Chapter 1

The Subject and Object
of Representation

To date, both philosophers and rhetoricians have only superficially explored the potentially profound significance of rhetoric to contemporary reflections on the nature of language, reason, and human being. Newton Garver posits that the philosophical study of language in the twentieth century has followed what he calls "two distinct flurries" (1973, xii). "The first movement," he writes, "was naturally a reinforcement of the philosophy of language based on logic; but the subsequent movement has been an overthrow of that long tradition, the overthrow which Derrida speaks of as the closure of metaphysics" (xii). The latter movement to which Garver refers not only includes Heidegger's and Derrida's "closure of metaphysics" but Deleuze's "reversal of Platonism" as well. Despite Garver's description of this second movement as rhetorical, his implicit definition of rhetoric does not reflect the conventional principles of rhetorical theory and practice. Indeed, the revolutionary philosophical insights on language and representation to which Garver refers have, at best, only mildly unsettled canonical conceptions of rhetoric.

A brief survey of modern rhetorical studies demonstrates that the discipline has proliferated examples of a classical, essentially Aristotelian, understanding of rhetoric instead of producing systematic inquiries into the ontological status of rhetoric itself. Dilip Gaonkar gleans from disciplinary publications a partial but telling portrait of the diverse topics grouped under the ubiquitous rubric that he terms "the rhetoric of X": "assent, antitheory, doubtful authority, economics, ethnographic holism, history, human sciences, image, inquiry, interpretation, irony, motives, modernism, mourning, passivity, pedagogy, philosophy, revolution, secularism, social history, social sciences,

temporality, textuality, and so on" (1997, 75).[1] The organizing syntax featured here—"the rhetoric *of*"—reflects the scholarly predilection characteristic of most modern rhetorical inquiry: placing a diversity of new examples under a familiar category rather than questioning the meaning or value of that category in light of both its history and its significance to changing social and intellectual circumstances.

Questioning canonical and hitherto self-evident definitions of rhetoric necessarily involves an interrogation of the ontology that sanctions those definitions and the system of representation they maintain. Conceiving of rhetoric beyond the authority of representation, as this book proposes, obliges one to reconsider the metaphysical order reflected in representation as such. The rhetorical tradition has always valued the ontological status of the speaking subject, yet that subject has been distinguished throughout by a partisan ethos, by partial and privileged ideals of knowledge, speech, and virtue, despite conventional wisdom testifying to its representation of universal human qualities. One might retort that many rhetoricians have in fact enlarged our understanding of rhetoric and subjectivity by examining how the rhetorical activities of giving speeches, writing public letters, or signing petitions, for example, influence the subjectivity of different agents. Such studies nonetheless interpret their objects of study predominantly according to generic conceptions of rhetoric and subjectivity rather than reconsidering the classical ethos of reason, autonomy, morality, and truth that characterizes canonical assumptions about the influence of rhetoric on the subject. In what follows, I begin a process of questioning the partisan conceptions of truth, reason, and virtue represented by such an ethos—questioning the apparent self-evidence of representation itself—in order to learn from the strangeness of the being that dwells inside traditional images of rhetoric's pious practitioner.

The implications of this study therefore exceed a revised understanding of rhetoric. One can attain a conception of rhetoric no longer defined by the representation of essential reason and morality only by transmuting our inherited assumptions about categories such as truth, knowledge, and being. In what follows, I provide a context for evaluating those assumptions in light of the withering scrutiny to which they have been subjected in recent decades.

Of what does one speak when one speaks of "representation?" How can words be said to represent things? To what does one refer when speaking of "identity" and "difference"—not as attributes of particular objects but as analytic categories in and of themselves? How do these categories inform the ontological arrangements according to which our culture traditionally defines the hierarchy of being, which encompasses the divine and the mortal, the sacred and the profane? Finally, how are these arrangements relevant to an understanding of rhetoric, to the act of discursively representing such ephemera as reason, truth, judgment, and virtue?

The authority ascribed to the category of representation in our values and beliefs reflects the priority assigned to manifestations of identity throughout our heritage. "The primacy of identity," Deleuze contends, "however conceived, defines the world of representation" (1994, xix). Difference cannot be thought in and of itself in "the world of representation" because the category of *identity* holds an exclusive organizing value in traditional conceptions thereof. When one refers to an object with a given word, when one represents a phenomenon discursively or symbolically, one refers to its objective existence—to its individual identity. By this logic, two phenomena are different from one another only insofar as they possess unambiguously distinct identities. Hence, identity *in itself* is the organizing principle of representation; difference has value only as a measure of identity.

However, Deleuze (1994) suggests that notions of difference were not always subjugated to the "primacy" of identity in the Western tradition. Indeed, they were not initially subservient to this seemingly ideal and transparent category. In the following sections, I offer two distinct but complementary accounts of representation in order to demonstrate that the allegedly ideal and transparent category of identity has not always been thus. Nonetheless, I do not propose a return to pre-Socratic formulations of these concepts. Instead, I demonstrate that one must interrogate the conventional relationship between identity and difference in order to reconsider the status of rhetoric and its influence on the formation of subjectivity.

The categories of identity and difference are not matters of impractical intellectual rumination. To the contrary, the ways in which groups and individuals traditionally defined these basic metaphysical categories have shaped commonplace Western assumptions about language, reality, and communication. Such categories crucially inform classical and humanist ideals of human being, which presuppose that human beings, irrespective of time, place, and culture, are unified by an identical and transcendent essence. Adopting a revised conception of the relationship between identity and difference hastens nothing less than a fundamental transformation in predominant assumptions about the nature of human being.

Modern rhetoricians generally avoid systematic inquiry into the relationship between rhetoric and subjectivity, electing instead to conduct criticism of rhetorical appeals based on traditional ideals of reason, prudence, and eloquence—to evaluate "the rhetoric *of,*" in other words. By failing to interrogate such standards, rhetorical studies typically accept as conventional wisdom the ideals of human being in whose pursuit they were first conceived. Contemporary rhetoricians habitually defend their emphasis on criticism by insisting that rhetorical inquiry ultimately must have a practical application. In relegating supposedly esoteric or impractical ontological questions to the jurisdiction of philosophy, however, modern rhetoricians

continue to endorse conceptions of human being that evaluate the speech, intelligence, and even social worth of groups and individuals according to socially and intellectually prejudiced ideals.

I propose that a conception of rhetoric beyond "the requirements of representation" (that is, beyond the priority of identity) provides an indispensable means of transmuting the Platonic hierarchies that continue to shape dominant conceptions of discourse and human being. In order to surpass that ontology, however, one must first understand its guiding principles and its largely unrecognized significance to rhetorical study. Rhetoric has always been defined according to the ideal of a knowing and speaking being that personifies the fundamental values of the metaphysical tradition. Accordingly, in the next section I note the dominant objectives of that tradition and explain how they conform to processes of representation. This review of the metaphysical system also documents modern philosophical developments that threaten to transform that system by assigning unconventional value to the category of representation, thereby inaugurating a new understanding of the relationship between speech and human being.

Subsequently, I turn to Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1994b), which chronicles the crucial changes in modern ways of thinking, knowing, and speaking that first made possible a discourse on subjectivity no longer organized by oppositions between words and things or subjectivity and objectivity. In this text, Foucault documents the historical processes through which representation became a governing ideal of Western thought and culture. He does so by disclosing the obscurities and mutations disguised in its appearance of transparency and transcendence. In brief, Foucault allows one to conclude that the traditional metaphysical system cannot do what it claims to do. *The Order of Things* uncovers pivotal differences and discontinuities previously obscured by the alleged transparency of a metaphysical order that presumed to represent things merely "as they are." Rhetoric, so long as it remains defined by the principles and values of that order, continues to participate in a prejudiced understanding of speech, reason, and human being, regardless of its frequently heralded value and utility to democratic life. Eventually, I use Foucault's study to explain how rhetorical inquiry might affirm a revised set of values concerning discourse and subjectivity. Taken together, these two accounts of representation illustrate the profound implications (recognized only peripherally by most modern rhetoricians) of recent challenges to traditional metaphysical principles for present and future conceptions of rhetoric.

THE CIRCLE OF METAPHYSICS

It is now commonplace to suppose that all of Western philosophy after Plato has been but a footnote to his insights. Plato (following Socrates' example)

indeed established the ideals of truth, knowledge, and virtue in reference to which the majority of Western thinkers have defined their own philosophies. Socrates and Plato, that is, articulated the questions that generally have defined the task of philosophy; or, more precisely, they defined philosophy *as* a process of asking and answering certain questions—a process of discovering the *truthful* answer and accumulating knowledge in that form. The acquisition of knowledge as such, the task of philosophy in general, amounted to distinguishing the true from the false, the essence of a phenomenon from its often misleading appearance, the ideal and original forms of truth, justice, virtue, or beauty, for instance, from unenlightened approximations thereof. In this regard, one may describe the majority of Western philosophy as *meta*physical in that it has been concerned with deliberation over the existence (or denial) of ideal truths about the nature of truth, justice, virtue, or beauty that, in their transcendence of the physical world, are not immediately apparent to the senses. Guthrie writes that Greek culture during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. was shaped by widespread debate over the relationship between the traditional, divine, and immutable laws of nature *(physis)* and the increasingly valued contingent laws of human convention and civic institutions *(nomos)* (Guthrie [1971] 1998, chapter 4). Socrates and Plato's formalization of the metaphysical system reflected this transitional intellectual climate. Because of the Socratic and Platonic tradition, the ontology of our culture (our inherited assumptions about the order of reality) has been characterized by a fundamental distinction between the *sensible* and the *intelligible,* between the world accessible to our deeply impressionable senses and the realm of eternal truths apprehensible only to the properly trained mind. The fundamental structure of the Christian order, with its separate human and heavenly spheres, is analogously metaphysical in nature. Thus, both the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions so constitutive of the Western heritage exhibit patently metaphysical values and ideals.

In this section, I discuss an indispensable aspect of metaphysical thought: its supposed beginning and end. The metaphysical search for knowledge in the form of truth is equivalent to a search for origins, meaning the ideal forms of truth, justice, virtue, or beauty upon which all sensible phenomena are modeled. In discovering that origin, however, one completes the task of metaphysical inquiry because the acquisition of knowledge as such is the quintessential goal of the Socratic method. Therefore, one might say that the beginning and end of metaphysics are not located on opposite ends of a linear spectrum but are, instead, joined together in the completion of a circle.

This paradoxical logic is reflected in the founding gesture of metaphysical inquiry. John Sallis (1995) observes this gesture at work in Socrates' turn away from the method of inquiry that had shaped Greek thought prior to his innovations. Citing Socrates' own description of this turn in Plato's *Phaedo,*

Sallis explains that Socrates turned away from "that direct method of investigation which would proceed to explain certain things by referring them directly to other things" and adopted instead an "indirect way of investigating things, a way which he describes as analogous to the procedure of studying things in an image rather than looking at them directly" (5). "Hence," Sallis avers, "the Socratic turn consists in the opening of the difference between immediately, sensibly present things and those εἴδη that would be their foundation—or, more precisely and literally, those εἴδη in which the sheer unobstructed look of things would be had" (5). Socrates' novel methodology established the fundamental opposition according to which metaphysics has been structured. "The Socratic turn thus differentiates between things in their immediate, sensible presence and those things in their original truth, in their originary presence" (Sallis 1995, 5). This differentiation does not simply counterbalance the sensible with the original; more significantly, it endows sensible phenomena with a negative, chimerical value and original forms with a positive, objective value: "It shifts away from immediately, sensibly present things, away from the fragmented presence of the immediate and sensible—shifts away in order to prepare a reappropriation of those things in their originary presence" (Sallis 1995, 5–6). Sallis therefore concludes, "[T]he Socratic turn constitutes the field of metaphysics as a field of presence and metaphysics itself as the drive to presence" (6). Following this gesture, the metaphysical search for truth is equivalent to a search for "originary presence," meaning an intuitive knowledge of the unmediated and original forms of truth, justice, virtue, or beauty. The logic of this search explains the value of identity in Western philosophy. Ideal and original presence, the transcendent truth of a given phenomenon, acquires that status only if it is unified in and of itself, admitting no imperfections or ambiguities—no differences in its essential nature. As such, ideal and original presence (essential meaning or truth) is a quintessential form of identity.

The metaphysical obsession with origins indicates an equal desire for fruition. Metaphysical reflection begins by fixing a singular focus upon its desired end. Not surprisingly, the unwavering metaphysical belief in ideal forms of presence lends itself to religious applications, which led Heidegger and then Derrida to describe the history of Western ontology as "onto-theological." By this logic, inquiring into the origins of human being impels one to consider the existence of an ideal, even divine, form of Being qua Being[2]—God, in other words. In the Western tradition, this origin turns out to be the desired destiny of human beings as well: an afterlife beyond the physical realm said to give meaning to one's mortality. Investigating the category of being in this context, according to Derrida, amounts to a search for "nothing other than the metaphysical unity of man and God, the relation of man to God, the project of becoming God as the project constituting

human-reality" (1982, 116). The ideal of the classical orator participates in such a project—a human "becoming God" by representing the truth of human being in speech, by personifying such Socratic ideals as reason, truth, and virtue.

The meaning of human being in our heritage, therefore, is fundamentally metaphysical or, more precisely, onto-theological. The identity of human being, its essential truth, signifies a capacity for acquiring objective knowledge of the relationship between sensible and intelligible phenomena, of the origin as well as the telos (or the purposeful fruition) of human endeavor. "The unity of these two *ends* of man," Derrida explains, "the unity of his death, his completion, his accomplishment, is enveloped in the Greek thinking of *telos*, in the discourse on *telos,* which is also a discourse on *eidos* [ideality], on *ousia* [essential substance], and on *alētheia* [truth]" (121). Accordingly, he concludes, "*The thinking of the end of man, therefore, is always already prescribed in metaphysics, in the thinking of the truth of man*" (121). Throughout the Western tradition, the category of human being incarnates the circle of metaphysics itself. It embodies humanity's search for the truth, presence, or objective identity of its own origins as well as the ultimate purpose of its own existence.

As indicated by the previous description, representation is essential to our long-standing cultural assumptions about truth and reality, as well as our ability to both know and express knowledge thereof. True to Socrates' founding metaphysical gesture, traditional ideals such as reason, truth, and virtue remain transcendent ephemera that one can represent only indirectly in language. Conventional assumptions about human nature, including its supposedly innate aspiration to wise and virtuous discourse, depend upon this representational thinking, and thus upon the metaphysical order in general. In Plato's *Phaedrus,* Socrates explains the now-commonsensical notion that one must "know the truth" of a subject by "isolat[ing] it in definition . . . until you reach the limit of division" (277b) (which is the cardinal objective of metaphysical inquiry) before one engages in discourse about it. Consequently, one's effort to critique and surpass the classical or humanist ideals of human being necessarily begins with an interrogation of the conventional ontology, the representational arrangement, of metaphysics. Such an effort might even prompt one to wonder if a non-metaphysical conception of being is at all tenable.

The Ends of Metaphysics

Throughout the Western philosophical tradition, philosophers periodically have challenged conventional metaphysical values in an attempt to reconsider the category of being or, more specifically, to conceive of the nature and

origins of subjective and objective phenomena unconventionally. Brief consideration of the most recent and influential of these challenges will allow me to clarify my aim in offering related critiques throughout this study. In order to apprehend the existing precedents for such critiques, I first distinguish between the different meanings of the so-called end of metaphysics.

I have explained how metaphysical inquiry arose by anticipating its ideal end, its desired culmination. Subsequent philosophers, however, have investigated the possibility that metaphysical thought might reach a *historical* rather than a transcendental end. Such an end would mark the discontinuation of the metaphysical system's influence as our dominant conception of reality instead of its ideal and transhistorical perfection.

In order to explicate the philosophical significance of this possibility, one must inspect the paradoxical significance of history to metaphysics. On the one hand, metaphysics has run a historical course in that one can study its development as a scholastic discipline according to successive historical periods. But metaphysics was conceived, on the other hand, precisely in a disavowal of the transitory realm in favor of the transcendent, of sensible phenomena in favor of their ideal and original forms. Sallis elaborates on this defining metaphysical tension: "[M]etaphysics is taken to have a history that is not simply extrinsic to it—that is, it is taken as something which was founded, which has run a certain course, and which since Hegel has come to a kind of end, as something which cannot be defined independently of this history. And yet . . . clearly one could not indefinitely postpone taking some account of the torsion already installed within such a concept of metaphysics as historical, the torsion resulting from the fact that metaphysics is also constituted as a turning away from history" (1995, 4). The torsion of which Sallis speaks renders the metaphysical process unstable. The ideal circle of metaphysics is undone by this torsion, by this energy applied to the transcendence of a historical process that, ironically, produced the very possibility of such transcendence, the possibility of its own disavowal. This torsion creates a dilemma: either one tries to shatter the circle, to reject all notion of history as a meaningful process with an ideal beginning and end, or one attempts to escape from it, to transcend the inherent paradoxes of metaphysical thought altogether. "But of course," Sallis reminds us, "there can be no question of simply breaking with the circle any more than there can be one of simply breaking out of the circle" (xiii). Thus, one might say that the alleged circle of metaphysics is not simply constituted by the torsion that Sallis describes but is continually *re*constituted by its periodic compression and release, by repeated efforts to shatter or escape from it—or better, that it only exists *as* this reconstitution.

Because of this fundamental instability evident throughout the metaphysical tradition, one can identify many different senses in which the end

of that tradition has been announced. The first such sense may be described simply as *termination*. Nietzsche augurs that two principal events will signal the termination of metaphysics: first, the death of God, the supreme ideal of Being qua Being; and, second, not merely the destruction of the ideal realm and a subsequent unleashing of the repressed sensible world but a destruction of the dialectical logic that invests both of these foundational categories with their contrasting sense and value.[3] In *Twilight of the Idols*, he famously exults, "The 'real world'—an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer—an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea: let us abolish it! . . . We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*" (1990, 50–51). According to Nietzsche, this destruction will hasten the arrival of a new reality with new values, the nature of which cannot yet be thought. Such is "a termination so complex," Sallis writes, "that it casts its shadow over all previously established determinations, setting all sense in motion, calling not just for new determinations but for a renewal of the very possibility of determination" (1995, 19).[4] Nietzsche thus affirms a set of values radically opposed to those of traditional metaphysics. Foremost among them is our apparent inability to intuit the essential meaning of our being and the ideal fulfillment of our history, to effectively represent such forms of pure presence in discourse.

Nietzsche, however, was not the first to announce the end of metaphysics. Hegel before him is remembered for thinking most intricately the end of metaphysics in terms of its *completion*. In Hegel's philosophy, the discomfiture between the history of metaphysics and its aspiration to transcend that history is unified in the fulfillment of a dramatic entelechy. The singularity of Hegel's proclamations, according to Sallis, derives from "his awareness that the end cannot be extrinsic to the history that it completes . . . that it cannot be an end which in this sense simply negates what has preceded" (20). Rather than maintaining a tension between the historical and the transcendental, Hegel envisions history as a dialectical process that ineluctably gathers every form of otherness, difference, or the negative into a transcendental synthesis known as the actuality of spirit. In *Philosophy of Mind,* Hegel describes this synthesis according to the acquisition of ideal knowledge:

> The significance of that "absolute" commandment, *Know thyself* . . . is not to promote mere self-knowledge in respect to the *particular* capacities, character, propensities, and foibles of the single self. The knowledge it commands means that of man's genuine reality—of what is essentially and ultimately true and real—of mind as the true and essential being. Equally little is it the purport of mental philosophy to teach what is called *knowledge of men*—the knowledge whose aim is to detect the *peculiarities,* passions, and foibles of other

men, and lay bare what are called the recesses of the human heart. Informa-
tion of this kind is, for one thing, meaningless, unless on the assumption that
we know the *universal*—man as man, and, that always must be, as mind.
(1971, 1)

The end of philosophy will be reached, Hegel prophesies, when every sub-
jective form of knowledge, every indication of subjective difference, is gath-
ered into absolute spirit—an ideal and original knowledge, a universal identity.
"Such a gathering is thought by Hegel in the concept of *Aufhebung*," Sallis
explains. "With this word—still not really translated, i.e., rethought, in
English—Hegel designates a movement in which what is lower is surpassed
and yet always essentially preserved by being elevated into what is higher,
gathered up into it" (1995, 21).[5] Hegel does not believe that metaphysics
will reach its end in simple termination. Instead, he anticipates the end of
metaphysics, in a rather operatic fashion, as the actualization of its ideal
form, in which diversity is sublated to the unity of an absolute identity.[6]

By foreseeing the end of metaphysics as a process either completed or
terminated, Hegel and Nietzsche provide this trope with its patently modern
senses. Heidegger, however, is responsible for coining its characteristically
contemporary sense (Sallis 1995, 20). After Heidegger, the question of the
fate of metaphysics ceases to be one of an "end" and mutates into one of
closure. In his own fashion, Heidegger excludes the possibility of a unilateral
termination of metaphysics; he admittedly anticipates its telos as a kind of
completion but one fundamentally different from a process of ideal fruition.
The nature of this completion may be explained by Heidegger's conception
of *Aufhebung*, which is distinct from the one featured in Hegel's philosophy.
Hegel's use of this term connotes predominantly a process of sublation in
which what is other is gathered up into what is higher until diversity has
become a unity, until all differences have been synthesized into a universal
identity. But, according to a slightly different nuance in Hegel's philosophy,
"*Aufhebung*" is also "the process by which what is extrinsic and peripheral is
gathered to the intrinsic, the center" (Sallis 1995, 21). Thus, Hegel's *Aufhebung*
more generally entails a movement of possibility into actuality, a gathering
of the extreme into the center. Heidegger's complete *reversal* of Hegel's
definition of this term indicates the radical nature of his philosophy. He
posits that the end of metaphysics is not its perfection but "that place in
which the whole of philosophy's history is gathered into its most extreme
possibility. End as completion means this gathering. . . . This development
looks like the mere dissolution of philosophy, yet in truth is precisely its
completion" (1993, 433). In Sallis's summation, Heidegger's end of meta-
physics is "a matter of gathering not to the center but to the most extreme
and of gathering not into actuality but into possibility" (1995, 21).

The significance of this redefinition exceeds that of a mere semantic distinction. In fact, Heidegger's appropriation of the term helps to explain the import of his entire philosophy, which remains the most radical and ambitious reconsideration of the category of being since Plato. What does Heidegger mean, then, when he anticipates the end of metaphysics as a gathering of its history into its most extreme possibility? Simply put, the possibility to which he refers is death. For the being that understands itself by inquiring into the possibilities of its being—the being that Heidegger calls *Dasein*—death is "a possibility that cannot be outstripped, that is unsurpassable, of a possibility that withdraws all possibilities, of a possibility that closes off decisively the opening to a future" (Sallis 1995, 22). In the possibility of death, Heidegger says, *Dasein* is confronted with "the absolute impossibility of existence" (1996, 236). The extremity of this end undermines any metaphysical effort to discover the ideal origins and ultimate meaning of being because death is "an end which metaphysics cannot circumvent, get beyond, while itself remaining intact. It is an end which withdraws all possibilities—that is, an end in which metaphysics' possibilities are exhausted. And it is an end which accordingly closes off all opening to a future" (Sallis 1995, 22). Closure in this context indicates the withdrawal of the very possibility of transhistorical meaning rather than the meaningful and ideal completion of a transcendental process. What remains in the wake of this closure (if any "thing" could be said to "remain" thereafter) is not an ideally realized unity but, as Sallis describes it, "a voice speaking from the darkness . . . the darkness of enclosure" (1995, xv).[7]

In the wake of Heidegger's insights, Derrida has further elaborated the profound implications of such closure.[8] Sallis credits both Heidegger and Derrida with observing that "the figure of closure," although it is certainly a defining preoccupation of modern Continental philosophy, "can be discerned, at least retrospectively, throughout the history of metaphysics" (22). The omnipresence of this figure may be identified most easily, according to these two thinkers, in the primacy of intuition. Metaphysical ontology considers intuition to be an ideal form of knowledge through which one achieves an unmediated understanding of phenomena, not as they appear in physical form, but in the uniform and transparent presence of their essential truth or meaning.[9] This ideal, therefore, "would be a matter of sheer intuition of full presence, utterly closed off from everything else, utterly self-enclosed, a perfect figure of closure" (Sallis 1995, 23). One of the elementary premises of Derrida's philosophy is that this figure of closure is both impossible and necessary. It is impossible in the sense that metaphysics cannot simply terminate, cannot complete itself ideally, nor enclose itself with finality. It is equally necessary, however, because philosophy has reached its present condition precisely by virtue of, and can only anticipate its future through, the trope of closure—a future that it cannot effectively represent but for which it can only prepare.

According to Derrida, a philosophical method that attempts to end metaphysics based upon a cyclical model is itself caught up in a paradoxical cycle. "But all these destructive discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a sort of circle," he writes. "This circle is unique. It describes the form of the relationship between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics" (1972, 250). Derrida provides an account of the unstable metaphysical relationship between history and transcendence analogous to Sallis's description of the same dynamic. He observes that, in the cyclical logic of the metaphysical method, any effort to complete, transcend, or terminate the history of metaphysics is always already a part of that history. Such a paradox, according to Derrida, is maintained by the characteristic idiom of metaphysics: "*There is no sense* in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language—no syntax and no lexicon—which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest" (250). Metaphysics functions according to an interrogative methodology; its essential categories are sustained by an unflagging effort to interrogate its own values with the alleged transparency of dialectical reason. In seeking to end metaphysics by questioning it from a location outside of its language, one merely reproduces its desire for a neutral position of knowledge uninfluenced by the prejudices of one's senses. "For it is not possible to show that the belief in truth is an error," Barbara Johnson writes, "without implicitly believing in the notion of Truth. By the same token, to show that the binary oppositions of metaphysics are illusions is *also,* and perhaps most importantly, to show that such illusions cannot simply in turn *be opposed* without repeating the very same illusion" (1981, x). Yet what Derrida calls our "complicity" with the discursive logic of metaphysics should be a source of affirmation rather than despair: "[W]e cannot give up this metaphysical complicity," he writes, "without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity" (1972, 250–51). In other words, "we must remember that if we are indeed *inside* metaphysics, we are not inside it as we might be *inside* a box or a milieu. We are still *in* metaphysics in the special sense that we are *in* a determinate language" (1984, 111). In sum, one cannot reject or transcend the idiom of metaphysics in order to transform it. One must, instead, illuminate the implicit paradoxes of its sustaining logic in order to question the normative values that its defining categories engender.

Derrida thus dismisses the possibilities of attack or destruction concerning the supposed end of metaphysics because the success of such efforts would require a rejection or transcendence of the means used to carry them out. Such a claim obligates one to question the longstanding agenda (whether

that of Socrates and Plato or Hegel and Nietzsche) to identify *any* determinate end of the metaphysical system, no matter how perfective or ruinous it might be. As such, one cannot view the paradox in which the so-called closure of metaphysics is caught (the "complicity" to which Derrida refers) as the symptom of an insufficiency that compromises the telos of an entire tradition; "[W]e cannot really say that we are 'locked into' or 'condemned to' metaphysics," Derrida insists, "for we are, strictly speaking, neither inside nor outside. . . . [T]he idea of the finitude and exhaustion *[épuisement]* of metaphysics does not mean that we are incarcerated in it as prisoners or victims of some unhappy fatality" (1984, 111–12). Admitting that the closure of metaphysics names neither its destruction nor its completion, but rather our complicity with it, is not an indication of failure. On the contrary, such an admission makes possible yet another, categorically different, sense of the end of metaphysics.

Heidegger provides the contemporary form of the end of metaphysics, as closure in the form of being's most extreme consequence; but Derrida pursues the ramifications of this form by putting it "under erasure." In his later writings, Heidegger (1958) underscored the inability of metaphysical terminology to objectively represent its ideal referents by literally crossing out the word *Being*, thus suggesting that language cannot actually disclose an ideal form of Being qua Being. Elaborating on Heidegger's gesture, Derrida proposes to place essential metaphysical terms such as *Being* or *presence* under erasure. In his logic, this procedure amounts to marking the discursive function of conceptual terms that we cannot transcend while simultaneously forcing them to function otherwise, to reveal the differences and contradictions disguised by their appearance of unity and transparency. Derrida's very phrase for this process dramatizes its disruption of presence: the active tense of *under erasure* suggests a form of presence defined by the activity of disappearing, a coming-to-absence taking place in the present, the familiar remaining recognizable only in its withdrawal. For Heidegger, the closure of metaphysics connotes a gathering into its most extreme possibility, into the fundamental withdrawal of meaning and presence; extending such insights, Derrida perceives in the notion of closure an opportunity to simultaneously reveal and disrupt those founding contradictions that enable the metaphysical dream of closure. Such contradictions include, most conspicuously, a history engendered by its efforts to disavow historical contingency, an origin characterized by its unity with a telos, and a drive to presence continually invoked by the absence thereof. In each case, Derrida demonstrates that, paradoxically, metaphysical inquiry cannot attain its apprehension of ideal presence without consideration of sensible phenomena. "Philosophy," he contends, "has always insisted upon this: thinking its other. Its other: that which limits it, and from which it derives its essence, its definition, its

production" (1982, x). The ideal telos of philosophy, therefore, is always already deferred from the outset.

Consequently, one merely reproduces the logic of oppositions at the heart of the metaphysical system if one attempts to argue against it, to adopt a more objective stance outside of it. In Derrida's terms, "exteriority and alterity are concepts which by themselves have never surprised philosophical discourse. *Philosophy by itself has always been concerned* with them" (xiii). Derrida scrutinizes the notion of metaphysical enclosure in order to identify a form of critique that more effectively calls into question the logic and ideals of traditional ontology (or onto-theology). Because metaphysics has always sought to ground its categories in ideal forms of presence, he proposes a novel kind of "place" from which to think metaphysics differently: a place neither "inside" nor "outside" of its categories, a "place" that signifies the very refusal of such diametrical categories. Derrida calls this elusive ground of critique a "non-site, or a non-philosophical site, from which to question philosophy. But the search for a non-philosophical site does not bespeak an anti-philosophical attitude. My central question is: from what site or non-site *[non-lieu]* can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner?" (1984, 108). In Derrida's view, one must deconstruct, and thereby inhabit, defining metaphysical categories in order to challenge the metaphysical order in general; as I have indicated, the notion of closure is therefore both methodologically necessary and practically impossible. In Elizabeth Wilson's succinct phrasing, "Deconstruction has effect by inhabiting the structures it contests. . . . We are never given the luxury of simply refusing a territory . . . or accepting a territory. . . . Instead, we are forced to negotiate perpetually a position with respect to these different fields of operation" (1998, 29). The desire for an "anti-philosophical attitude" participates in the very dream of objectivity and transcendence that it ostensibly refutes. Recognizing this conundrum, Derrida submits that one can make "philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself" by interrogating the apparently stable meaning and presence attributed to metaphysical ideals (the category of being foremost among them). Such an effort obliges one to repeatedly "place under erasure" the supposedly objective grounds of one's own propositions, to continually decenter the forms of knowledge that might otherwise acquire a normative, or central, status. Nevertheless, Johnson cautions, "[d]econstruction is not a form of textual vandalism designed to prove that meaning is impossible. In fact, the word 'de-construction' is closely related not to the word 'destruction' but to the word 'analysis,' which etymologically means 'to undo'—a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct.' . . . If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another"

(1981, xiv). Regardless of insistent reports to the contrary, deconstruction does not nihilistically seek to reduce all meaning to nonsense but analyzes the discursive forms according to which meanings attain, to whatever social or political end, a seemingly self-evident authority.

In sum, Derrida regards as suspect all manifestations of closure, whether in the form of transcendent meaning, unchanging presence, or appeals to an ideal origin or telos. For him, pondering the closure of metaphysics concerns a multifaceted effort to rend open the metaphysical ideals that exhibit such closure, to reveal the irreconcilable contradictions that traditional metaphysical categories would obscure in their effort to categorize and represent essential identities. In her celebrated preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology,* Gayatri Spivak paraphrases Derrida's logic on this point: "It is also the metaphysical desire to make the end coincide with the means, create an *en*closure, make the definition coincide with the defined, the 'father' with the 'son'; within the logic of identity to balance the equation, close the circle. Our language reflects this desire. And so it is from within this language that we must attempt an 'opening' " (1974, xx). The goal of this "opening" is, in Derrida's words, to "displace philosophy's alignment of its own types" (1982, xxiv) rather than to inaugurate an alternate alignment of ideal types. Derrida seeks to unhinge manifestations of closure, not in order to confirm a superior form of knowledge, but to keep formerly privileged meanings and referents in play, to establish "a double understanding no longer forming a single system" (xxiv). Such is a form of critique that "reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being the way they are, their effects on what follows from them" (Johnson 1981, xv). Whereas Heidegger emphasizes the fundamentally meaningless and indeterminate fate of all conventional meanings and representations, Derrida deconstructs figures of closure—of uniform identity, essential meaning, or the representation of being as presence—in order to reveal and keep in play the irreconcilable metaphysical paradoxes they surreptitiously obscure.

Derrida's conception of closure evinces the irony with which he interprets the end of metaphysics. The possibility of critiquing metaphysics, he insists, entails a myriad unhinging of whatever in its system desires the appearance of closure, meaning certitude in the integrity of identities, the transparency of meanings and representations, or the uniform essence of being. This process of unhinging, moreover, is conducted without faith in a governing origin or telos because the notion of an identifiable origin and destiny for all beings suggests that history is unified by an intuitional meaning, truth, or presence that one can represent objectively in discourse. Derrida thus posits that metaphysics as we have known it ends when we realize that it cannot end as such.

THE END OF RHETORIC?

I have delineated four especially influential conceptions of the metaphorical end of metaphysics in order to refine my approach to the commonplace relationship between rhetoric and human being. I have devoted such attention to this topic not simply to draw an analogy between the philosophical and rhetorical traditions; more significantly, rhetoricians have, since antiquity, legitimated their theory and practice by assenting to the metaphysical ideals of truth, wisdom, morality, and human being central to Western philosophy from the Greco-Roman period forward. In this regard, metaphysical ontology has always dictated the intellectual and practical criteria according to which the discipline of rhetoric acquired its cultural value. By virtue of this dynamic, rhetoric traditionally has served as a preeminent pedagogical instrument used to represent metaphysical ideals in the form of conventional wisdom. Developing a conception of rhetoric and subjectivity that questions representational notions of being, that questions the alleged identity of subjects unified by a transhistorical human essence, therefore advances the contemporary project of critiquing metaphysical equations of being with continuous presence, with a privileged interpretation of being's truth.

I also cite the preceding discussion as evidence that developing a conception of rhetoric beyond representation should not amount to a simple termination of rhetoric in its conventional form. Recent efforts in rhetorical studies to establish an alternate set of rhetorical values and ideals in contrast to those of philosophy mirror the dialectical method of parsing truth from falsehood, no matter how socially constructed that truth may appear. Reversing traditional ontological categories so as to assign superior value to fiction instead of fact, culture instead of nature, discourse instead of essence, or rhetoric instead of philosophy merely rearranges those categories while leaving the metaphysical calculus of dialectical ideals intact. One cannot implement this calculus without invoking at least a tacit search for the truth of things, meaning a more objective ontology. As I have shown, one's characterization of a particular ontology as truthful, as a universal formulation of the order of things, relies on essentially Socratic values and methods. Rather than effectively terminating its traditional form, recent scholars' appropriations of the metaphysical categories by which rhetoric traditionally has been domesticated (such as appearance, deception, sentiment, and so forth) merely amplifies the significance of an existing conception of rhetoric without questioning the logic according to which it originally was formulated.

That said, other rhetoricians' contentment with maintaining separate but equal domains for philosophy and rhetoric, for *sapientia et eloquentia,* also warrants critique. I have demonstrated that the relationship between such distinct but putatively equal domains actually reflects a partial and privileged

conception of both philosophy and rhetoric, albeit to the distinct advantage of the former. The canonical separation of the two disciplines, of investigation and argumentation, has assured the priority of truth, intuition, morality, and transparent discourse in their ideal forms. These ideals, furthermore, have preserved a conception of the knowing and speaking subject representative of humanity's allegedly universal identity. Like metaphysics (indeed, from *within* a metaphysical arrangement), one can maintain rhetoric in its canonical form—as reasoned, virtuous, and transparent argumentation—no more than one can abruptly terminate it.

My proposal to develop a conception of rhetoric beyond representation, therefore, should not be interpreted as an effort to "end" metaphysics, either by proposing a contrasting ontology or by ignoring the larger system of values and ideals in which rhetoric (whether one acknowledges it or not) has hitherto participated. In analogous fashion, Calvin Schrag's definition of the so-called end of metaphysics provides an apt description of my approach to developing a conception of rhetoric beyond representation: "End here is understood as a perpetual 'thinking beyond,' an ongoing dissemination of sedimented metaphysical and epistemological position-taking. It defines a task rather than a state of affairs" (1985, 166). Having defined my task as such, I propose to assign new significance to the *non*representational (rather than *anti*representational) elements of rhetoric, which have received scant attention by rhetoricians to date. Given my demonstration of the metaphysical affinity between representation and human being, I plan to investigate the influence of rhetoric on the formation of subjectivity according to the *differences* obscured by the supposed identity, the essential ethos, of human being in its classical or humanist forms. Such forms, of course, remain the models by which the knowledge, speech, and social conduct of groups and individuals commonly are measured. Ultimately, I intend to scrutinize heretofore neglected aspects of representation and human being in order to develop a nonrepresentational conception of rhetoric and subjectivity rather than to assert an ostensibly antirepresentational or antimetaphysical conception of rhetoric that inevitably endorses the metaphysical logic it was designed either to transcend or terminate. In the next section, I turn to a second account of representation, which I employ in order to reveal the analytic principles according to which one may assign an alternate, nonrepresentational sense and value to traditional notions of discourse and subjectivity.

A CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

"Reason" in language: oh what a deceitful old woman! I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar . . .

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

In *The Order of Things* (1994b), originally published in 1966, Michel Foucault presents a historical and discursive, instead of metaphysical, account of representation. He scrutinizes the ways in which individuals throughout successive periods of early modernity thought and spoke of life, labor, and language, or the fields of knowledge and experience that would become known as biology, economics, and linguistics. He thereby investigates the institutional and intellectual developments by virtue of which recent Western culture embraced representation as its organizing principle of knowledge, discourse, and, subsequently, human being. The differences between the thought and discourse of successive eras admittedly indicate changes in Western ontology, or collective assumptions about the order of things, yet Foucault interprets the significance of such changes according to their historical and discursive development rather than in the confirmation of a preferred, transhistorical ontology.

Foucault's study attends to the discursive significance of difference in itself so as to interrupt the priority traditionally given to forms of identity in histories of ideas. He proposes to leave "the problem of causes to one side" and "confine" his project "to describing the transformations themselves" that engendered particular ways of knowing and speaking (1994b, xiii). This "description" is advantageous because it avoids impressing successive historical and discursive developments with an artificial continuity (a temporal identity) that determines their individual significance without regard to the contingencies of different cultural and intellectual contexts. Accordingly, Foucault studies the development of successive forms of knowledge and speech "not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse" (xiv). On the one hand, Foucault devises an empirical method that avoids privileging the testimony of particular subjects as representative of an entire culture, which would assume an inherent identity between the knowledge and speech of exemplary individuals and a historical period in general. On the other hand, he refuses to deduce a uniform collective unconscious supposedly represented in the "formal structures" of an era's collective discourse as an explanation for the nature of knowledge at that time because not all forms of cultural experience, whether conscious or unconscious, are identical. Instead of appealing to an exemplary individual or to a historical unconscious as his organizing principle, Foucault argues that the very differences between discourses indicate the "existence" of tacit discursive "rules" that determine how certain forms of knowledge and speech, of representation, are made possible in one period versus another. Such rules reflect neither the subjective intentions of a privileged subject nor the objective truth of a collective unconscious but exhibit, rather, the self-germinating qualities of a given discourse. Charles Scott describes the ways in which "discursive changes take place

that override traditional meanings and significations"; he avers, in agreement with Foucault, that "[t]hose changes and their consequences take on a life of their own in the sense that . . . they condition what can be said and what wants to be said" (1987, 3). One's intention to represent a given phenomenon in words is authorized by the discursive rules that "condition what can be said and what wants to be said," that endow one's statements with their characteristic meaning and value in social and historical contexts. For Foucault, the differences between modes of discourse, rather than manifestations of subjective or objective identity, engender forms of knowledge and speech without regard to a transhistorical origin or telos.

Although these discursive differences engender forms of representation, they themselves are not representational. Foucault's account of representation demonstrates how discursive practices produced changing forms of knowledge and speech throughout early modernity without himself advocating a particular set of representational principles, without endorsing a privileged type of knowledge. However, my claim that Foucault recognizes the significance of discursive differences in and of themselves, that he assigns value to the nonrepresentational aspects of representational thinking, does not mean that his stance is antirepresentational. On the contrary, Foucault traces the discursive formation of a host of related analytic categories; the notion of endowing certain categories with greater or lesser value based on some transhistorical standard of truth or objectivity is foreign to his inquiry.

I devote the following passages to *The Order of Things,* however, not simply because of its methodological features. More significantly, I elaborate on Foucault's subject matter in order to clarify the nature of representation as an analytic category. Rhetorical scholars conventionally accept as conventional wisdom that rhetoric is a representational phenomenon. Yet Foucault painstakingly demonstrates that, during recent Western culture in particular, the category of representation has been assigned different meanings and values and has been used to authorize multiple kinds of knowledge and discourse. Changeable discursive rules, in other words, presuppose a variety of meanings and uses for the category of representation, which usually is invoked by modern rhetoricians as a generic rubric. Beyond its mere recognition of intellectual differences among historical periods, Foucault's text is valuable to my study because it documents how the unquestioned truth of representation, in reaching the pinnacle of its influence as an organizing principle of Western knowledge, nevertheless became profoundly questionable.

As such, Foucault's study is not so much a history of ideas but a history of *thought* as he himself differentiates these two objects of inquiry. In his reasoning, a history of ideas presupposes that knowledge enjoys an unbroken and transparent development from the inception of an idea to its fruition, whereas a history of thought examines how the emergence of problems and

discontinuities in knowledge and discourse fundamentally contributes to the development of truths, values, and conduct:

> The history of ideas involves the analysis of a notion from its birth, through its development, and in the setting of other ideas which constitute its context. The history of thought is the analysis of the way an unproblematic field of experience, or a set of practices, which were accepted without question . . . becomes a problem, raises discussion and debate, incites new reactions, and induces a crisis in the previously silent behavior, habits, practices, and institutions. The history of thought, understood in this way, is the history . . . of the way people become anxious about this or that—for example, about madness, about crime, about sex, about themselves, or about truth. (2001, 74)

Foucault's study therefore allows one to follow the emergence of a crisis in formerly self-evident truths, in accepted knowledge, practices, and forms of expression. Most rhetoricians have not yet considered how the crisis in representational thinking that Foucault documents radically challenges conventional, and generally unquestioned, assumptions about the nature of rhetoric. By drawing from his text, I underscore the nonrepresentational elements of representation, the differences obscured by its appearance of uniform transparency, in order to begin questioning such assumptions. In the end, I demonstrate that interrupting the commonplace equation of rhetoric with representation is essential to questioning the ideals of human being in which such *topoi* allegedly have been unified throughout the Western tradition.

The Order of Things reveals how initially opposed forms of knowledge and speech were united in a common identity over the course of Western modernity. Foucault's intricate inspection of Diego de Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas* sets the stage for his inquiry. He treats Velasquez's fascinating portrait of the very act of portraiture itself as a synecdoche of representation "in its pure form," made possible by "the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation—of the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance" (1994b, 16). Foucault's text begins with this visual metonymy of representation's ideal transparency, unmarked by subjective imperfections, and ends with a radically contrasting image in which representation is doubly shackled to "man," who emerges as its simultaneous subject and object, as the person that the portrait "resembles" and "the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance." Between these historical counterpoints, one reads the story of how representation in its modern form came to be, and also how it came to pass.

"The Empirical and Murmuring Resemblance of Things"

Resemblance was the primary organizing principle of representation during the Renaissance. "Up to the end of the sixteenth century," Foucault writes, "resem-