les perspectives de l'enseignement de la philosophie en France' [1991]). While I argue below that this challenge has significance for the rethinking of professorial charisma, this specific suggested change does nothing to alter the nature of the third source of professorial authority, that of a professor's authorizing power, because even a more varied final examination would maintain professors in the position of being the examiners.

2.4 Professorial Charisma

If the professor's power of authorization remains unchallenged in Derrida's writings, the same cannot be said for what I have identified as the fourth source of professorial authority, charisma. Recall that in France this can be understood through the particular image of the lycée philosophy professor, the solitary teacher who schools his students in the practice of freedom, students who are both young enough to receive this teaching and old enough to use it. Derrida takes on this configuration in a number of ways across his educational writings, some of which I have already discussed. The unified image of the philosophy professor is challenged by the analysis in 'Where a Teaching Body Begins' that I raised in relation to knowledge, for insofar as all professors are sites of repetition and innovation, of reproduction and the resistance to reproduction, they are riven internally by these competing and sometimes contradictory tendencies. A similar provocation to division is found in the temporal structure that I suggested underlies Derrida's rethinking of the relations to both knowledge and the state. In this temporality,

foundation does not take place in a single unified moment in the past. Instead, the authority of the professor is dispersed across the past and future in the structure constituting the promise to-come.

In addition to pluralizing the professor, Derrida also pluralizes the discipline. Throughout his writings on education he consistently emphasizes that philosophy is multiple. This is particularly clear in the essays from the 1970s that were responding explicitly to the threat of government cuts to the lycée philosophy class (Orchard [2011: 46–78] provides a detailed account of the debates to which this threat gave rise). For example, in the aptly named text 'Divided Bodies,' Derrida refuses to see this threat as 'a case of *nonphilosophy* against Philosophy', arguing instead that it involves 'an apparatus capable of inculcating a philosophy or maintaining a certain philosophical type, a philosophical force or group of forces, in the dominant position' (Derrida 2002a: 165). For Derrida, there is no one thing named 'Philosophy' that is to be defended against forces foreign to it; the struggle is better seen as between different philosophies competing for hegemony. And rather than responding to the threat by doubling down on the existing state of affairs, a strategy pursued by the traditional defenders of the discipline, Derrida and his colleagues in GREPh advocated for the extension of the philosophy class beyond the final year of the lycée. The proposal for extension is articulated in a number of Derrida's writings, but it receives its most detailed and fullest exploration in the 1989 report mentioned above. The report proposes that philosophy be made mandatory in the final two years of lycée education as well as in the first year of all tertiary degrees. The effect of this expansion would have been to multiply the number of professors that students have in their encounters with philosophy, and the subject's unity is further challenged in this proposal by the fact that the first year of lycée studies is to be interdisciplinary in nature, introducing philosophy to students by coupling it with material from literature, the social sciences, and the sciences (Derrida 2004: 254–59; I analyze the nature of the interdisciplinarity proposed in the 1989 report, together with a related structure theorized by Derrida in his writings on CIPh, in Haddad [2017]).

In seeking to extend the teaching of philosophy beyond the lycée's final year, Derrida challenges the traditional understanding of professorial charisma in another way by drawing attention to the question of age. The proposal of extension runs counter to the notion that there is an appropriate age at which philosophical education should take place, a single magical moment in which philosophical learning occurs. As the report states:

The teaching of philosophy has too often been conceived according to the model of the conversion, which would have the student pass from common opinion to the philosophical spirit all at once and all of a sudden. The teaching of philosophy should rather be envisaged as an apprenticeship that takes place through a methodical acquisition that is progressive and adapted to the rhythm of students and the knowledge and skills required to conduct true philosophical reflection. (Derrida 2004: 255)

This challenge is developed at greater length in the 1977 essay, ‘The Age of Hegel’ (Derrida 2002a: 117–57). There Derrida reads texts by Hegel and Victor Cousin on the question of whether philosophy should be taught prior to the university. Hegel and Cousin would appear to be opposed on this question, with Hegel arguing in favor of excluding the discipline from secondary education, and Cousin advocating for its inclusion. Derrida sides with neither thinker and demonstrates that both presuppose a conception of natural development implying that the right age for encountering philosophy—whatever it may be—is preordained. Derrida rejects this presupposition, arguing that it undergirds the encyclopedic and teleological conception of education and the university to which he and GREPH are opposed.

Finally, Derrida rethinks yet another characteristic of the traditional model of charisma by interrogating the vision of the philosophy professor as a free voice opposed to higher powers. Derrida does not deny that philosophy professors have some degree of autonomy, but he argues that this autonomy is not constituted in opposition to the state or other higher powers. As I have already shown, this argument is present throughout his writings on the Collège International, which keep the philosophy professor tied to the authorizing power of the state in a complicated loop. A similarly complex relation is presented in ‘The Age of Hegel,’ where Derrida analyzes the way Hegel gives ‘signs of allegiance to the “right” when the situation or the relation of forces seems to require that he do so, [at the same time as he is] secretly protecting his persecuted friends on the “left”’ (2002a: 138). Derrida also spends some time in this essay analyzing Hegel’s plea to the Royal Ministry for an increase in salary, putting the spotlight on another set of forces that are ever-present to professors and complicate their relation to the higher power of authorization (2002a: 127–30). Derrida thus resists the standard and all-too-easy understanding of Hegel as a servant of the state. An intervention in the other direction is in play in Derrida’s analysis of the politics of language in the work of the French philosopher par excellence, Descartes. Descartes’s choice to write the *Discourse on Method* in French is traditionally taken as a sign of his alignment with ‘the people’, exemplary of the philosopher’s freedom. Against this view, in ‘If There is Cause to Translate I: Philosophy in its National Language (Toward a ‘litterature en français’)’ (2004: 1–19), Derrida draws attention to the expanding imposition of French in the preceding century, as the state sought to diminish the presence and influence of the Latin of the church as well as to establish a national language in the place of the many local and regional languages existing in France. Given this context, Descartes’s choice thus appears to be a calculated decision in support of the state. In scrambling the usual understandings in these ways, Derrida suggests that the freedom taught by the philosophy professor is not a pure autonomy, but one dependent on and constituted through its relation to a power that governs it.

Thus, by calling into question the singular unity of the professor, the discipline, and the class, the appropriate age of the philosophy student, and the power of the professor to teach freedom, Derrida challenges the main axes by which professorial charisma is thought in the French tradition. Derrida’s professor still has charisma and thus authority deriving from this source, but it is to be constituted through an

embrace of the multiplicity of philosophy, an openness to all ages in philosophical learning, and an autonomy inextricably tied to heteronomous forces.

3. Conclusion

Throughout his writings on education, Derrida at no time advocates that we should abandon professorial authority, and in the new understanding that emerges in his work, traces of the traditional view remain. Indeed, some aspects of the traditional view are left more or less untouched. I claimed above, for example, that the authority deriving from the professor's authorizing power remained intact in Derrida's writings. It is also worth noting that while Derrida does draw some attention to the gendered and sexual aspects of traditional charisma (he highlights the fact that in the ideal the male professor is seen to teach freedom to male students of a certain virginal age), he offers little by way of thinking this along other lines.

But if we share Derrida's opposition to the traditional model of professorial authority, and want to develop his challenge to it further, why not go beyond his characteristic half step and abandon the notion altogether? Why not get rid of the structures and procedures that reinforce the power professors have over students? It would appear that no amount of transformation can overcome what is at base a relation of inequality. Here it is worth recalling what Derrida stated in his doctoral defense when he spoke of his 'political reasons' for supporting the tradition and traditional procedures of authorization (Derrida 2002a: 121). Derrida does not articulate these reasons in the defense, but one can imagine them conforming to the justification he frequently provides for why his own practice, deconstruction, should maintain its liminal position both inside and outside traditional systems of thought. As he argues in 'Where a Teaching Body Begins', 'if deconstruction had disregarded the principle of the *internal* deconstruction of phallogocentric onto-theology, it would have reproduced . . . the classic logic of its surroundings. And it would have let itself be guided, more or less directly, by traditional metaphysical schemes'. Applying this diagnosis to teaching, he suggests that

to conclude from a *project* of deconstruction that we are facing the pure and simple, the *immediate* disappearance of philosophy and its teaching . . . would be to abandon, once more, the field of struggle to very specific forces . . . forces [that] have an interest in installing a properly metaphysical dogmatics. (Derrida 2002a: 72–73)

This implies that the attempt to abandon professorial authority would run a serious risk, for there are multiple forces in play in any pedagogical scene. If professors try to simply avoid their authority, then they will allow traditional structures to remain, either through a blindness to their own inevitable power or by clearing a space for other forces to enter. Certainly, our own situations are not the same as that of Derrida's France. How authority is constituted depends on features particular to our own educational and political contexts, contexts that themselves

are subject to change, and any attempt to reconceive authority must be sensitive to these features. But this is just to say that we must continue to rethink professorial authority, to call it into question and imagine it anew. I hope to have shown how Derrida's writings on education show us one way that this might be done.

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