

### Michael Naas

Michael Naas is a full Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs in the Department of Philosophy at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. He earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the State University of New York at Stony Brook under the direction of Hugh J. Silverman, and a D.E.A. from the École des Hautes Études Pratiques in Paris, where he studied under both Julia Kristeva and the late Jacques Derrida on a Bourse Châteaubriand Fellowship from the French Government. A recent recipient of the prestigious Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques (France's "Knight in the Order of Academic Palms"), Dr. Naas specializes in ancient Greek philosophy and contemporary French philosophy, approaching the classics via such thinkers as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Lyotard, Levinas, and Derrida.

Over the span of his young career, Dr. Naas has spoken at conferences and events around the world, giving more than eighty presentations in England, France, Portugal, Sweden, Italy, and Greece, as well as across North America. These presentations include keynote addresses at Wofford College, the University of Illinois, and at the 2005 International Symposium on Deconstruction and National Contexts in Brazil. Dr. Naas has discussed Derrida's work on the radio, including a 2004 appearance on "Odyssey" (Chicago Public Radio) and, more recently, a three hour program on Derrida's work for France Culture Radio (along with Jean-Luc Nancy and Peggy Kamuf).

Dr. Naas has published widely on a variety of philosophical and political themes, with more than forty book chapters and articles in such journals as *Philosophy Today*, *Continental Philosophy*, and *The Oxford Literary Review*. Forthcoming chapters include "Derrida's America," in *For Derrida* (Routledge, 2006); "Levinas and Speech Therapy," in *Levinas and the Ancients* (Routledge, 2006); and "'One Nation... Indivisible': Jacques Derrida on the Sovereignty that Dare Not Speak Its Name" (University Araraquara Press, 2006).

Dr. Naas is a noted translator of Derrida's work, as well, having co-translated five of Derrida's books, including *The Other Heading* (Indiana, 1992), *Memoirs of the Blind* (Chicago, 1993), *Adieu* (Stanford, 1999), and *Rogues* (2005), as well as nearly a dozen of his essays, including his influential "Auto-Immunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides" in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (2003), and "By Force of Mourning," in *Critical Inquiry* (22.2). Dr. Naas is the co-editor of Derrida's *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago, 2000) and *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde* (Galilee, 2004).

Dr. Naas is also the author of two books, including *Turning: From Persuasion to Philosophy* (Humanities, 1994) and *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction* (Stanford, 2003). In *Taking on the Tradition*, which won the 2003 Choice Outstanding Academic Title Award, Dr. Naas traces both the content and the form of Derrida's work, arguing that Derrida's claims cannot be separated from the manner in which they are made. This important text also explores how Derrida's work has helped us rethink and rework the themes of tradition, legacy, and inheritance in the Western philosophical tradition. In the introduction to this work, he describes Derrida's relationship to the tradition—and our relationship to his work—as follows:

A text by Derrida is always an *event*. Always contextual, occasional, always written in response to certain conditions—historical, political, philosophical, personal—Derrida's texts try to *invent* new means of reflection and reception from out of these conditions. They attempt to negotiate between conditions and the unconditional, between the tradition and what has not been and can never be received by the tradition, so as to provide another reception for the tradition, another way for it to come into its own. In this sense a text of Derrida's is always an event of reading and reception in which we, as readers, are, like Derrida, *implicated* in the very reception of the tradition. For it is we who ultimately sign off or do not on the tradition, we who give it its ultimate authority, an authority that we will then assume it always already had.

Dr. Naas' keynote address, entitled “Comme si, comme ça: Fictions of Self, State, and a Sovereign God,” suggests that although Derrida read sovereignty as essentially a fiction or a phantasm, this does not make the effects of sovereignty any less real or less dangerous. On the contrary, Dr. Naas will explore Derrida's insistence that we must ultimately relinquish our notion of sovereignty in the name of the very thing that has traditionally been identified with it, that is, in the name of the unconditional. Though sovereignty—be it the sovereignty of a self-determining or self-legislating individual, of a self-sufficient or self-founding nation-state, or of a single, all-powerful God— is today undergoing critique or deconstruction (what Derrida has called an ineluctable “autoimmune process”), this deconstruction remains for us an essential task.