Jacques Derrida’s attack on metaphysics is well known in the history of philosophy. Starting from Aristotle, the entire Western tradition centres round their discussion on metaphysics and metaphysical thinking. Therefore it may be mentioned that the whole philosophical tradition was full of attack on metaphysics. In that sense some philosopher remarked that Derrida was part of that sceptical tradition. But if we delve deep, one can unearth that Derrida belongs to opposite direction. Through deconstruction, his goal is to question the philosophical thought. In the strict sense he was not a sceptic because the strict sense of scepticism includes two positions. The first one is completely denial of knowledge of reality itself on the ground that “no knowledge claims have guaranteed certainty”\textsuperscript{151}. This tradition goes back to the Sophists and earlier Ancient Greek philosophers like Heraclitus and Parmenides. The second one is where people deny a maximum part of what is taken as evidence of the nature of reality, which is always followed by the constructive move. In Plato’s Idea, we can see that in search of pure ideas or forms, the idea of evidence was rejected. So, the questions of Scepticism are the major issues of the theory of knowledge (of epistemology). Here certain metaphysical issues are involved. Whether there is any reality outside the contents of our experience? Whether about reality we have any truth or not, and what reality in its most general sense is?

Most of the earlier metaphysical discussion leads to paradox. It is worth here to mention that in the dialogue the Sophist, Plato’s opinion was that “we cannot refer to what is not, to non-being, without the danger of paradox and therefore of self-contradiction.” In the seventeenth century especially before Kant, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) remarked that any attempt at philosophical first principle was self-contradiction, but we cannot explain from where these principles arise and how these could be justified except by reference to a kind of pure invention. For Kant, dialectical problems are major question. After Kant, German Idealist G.W.F. Hegel discussed about the problem of contradiction. After that Bertrand Russell (a principle figure in the Analytic approach to philosophy) was deeply concerned with those issues. On the one side he was concerned with sentences about things which were not in existence. On the other side he was concerned with classes of things and the status of the class of things which does not exist but this second problem itself a version of the first problem. Therefore it leads to an important paradox, because here we are talking about

\textsuperscript{151} Barry Stocker, Derrida on Deconstruction, 2006, p 18.
classes. It is impossible to say that the class of classes are either true or false without getting into any contradiction, because the paradox is the status of the class of classes which are not members of themselves. As this class is a member of itself, it is not a member of themselves. It is true that the concept of classes leads to Russell’s paradox. But for Russell it was an unacceptable situation. Thus he tried to give a solution called ‘Theory of Descriptions’ that revise the apparatus of mathematics or natural language and this solution is known as the ‘Theory of Types’. But he does not solve the paradox. It is not just a paradox of classes; rather Russell’s paradox was a version of Plato’s paradox of non-being and paradox in language.

Derrida like Russell referred to Plato’s paradox and explained that “Henceforth it is not to the thesis of the arbitrariness of the sign that I shall appeal directly, but to what Saussure associates with it as an indispensable correlative and which would seem to me rather to lay the foundations for it: the thesis of difference as the source of linguistic value. What are from the grammatological point of view, the consequences of this theme that is now so well-known (and upon which Plato already reflected in the Sophist)?”152 Sophists first raised the issue of the paradox and they claimed that everything that can be said must refer to what exists and this includes non-being too. Here Plato’s paradox is the consequence of Sophistical pseudo-reasoning, which Derrida refers to Saussure’s method and it is again a repetition of Plato. However Saussure’s idea of being was distinct from Plato. For this reason it is important here to discuss some point about Saussure.

Though Derrida explained his philosophy through contemporary discussion of other works but there are some critics, careless readers and followers who are confused with Derrida’s position. Saussure had a revolutionary impact on linguistics which was very interesting. His key ideas are: (i) distinguishing between language as a system or as a static abstract system (synchrony) and language as an individual using at a particular moment, which changed over time within linguistic sign (sounds of speech or writing). (ii) Distinguishing between the spoken phenomena or written grapheme (material sign) and the concept of signified. (iii) Saussure sees the sign as arbitrary and its relation with the things or the concept are signified, which was its referent and it was accidental. The reason is that, its linguistic values dependant on the system of differences with the other signs. Thus Saussure has a bold theory about linguistics. He holds that linguistics is concerned with the sign as a general institution which

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152 Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, p 52-3.
he called semiology. But Derrida doubted this account of Saussure. For him, Saussurean linguistic was metaphysically neutral science of linguistics, because Saussure followed Rousseau, and Rousseau’s thought was parallel with Platonic and Cartesian metaphysical assumptions.

While discussing about Saussure, Derrida shows that metaphysically neutral science of linguistics is highly open to doubt. Derrida doubts the metaphysical neutrality of structuralism and philosophical phenomenology. His way of doubting resembles earlier criticism of philosophical positivism. In nineteenth century, Auguste Comte coined the term ‘Positivism’. He claimed that science and the whole organization of society were based on positive knowledge, which was derived from pure facts. These are the main targets of Nietzsche. For him, the whole society was based on pure facts was self-refuting. Empirical method and science wants to destroy the un-empirical, what includes any metaphysical posit about the universe, law-governed events, causality, and the presupposition of the unity of laws. According to Nietzsche, these rigorous empirical refutations follow from Positivism.

At this point if we ponder again to Saussure, it may be observed that he was dependent on the absolute opposition between the social and the natural, where language marks the emergence of the social in a break with the nature. For Derrida such breaks and oppositions are metaphysics. So, Derrida interprets that Saussure just repeats the Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s assumption which Rousseau mentioned in his *Essay on the Origin of Language*. Here he mentioned the separation between human social world and the natural physical world. It repeats Descartes’s metaphysical separation of spirit as substance from the matter as substance. All these metaphysical oppositions are attempts to overcome contradictions which cannot be removed. They just tried to place one term over the other. For Rousseau, in language the social was placed in the natural. Here Rousseau influenced by Platonist position, comments that the pure ideas contained in language are opposed to the empirical forces of linguistic acts, such as: in writing the force of material inscription and the force of the voice in speech.

However, there was a contradiction within Rousseau’s claim; purely social language emerges from the purely natural language. There is a moment where the force of natural became social. Therefore that point must be both natural and social. Since, he depends on there being on absolute opposition; it is not possible to place both the social and natural force at the same place and same time. Therefore contradictions follow. For Rousseau, it was a trauma but it
was repeated everywhere like his variations in language. In the same way Saussure’s thought rests on the opposition between social and natural. In the case of Saussure’s definitions, there was a superiority of langue or system over parole or individual instances of language. This was similar to Platonist metaphysics and placed one term over the many by placing what was unchangeable over time. Here static and constancy of substance are raised above the change over time and the diachronic aspect of movement. As less real than the immutability of structure, time itself was denied and these all are the characteristics of Plato’s forms. Saussure’s another Platonic assumption was that the pure concept within the sign was signified and it is essential in relation to the material signifier, the graphic or phonic force and through this, in the sign, the concept was unified. Here “the superiority of the concept is the superiority of the Platonic form over the diversity of appearances in the senses”153. But Derrida strongly criticized this superiority of the concept in Saussure. That is why Derrida believed that reality does not exist outside the concepts of language. But the precursor of Analytic Empiricism George Berkeley observes that reality was immaterial and consisted of the contents of ideas in people’s mind. They claimed that reality is something which exists in someone’s mind as content. But when Derrida interpret Saussure he finds some positive aspects, which are: difference and the materiality of the signifier. Saussure never mentions that the system of language was a form which imposed on an existing set of meanings or linguistic values; rather it was the effect of the differences between the signifiers. So, through its differences from other sign we only can give a meaning, a sign, and a linguistic value. We can define a word only by using other words and we can separate signs or words from other signs or words only by the differences between words but not the essence. About this concept Plato and Aristotle mentioned an example such as: when we speak the word ‘tree’ it means only tree. The reason is, it does not mean any kind of animal and not any kind of vegetable and so on. But according to Derrida these arguments are trapped within the disruption of metaphysical system and this disruption was present in Saussure’s thought. For Saussure, meanings are determined only by the differences between the material signifiers. After that, the issue about the transmission of metaphysics exists in the anthropology Levi-Strauss. They opine that metaphysics arise in the assumption; there can be such a thing as natural man which is in consciousness completely interior. Therefore it lacks in exteriority. The above traditions come from Rousseau.

153 Barry Stocker, p 29.
Thus for Derrida, the history of metaphysics is indelible. This thought of Derrida was derived from Heidegger. Heidegger was concerned with Presence or Being and mentioned that both are distinguished from being (what is present). But in his concept what is present is never Presence or Being itself; rather it (what is present) is being, where Being has withdrawn from ‘what it is’. Thus both Heidegger and Derrida agreed that the history of metaphysics is the history of something which is a substitute for Presence or Being and it is only grasped as present. However Heidegger’s arguments are applied to empiricist’s position, where logic and sensation are understood as Presence, and as being, which is present. According to the classical British empiricism especially Locke, Berkeley and Hume, the sensation or impression is understood on the model of Descartes’s Idea and it is purely rational. But Heidegger never gives weight age to the Empiricists view point. On this issue Derrida was clearly opposite to Heidegger. What distinguishes Derrida from Heidegger is, for Derrida deconstruction is the challenging of the transcendental by the empirical and refers his position as ‘radical empiricism’, for Heidegger empiricism as non-philosophical and instrumentalist never appears important. He refers to Being and Presence – these are appropriate but never present. In Heidegger, there was a supreme power of Being and Presence but Derrida does not endorse it at all. Although like Heidegger, Derrida comments that Being and Presence are ungraspable and unnameable but the conclusion which Derrida draws are not similar with Heidegger. Derrida mentioned, Heidegger was just a one side of deconstruction – in opposition to the affirmation of difference in the case of Nietzsche. Thus it may be realized that for Derrida there is only nature exists as the opposite of the social but never as it is in itself. So, Being or Presence is only the opposite of difference and absence.

The concept of being or ‘what is present’ is the main issue of metaphysics and this concept excludes absence as difference, illusion, and non-Being. But according to Derrida only Being itself can be absent and we are never confronted with it. So absence is necessary for there to be difference. But in Saussure’s point of view, no words have a completely present meaning. Always meaning depends on there being other different words; and meaning is contextual in various ways, which includes a way where languages exist as a system of differences. Therefore a word’s meaning depends on what it does not mean. The reason is, in the system there are other words, and these words already have excluded that meaning by possessing it. In the *Genesis and Structure*, Derrida explained, the aspects of structuralism are joined in metaphysics. He studied already this in Husserl. Derrida explained that Husserl’s position was parallel with the Logical Positivists. Husserl rejects metaphysical questions through
phenomenological *epoché* or ‘bracketing’. But in Logical Positivism, there was a commitment to descriptions of experience and it precedes any theoretical point of view. Thus, like Logical Positivist, Husserl wanted to see a formal approach which includes two sides of pure forms. In one side, it includes logical judgements and on the other side, it includes empirical facts. But here it may be commented that equal significant differences exist from Logical Positivists.

In *Logical Investigations*, Analytic philosophers are the main issue to Husserl and in this work he includes those philosophers who were concerned with relative technical question, for example: about mereology; a theory of parts and wholes. Even his text is followed by a mathematician and logician Gottlob Frege, but startled difference exists, between them. There are two issues on which their thoughts are parallel. One was rejection of psychologism; the explanation of philosophical issues with the reduction of the contents of thought to the subjective states of mind or truths of psychology. Secondly, they are concerned with language as a general sense and as signifying objects; they both operate these issues in relation to subjective psychological associations. There are some Analytic philosophers such as Russell, Strawson and Kripke who carried a different story but their works are not regarded as accurate. On individual points their commentary is always questionable but their creative and original ideas are collected to bear on classical text. As the scope of the present study is limited, we are not giving here any detail discussion of those philosophers. For Continental European philosophy, *Logical Investigation* was a major moment in Phenomenological tradition and it takes various ways with reference to Husserl, Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Mearleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Lévinas and Derrida. However Husserl rejects Heidegger’s work, where Heidegger expressed historical and subjective instead of formal and transcendent. Husserl in his work himself gives importance to the subjective, historical and intersubjective. John Claude Evans, who was a traditional Husserl’s scholar, criticized Derrida. For him Derrida was a bad philosopher and a bad reader. Evans said that Derrida was falsely attributed ontological claims to Husserl’s phenomenology. Therefore with the work of Russell, Strawson and Kripke, the comparison of Derrida’s reading of Husserl shows that Derrida was far more careful by a long way and he was careful to give long quotations. Derrida’s thought about Husserl was very deep.

Here Evans claims that “Husserl said many things which suggest that he was trying to exclude ontological claims from Phenomenology; and what he then does is to claim that, if Derrida finds any ontological implications in what Husserl says, then Derrida must have read
Husserl badly. But the problem of Evan’s thinking about Derrida was he depends on the idea that in Husserl there are no ontological claims, which Husserl claimed explicitly. But in every aspect a text cannot be judged by the general claims which made by its author. Derrida observed that, in the *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Husserl claimed to be a Platonist, in the sense of the status of abstract objects like universal qualities, universal type, and ideas of objects. Platonism was a belief in the reality of abstract objects which exist outside the mind and it separate from physical objects. Husserl’s philosophical career strides the path of Platonism to explain the status of the transcendental structure of consciousness. As anti-psychologist, one of the main aims of Husserl is to explain transcendental structure as mental entity. So, as Platonist he supports phenomenological claim and he also describe the content of consciousness without any reference to the ontological status of anything. Thus the ambiguity of Husserl is very clear.

Derrida’s attention is to draw the ambiguity of Husserl’s idea of pure contents of consciousness which exist independently of ontological considerations. In his philosophy, in the pure ideas of the ideas of consciousness he takes the pure forms as the first principle. Here Derrida mentioned that this is the repeat ambiguity of Kant. In Kant’s theory there are some pure ideas as categories of the understanding and as the regulative ideal of reason. Derrida in *Of Grammatology* mentioned that Husserl holds a Kantian transcendental and Platonist view, and such position exists irreducibly in a tension with historical and the empirical concerns of Husserl. But Derrida rejects this because for him, all these attempts replaced metaphysical ontological problems with formal problems. It holds that ontological commitments are self-contradictory. The reason behind this is, by a formal category (phenomenological or linguistic) if we replace the ontological category then we actually created another ontological category. Thus phenomenology rests on Platonist metaphysics because like Platonist form or idea, it has the same status. According to Plato, the secondary imitation of the idea of the object is the empirical object. Husserl asserts that after Kant and in neo-Kantian formalism writing-the pure forms of consciousness are transcendental, and it is beyond any particular object. Therefore, phenomenology of Husserl always returned to Platonism even when they claimed that their theories are non-metaphysical and descriptive.

Husserl’s phenomenology orientated towards both transcendental metaphysics and a life philosophy. Transcendental metaphysics provided the basic forms of judgement and
intentions. The act of consciousness in phenomenology understood and directed towards an object. It is intended by consciousness. Thus all act of consciousness are defined as ‘intentions’. In Husserl’s Phenomenology, on the model of Kant’s theory about experience and knowledge as judgement about objects tends to be less intellectualist. In the life philosophy, Husserl understands the transcendental structure to appear in the everyday life’s immediate experiences. So, for intentionality, if there are transcendental structures and transcendental ideas then whatever those structures and ideas are will be the contents of consciousness. Therefore all the contents of consciousness are understood to be contents of the consciousness of a transcendental ego. This transcendental ego is the subject of the transcendental structure, which is a self and it exists as a pure form of the self and it has a pure forms of consciousness. However the transcendental purity itself becomes a part of a life-philosophy, where all the contents of consciousness and each moments of consciousness are fulfilled with the transcendental consciousness within the life of the human self. So, according to Derrida if Husserl’s attempt to transcend metaphysics was tied up with life philosophy then the above thought must be true in metaphysical system. Thus all metaphysic caught up within the principle of consciousness, fulfilled all of nature and gives both the individual human and nature a purpose.

After that in Of Grammatology, Derrida remarked that the concept of metaphysics required the concept of writing. Husserl distinguished between the consciousness of the general ideal object and a particular object. In some substratum of absolute objectivity, particular languages are separate from the general ideal object but this is necessary to account for the essential fixity of the object, which is independent of variations between languages. The object of perception is contingent and changeable. So, to be an ideal object, if language is necessary then ideality was caught up in the cultural, historical and ambiguities of language. Language as necessary and fixed means writing, since speech was tied to the moment of consciousness. According to Derrida these aspects undermine the metaphysical phenomenological starting point. It is the content of consciousness and understood as what is present in someone’s consciousness. In the whole philosophical tradition these remarks are applicable. Even Husserl in his book Cartesian Meditations mentioned that philosophy tried to find itself on the self contemplating contents of its own consciousness and said that it could not mentioned in the earlier philosophy. But Derrida claimed that phenomenology itself rest on previous traditions and it referred to the inside as pure and the outside as an impurity with regard to ideas, truth, and the soul. In Speech and Phenomena Derrida remarked that “is this
to say that what opens the repetition to the infinite, or what is opened up when the movement of idealisation is assured, is a certain relation of an ‘existent’ to his death? And that the ‘transcendental life’ is the scene of this relationship? It is too soon to tell. First we must deal with the problem of language. No one will be surprised if we say that language is properly the medium for this play of presence and absence. Is there not within language — is it not language itself that might seem to unify life and ideality? But we ought to consider, on the one hand, that the element of signification — or the substance of expression — which best seems to preserve ideality and living presence in all its forms is living speech, the spirituality of the breath as phōnē; and, on the other hand, that phenomenology, the metaphysics of presence in the form of ideality, is also a philosophy of life.”

Derrida criticized and defines metaphysics on the basis that it was a reduction to oppositions between the social and natural. He observed that a list of oppositions followed in the wake of Nietzsche. But the history of metaphysics largely derived from Plato where he gave preference to pure forms over the appearances and it was a preference to life in another world to life in this world. Nietzsche defines the denial of this world, this life and the appearances which we perceive in it, as nihilism. Therefore Derrida does not accept this Nietzsche’s condemnation of metaphysical nihilism, as he shows an inescapable contradiction between empirical and transcendental force. Here transcendental refers to something which is abstract, universal, general or conceptual in meaning which includes metaphysics. Nietzsche highlighted that every word was an abstraction of the constant changes. Therefore every word carries variety of sensation. He gave an example: ‘leaf’. For him, in every different kind of tree there is a different type of leaf. Even in one particular tree, all leaves are different from one another. Thus from the massive variety of leaves in nature, there is an abstraction. He explained that if we find that two leaves were identical; in their each single detail they would be different in place, time, and space. Thus any kind of thought and language must be metaphysical and by any particular philosophical argument, the philosophical issue cannot be eliminated. For this reason, from the Logical Positivism or Pragmatism, Nietzsche became an anti-metaphysician. In this case, Derrida followed Nietzsche. There was a similarity between Nietzsche and Hegel’s thought because Hegel sees the name as universal like Nietzsche. Therefore it goes beyond any particular object named. But the conclusion which Hegel draws was totally opposite from Nietzsche. According to him, when the name goes beyond the objects of experience that time it is more real than the particular experience. He realized, the

world is structured by the relation between the complex rationality of reality and particular existences in the sensory reality as the whole. But this rests on contradictions and becoming.

Nietzsche finds oppositions as the evidence of conflicting forces and it is in itself undermine the view of thought. So, reason is more rationally real and ideal than the material and empirical world. He includes some opposition such as real and apparent, good and evil, truth and false; and from Nietzsche, these oppositions are picked up by Derrida. Here, in the discussion of language, metaphysics takes inside as real, good, and truth. It takes speech as an inside, which has being. On the other hand metaphysics, accepts outside as apparent, evil and false. It takes writing as an outside, which has non-being. Derrida discussed about the distinction between speech and writing. Sometimes he claimed that philosophy contained a phonocentric theory and he argued that logocentrism was dominant in all philosophers and it was inescapable in whole philosophy (including Plato, Rousseau, and Rationalist: Leibniz, Hegel, Analytic philosopher: J. L. Austin). So, the issue is not to describe how many philosophers are intentionally placed speeches over writing; rather the issue is whether philosophers are assumed constantly that meaning was found first in speech, in both the logical and temporal sense, and writing was found to be secondary. Through Socrates, Plato clearly argued in his Phaedrus that speech was the immediate expression of the speaker because speaker is present to clarify any uncertainties about meaning. Therefore writing is inferior to speech. Even in the case of writing, there was the absence of the individual who inscribed it. Anyone reads the words and puts a number of interpretations on them, sometimes which was out of context. Therefore, there were no possibilities of corrections from the inscriber. Here Derrida combined this discussion with Rousseau and Saussure’s phonocentrism, where they both presumed that in natural order speaking is first in time, compared with writing. Even when he discussed about J. L. Austin he notes, knowledge in its non-descriptive aspects refers speech act as the primary form of language. On the other side, in Husserl he notes the primacy of inner speech. According to them, writing was always assumed as the copy of speech.

In Of Grammatology, Derrida mentioned that the analysis of writing is important and it is the study of ‘grammē’ (the written words). From the above it follows that Leibniz’s thought includes the urge for the universal language which is the product of written design. Hegel advocated the system of absolute on the basis of a spirit. However in Phaedrus, Plato states that truth was best uncovered in speech. From the above study, it does not mean that all philosophy is faithful to speech as superior to writing. Thus it can be claimed that
metaphysical philosophy is ‘logocentric’ and ‘logocentrism is a neologism for Derrida, which refers to ‘what is centred’. So at the heart of metaphysics knowledge or being and truth are present at some particular moment. ‘Logocentrism’ refers to the philosophical tendency which finds truth in the spirit, the presentation of Being, philosophical ideas or system and consciousness. In this respect, Plato was a ‘logocentric’ philosopher. With reference to dialectical speech, Plato’s dialogues are claimed to reveal truth. On the other side, Descartes was ‘logocentric’ because his claims reveal truth in the distinct and clear ideas of our consciousness. Hegel’s claim reveals truth in absolute spirit. For Austin, the truth of language appears in the immediate situation of the utterance of particular statements. Therefore the challenge from empirical to philosophical in Derrida denied the idea that the meaning of a statement can be placed in any situation beyond doubt.

Thus, now it is very clear that the position of Derrida is not holding a metaphysical position. His aim is to get outside of metaphysics. Like Wittgenstein, Derrida is not thinking that philosophical system just as full of metaphysics; rather he sees, our usages of language itself fall into metaphysics. According to both, writing outside metaphysics is a contradictory but it is a necessary way of doing philosophy. It constantly struggles with the tendency of words to become an abstract concept. Therefore it is metaphysical. But their views are different. According to Derrida, transcendental or metaphysical forces are perpetually present. Therefore, they are necessary for there to be concepts, language, communication, and philosophy. Thus, there is no kind of pure logical or empirical method which removes the metaphysical.

Thus we may conclude this discussion with the thought that there is always some kind of philosophical touch in literature, metaphor, and aesthetics. Philosophical language always contains metaphors and philosophical language cannot eliminate metaphor. Therefore it cannot eliminate its status as literature. The Western Philosophical tradition has tended to try to separate from metaphor- which is nothing but this only can be another mythology, another fiction. Philosophy always contains metaphor and it tries to establish the interpretation of the laws. This interpretive activity leads towards the metaphorical status of language as free invention. It is not an argument for arbitrariness in argument; rather this is for saying that there is no position in which this arbitrariness has been eliminated. Thus, it may be remarked that we are always within the closure of metaphysics.

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