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HUMANITIES CENTER

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Dear Esteemed Colleagues,

I am pleased to offer my evaluation of Professor Michaela Fišerová's book proposal for the purpose of her candidacy for promotion. For this testimony, since I serve in some ways in analogy to a notary public attesting to the authentic resemblance of Professor Fišerová's signature (or her signing of Derrida's signature), I should begin by establishing my expertise. I was a student of Professor Derrida, who served as the primary advisor of my dissertation research, which he also personally "signed" to confer the degree of Ph.D. in 1995. Over the past twenty-four years, I have written and published extensively on Derrida's philosophy, with particular attention to the question of style, which is the third metaphysical pretension (or *aporia*) that is the subject of Fišerová's own analysis. I have peer reviewed numerous articles for academic journals and well over twenty book-length monographs on Derrida's philosophy for major university presses in North America and The United Kingdom, eight of which have been published.

In my evaluation Professor Fišerová's manuscript, *Deconstructing Signature. Jacques Derrida and Repeating of the Unrepeatable*, represents one of the most sophisticated and knowledgeable readings of Derrida's program of deconstruction on the limits of representation. Moreover, the question of the signature is not an "applied topic," but rather exists at the core of Derrida's own theory of writing, *grammé*, or trace, which precedes *logos*. Fišerová interrogates the limits of a deconstructive analysis by applying the positive methods of forensics and graphology to Derrida's original program, thus revealing an epistemological weakness in the method for addressing specific media. In short, Fišerová writes, "as everything is text in deconstruction, Derrida's thinking doesn't allow distinguishing particular media, such as written word and drawn image, it doesn't allow developing any technologically specific media analysis."

In evaluating the claims of the proposal, I found the conclusions to be remarkable and innovative, as well as useful in demonstrating the limits of the epistemological expectations of a deconstructive analysis in certain concrete regions of knowledge, since the text of deconstruction is the general text of metaphysics, and this it cannot be employed to make a "decision" with regard to certain positive scientific discourses; since "while it is suitable for reflection on science as such, it isn't suitable for reflection of a particular scientific discourse." Therefore, as she concludes: "Deconstruction brings no revolution. It is motivated by the opposite of revolution: the melancholy. Derrida is aware that every critique of metaphysics can neither improve, nor eliminate it. Metaphysics can't be criticized. It can only be deconstructed - presented in the perspective of pragmatical paradoxes or aporias."

Although this would immediately appear to be a criticism of Derrida's methodological approach to the sign, in fact, it clarifies the appropriate or proper uses of a deconstructive method of analysis and, thus, corrects the metaphysical pretensions of those critics who have sought to employ deconstruction to interpret a particular text or positive discourse (literary, philosophical, historical, or scientific), which has often resulted in simply bad interpretation. Consequently, Fiserova employs the more regional and scientific methods drawn from modern forensics, graphology, and semiotics to "supplement" the Derridean

deconstruction of the general, metaphysical text. Ironically, if we recall Derrida's own use of the "supplement" to represent the priority of the written trace in interrogating the meaning the sign, Fišerová thus reverses this original deconstructive gesture thereby producing a "positive criticism" of the metaphysical expectations that informs the conventional belief in the signature, or a "deconstructed semiotic conception of complex expectations from handwritten signature as a civil sign of identity."

In this regard, Fišerová clearly explains the justification of her claim to "complete a deconstructive analysis" by adding a supplemental semiotic method for analyzing specific media, which I will simply quote:

Why do I introduce semiotics in this third and final phase of my reflection? Why do I find necessary to "complete" deconstruction? It's mostly because deconstruction doesn't allow any scientifically or philosophically positive grasping of the problems of the trace, expression, event or style. Its subversive position can't found any positive definition of a handwritten signature as a sign determined by the legal mediation politics. From the position of deconstruction, one can't think about the discursively privileged interpretation of the handwritten signature. Because Derrida refuses the positivity of both semiotics and discursive analysis, it helps to consider metaphysical prejudices, but not the specific mode of communication -based on them.

Accordingly, the resulting analysis will be useful in revealing the underlying prejudices in the contemporary discourses of legal and civil mediation which continue to depend on metaphysical categories of resemblance, authenticity, and identity. Moreover, such an analysis can become especially important for examining and critiquing the persistence of certain metaphysical expectations based on handwritten conventions of discursive mediation in the transfer to digitalized media in contemporary legal mediation.

Finally, Fišerová's very astute reading of Derrida's offers a unique and remarkable interpretation of the characteristic mood (*melos*) of melancholy that permeates Derrida's philosophy and has been the constant subject of much interpretation and commentary. According to the author, it is result of the trace of the epistemological aporia that is simply the effect of the deconstructive aporia that haunts its own method, the trace of its own failure to "close the text" or, in other words, to achieve any positive knowledge of the particular act of representation in question, which prevents it from establishing its own knowledge in the manner of the historical sciences. Nevertheless, as she argues, this melancholy and this aporia of deconstruction is epistemologically productive and is indispensable to any positive semiotics or contemporary legal analysis; moreover, "the metaphysical dimension of the legal mediation politics can't be approached without deconstruction."

To conclude my evaluation, as an expert on the written traces of Derrida's own signature, I am fully confident in attesting to the authentic resemblance of this work, both in its relation to the original text, and in its promise to complete the original by the addition of a new supplemental methodology that goes beyond the strict limits of the original in a useful and highly relevant manner for contemporary discourse analysis. The published version will make an important contribution not only to the field of Derrida studies, but more importantly, to the semiotic theories that inform contemporary systems of legal mediation of authorial and civil identity.

The habilitation thesis of Michaela Fišerová meets the requirements standardly made at the level of habilitation thesis in the of field of philosophy. Respectfully submitted for your consideration,

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