

Catherine Malabou

Catherine Malabou is a graduate of the École Normale Supérieure of Fontenay Saint-Cloud, and holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy, which she completed under the guidance of Jacques Derrida at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. A former director of programming for the International College of Philosophy, Dr. Malabou is currently a professor at the University of Paris X Nanterre in the Department of Philosophy, which was founded by Paul Ricoeur and whose emeriti include Levinas and Dufrenne.

Dr. Malabou specializes in the relations of dialectics to deconstruction, and much of her work examines this relationship through her concept of “plasticity.” In her book *The Future of Hegel* (2004), Dr. Malabou suggests that “plasticity” signifies the capacity to both receive and provide form, incorporating the aesthetic realm but also designating the capacity to evolve in a more general sense, involving an adaptation, or an ability to open itself to the future. While plasticity may be used to describe the crystallization of form, it may also be understood to be diametrically opposed to form, describing the destruction of all form (as suggested by the term “plastic explosive” for the bomb). In texts such as *Le Change Heidegger* (2004), *La plasticité au soir de l’écriture. Dialectique, destruction, deconstruction* (2004), and *L’Avenir de Hegel* (1996)—translated into English as *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic* (2004)—Dr. Malabou has explored this notion of plasticity in the work of Heidegger, Levinas, and Jacques Derrida.

By designating new models of organization, new configurations of being, and new systematic functions, Dr. Malabou’s concept of plasticity also inserts itself in particular in the field of neurosciences to characterize the functioning of the brain as it is conceived at the present time. In her recent study of this functioning, Dr. Malabou’s book *Que faire de notre cerveau?* (2004) seeks to posit a new materialism.

Dr. Malabou has participated in academic conferences around the globe, and has published widely on such thinkers as Hegel, Heidegger, and Judith Butler. In addition to the book-length studies already identified, Dr. Malabou has published important work in both French and English journals. Forthcoming work includes the book chapters “Another Possibility,” in *Research in Phenomenology* (2006) and “Plasticity and Writing,” in *The European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms “Derrida”* (2006). Dr. Malabou is also the editor of the collection “Non et Non” (Editions Léo Scheer), and she is currently completing a book-length study exploring the concepts of a new materialism in a confrontation between Freud and neurobiology.

Dr. Malabou has also published widely on the work of Jacques Derrida. Her recent book chapters on Derrida include “Prières,” in *Jacques Derrida* (2005) and “La compulsion de révélation” in *Judéités. Questions for Jacques Derrida* (2003); recent journal articles on Derrida’s work include “La mort de Jacques Derrida” in *La Quinzaine Littéraire* (n°886, 2004). Dr. Malabou was also the editor of the special issue of *Revue Philosophique* entitled “Derrida” (n° 3, 1990), in which she also has an essay, “Economie de law violence, violence de l’economie. Derrida et Marx.”

In 1999, Dr. Malabou collaborated with Jacques Derrida to write *La Countre-allée*, which has since been translated into English as *Counterpath: Traveling With Jacques Derrida* (2004). A collection of randomly arranged chapters on Derrida’s work and the notion of the voyage, *Counterpath* contains dozens of postcards sent by Derrida to Dr. Malabou as he read chapters of her work in progress. The result is a text that is at once critically acclaimed and deeply personal, a unique look at both Derrida’s thought and character.

Early in the text, in one of the first his postcards, Derrida has this to say of Dr. Malabou’s work:

I am beginning to read you. [...] I express my thanks to you once and for all. The road you are taking is unique, you marry the grand art of forging a path and the force of a deciphering. You can see and understand everything. The privilege that you have decided to the word *dérive* is really a stroke of genius. Insanely economical. The plastic art of an unexpectedly subversive plastician.
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Dr. Malabou’s keynote address, entitled “Again: The wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind,” examines the question of regeneration in regard to scarring. Considering the degree to which regeneration, in its plasticity, may be considered a post-deconstructive concept, Dr. Malabou will re-read Derrida’s “La difference” to undertake a new questioning of the trace.