Although it is useful to talk about the relation between Jacques Derrida's writing and Platonism in general on the grounds that that these labels are assumed to indicate philosophical ideas of some significance, one certainly cannot advance far in such a project without distinguishing Derrida's relations to Plato from his relations to Platonism and indeed Derrida's relations to Plato from his relations to Neoplatonism. We should perhaps study Derrida's relation to Plato rather than to Platonism or Neoplatonism on the grounds that an emphasis upon the play of discourse is a shared feature of deconstruction and Plato's actual dialogues. However, Derrida's relation to Platonism or Neoplatonism rather than to Plato should be studied not only because a certain preoccupation with the question of structure is a common element in deconstruction and ancient readings of Plato, but also because the activity of deconstructing Derrida's relation to a prior text rather than simply following Derrida's own deconstruction of that text is not only possible but necessary according to his criteria.

The essay "The Double Session" first published in the periodical Tel Quel in 1970 and re-published in the volume La Dissémination in 1972 provides an excellent basis for the deconstructive reading of the relation between Derrida and Neoplatonism which will be attempted here. But two methodological observations are perhaps worth making at the outset. The first point concerns our choice of a philosophical vector: the notion of non-discursive truth. Here, we will trace not the philosopheme of "negative theology" which Derrida himself exploited in such texts as "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" and which has been a prominent theme in this book as a whole, but rather the philosopheme of "making the truth" which Derrida exploited in the work

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Circumfession. Fifty-Nine Periods and Periphrases⁴ and which has formed part of our subject-matter in chapter 1. The second point concerns our choice of an intertextual basis: Martin Heidegger’s thinking of the distinction between truth as adaequatio and truth as unveiling and through that distinction the notions Being and Ereignis. This choice will extend and transform Derrida’s own approach in “The Double Session” since the detours through Heidegger’s work in Derrida’s essay take place within the context of reading not Neoplatonism but Plato himself.

The first of the two segments which provide “The Double Session” with its title takes its starting-point from a strategic juxtaposition of Plato’s Philebus and Mallarmé’s Mimique⁵ in which the second text is spatially positioned within the angle⁶ formed by the first, and in which five extracts from Mallarmé’s Livre are typographically displayed one below another.⁶ Since we are here dealing with an ancient Greek philosopher and a nineteenth-century French poet, the question of the relation between philosophy and literature arises. This in its turn involves the question of the relation between philosophy and truth on the one hand and the relation between literature and truth on the other.

Displayed typographically in the manner indicated ...

... the first two texts read as follows:

SOCRATES:⁷ And if he had someone with him, he would put what he said to himself into actual speech addressed to his companion, audibly uttering those same thoughts, so that what before we called opinion (doxa)⁸ has now

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5 This “angle”—together with the “hymen” and “blank” with which it is metonymically associated—is a “general structure” of deconstruction. On these ideas see pp. 179 and 183–185.

6 This spatial-typographical presentation of texts is an important part of the non-discursive aspect of deconstruction and reaches its climax perhaps in Glas where passages of Hegel and Genet are laid out in parallel columns. See Jacques Derrida, Glas (Paris: Denoël, 1981) (= Jacques Derrida, Glas, trans. J.P. Leavey, and R. Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986)). The idea goes back at least to the exergue presented in De la Grammatologie where short passages of an unnamed Egyptian scribe, Rousseau, and Hegel are placed one below another. See Jacques Derrida, De la Grammatologie (Paris: Minuit, p. 11) (= Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. G.C. Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, p. 3)).

7 The three passages quoted here can be found in Derrida, DS, pp. 175–176/Diss., pp. 201–202.

8 The Greek terms and phrases are inserted by Derrida.