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or process – that of enlightenment's first over-coming and then reverting to mythology. The quest is not for an origin or a beginning, or for the moment when enlightenment first happened. It is rather a quest for the present, for an understanding of how we arrived where we did – for example, fascism, or the Hollywood "culture industry" – and how reason came to be used as a tool in getting there. In other words, for Adorno and Horkheimer enlightenment has not led to an enlightening of our social conditions, or of our relationship with nature, or even of our own selves. Instead it has led to the darkest of times, to fascism, and more generally, but not unrelatedly, to what Adorno called late capitalism.

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ANTHONY JARRELLS

difference

The term "difference" derives from the Latin *differre*: literally, to bear off in different directions; hence, to scatter or disseminate, to put off or defer (from *dis-*, apart, and *ferre*, to bear). The Greek equivalent *diapherein* has this same sense (from *dia-*, apart, and *pherein*, to bear).

In the postmodern context, the term "difference" cannot be simply and reductively defined, not least because what the term "difference" names is the basis and possibility of all differentiation; hence of all classification and definition. To state that difference is "the quality or state of being unlike, dissimilar, and so on," for example, merely begs the question of definition by supplementing one term with another in a finite but nowhere terminated sequence of substitutions (see **dissemination**).

The crucial significance of the thinking of difference in twentieth century thought has been double-edged, in both respects excising the most central and persistent metaphysical presupposition that has dominated the Western way of experiencing, thinking, and being in the world. This dominant mode of cognition may be characterized by the names "essentialism," "substantialism," or, to use the phrase made familiar by Jacques **Derrida** within the context of **deconstruction**, the **metaphysics of presence**.

First, the thinking of difference confirmed the recognition that the closely related notions of essence and identity, understood as self-subsisting and self-evident facts, and therefore as steadfast principles of logic, ontology, and epistemology, were ultimately invalid and incoherent notions; nor have they ever been supported by empirical evidence, except out of habit or prejudice. Rather, the notions of essence and identity, in Western culture generally, have provided a convenient and habitual fiction, whether in the form of a metaphysics of the individual person (the eternal atomistic soul), of individual objects (comprising material or ideal essences such as eternal universal properties), of language (essential and permanent meanings or concepts), of gender (essential maleness and femaleness), or even of economic value (for example, the notion that objects and human labour possess an essential value that can be measured and represented in the form of money and thus exchanged). Second, by annulling the presuppositions of essence and essential identity, the thinking of difference also confirmed the recognition of the inter-relatedness, inter-dependency, and open texture of the signifying networks constituting our processes of cognition (both perception and intellection) and social being.

The recognition of the profoundly anti-essentialist significance of difference is not a new one in the history of Western thought, nor in that of non-

Western thought (for example, in certain Indian and Asian philosophical traditions). In Western history, however, it has repeatedly been either forgotten, misconstrued, or simply missed. Among the pre-Socratics, Heraclitus and Parmenides stand out as remarkable and radical thinkers of the nature of difference, although their import has been severely obscured by Plato's and Aristotle's dubious representations of their thought.

Heraclitus speaks of oppositional terms as being "one," "the same," and "grasped together"; he speaks of this oneness as "differing from itself" and thereby "agreeing with itself." In other words, opposites can only arise in relation to one another, in mutual inter-dependence; they are in this sense "one" and "the same": a "sameness" that makes difference possible by sustaining the differential relations that make differences meaningful. Parmenides, perhaps the first "postmodern" writer, speaks of two alternative "paths of inquiry" in the section of his philosophical poem dealing with "The Way of Truth": "is" and "is-not." He rejects the latter as a path of thought in that it is the negation of the former; but, as it turns out, the former is a path that ultimately leads to the suspension of language. In discussing "The Way of Seeming," that is, mortal beliefs and opinions about the nature of reality, he claims that human beings "distinguished opposites in body and established signs/apart from one another"; and that "all things have been named light and night." In other words, ordinary language and thinking are founded upon fundamental oppositions which, ultimately, are reducible to the differential opposition between "is" and "is-not."

Plato, in *Sophist*, attempts to reconstruct (or defuse) the Parmenidean *reductio* and to reconcile it with his account of ideal, eternal, self-referential forms that make meaningful discourse and knowledge possible. He reinterprets the notion of "Not-Being" ("is-not"), which, when taken to mean "does not exist," can appear paradoxical, as the ideal Platonic form of "Difference" (of "not-being-*that*," "being-*different*-to-that"), and hence as the opposite of "Being." Aristotle, in *Metaphysics*, defines "Oppositeness" as a form of "Difference," and "Difference" as a form of "Otherness." He opposes "Otherness" to "Identity," and places the latter in the primary category of "Unity," which he

equates with "Being"; the former he places in the primary category of "Plurality." Both Plato and Aristotle, by attempting to contain the implications of difference by listing it as an element within a definite system of opposed terms, fail to recognize that difference must be logically prior to that system: for it is already presupposed as the possibility of alleged primary differentiations such as "Being/Not-Being" and "Unity/Plurality."

The critique of the metaphysics of essence and identity in Western thought, and the recognition of the significance of difference, has been developed and extended in extremely important directions in the work of **Hegel**, **Nietzsche**, **Freud**, and Marx, among others. Poststructuralism and deconstruction have also been deeply informed by structural linguistics, particularly the groundbreaking work of Ferdinand de **Saussure**, both as a development of and a critical reaction to its principles (see **linguistics**; **structuralism**). Saussure, through his theory of language, effectively radicalized much Western thinking, not only in linguistics but in fields such as anthropology, political theory, and philosophy. The crucial recognition of his theory was precisely that difference is the fundamental feature of a language system; thus language must be studied as a differentially articulated whole, a closed network of differential and oppositional relations between its component terms. Since the terms of a language system only have value and function in dependence upon relations of difference, they are fundamentally negative in nature; a conclusion that profoundly reverses assumptions about essence, identity, and meaning.

Particularly in his later thinking, Martin **Heidegger** suggests a way to a profound assimilation of fundamental difference without recourse to the logically derivative notions of identity or of metaphysical Being. The (ontological) difference between Being and beings need not be thought in terms of the opposition between identity and difference, nor even of difference as a kind of primal engine of "plurality" articulating a metaphysical ground of "unity." Rather, the identity of beings and the identity of Being, just like the (ontological) difference between Being and beings and the (ontic) difference between beings, are thought as their free "belonging together" in "the Same," a term which Heidegger traces back to

Parmenides. This does not make of the Same just another name for a metaphysical ground because the Same is precisely the *belonging together* of identity and difference, and therefore cannot be thought in terms of identity and difference. Although the implications of Heidegger's thinking of difference in this particular context precede Derrida's thought, and although Derrida claims to have gone beyond the latent limitations of Heidegger's metaphysics, there is an important sense in which Heidegger's thinking of the Same may complement and complete Derrida's thinking of difference in a non-metaphysical mode that is closely akin to certain "Eastern" thinking (for example, that of Zen Buddhism).

Derrida indicates his thinking of difference by producing the term *différance*, which in French superimposes the two senses of the verb "to differ" (*différer*): "to differ" and "to defer." In this way, the term *différance* attempts to name the fact that our cognitive (that is, perceptual and intellectual) experience of being in the world is fundamentally generated as a dynamic process of differentiation; and that the irreducible mode of this differentiation is one of "timing" (deferring) and "spacing" (differing) as mutually inter-dependent aspects of the same process (and not as metaphysical substances, "space" and "time").

Derrida's thinking of difference has been interpreted largely in terms of language, given his deconstructive emphasis on textuality, and its radical philosophical significance has consequently been understated. The notion of *différance* clears the way to a non-metaphysical and critical insight into our mode of cognition and recovers a thinking of difference which, while it has repeatedly recurred in the history of Western thought, has been effectively repressed by a metaphysics of essence saturating every dimension of Western culture.

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KHRISTOS NIZAMIS

differend, the

The differend (*le différend*) is a term used by the late French philosopher and cultural theorist Jean-François **Lyotard** to describe irresolvable disputes among phrase regimes (language-games) in the absence of regulating grand narratives. For post-structuralist and postmodern thinkers, the linguistic turn inaugurated by Ferdinand de **Saussure** makes the sovereignty of the sign, as well as the self-sufficiency of concepts and ideas, impossible. A sign is dependent upon the oppositional differences within a signifying system. Because there are, as Saussure indicates in his text *Course in General Linguistics*, "only differences with no positive terms," a metaphysics of presence in the sign to which all its attributes adhere is inverted, leaving the meaning of signs as a function of an oppositional system. This oppositional sign-system predicated upon a radical heterogeneity of language results in the dismantling of self-legitimating discourses that accumulate as transcendent values of meaning and truth.

While an oppositional sign-system makes possible Saussure's linguistic turn, leading to poststructuralism in general, it does not complete the postmodern turn that Lyotard recognizes in inventing the differend. For Lyotard, the differend arises more from Wittgenstein's linguistic turn and Kant's notion of reflective judgment in the absence of criteria, than it does from Saussure's linguistics. Signs for Wittgenstein achieve meaning in context, in language-games. Lyotard views these language-games as creating the conditions for discrete genres of discourse, phrase regimes. The problem that Lyotard identifies is that one may posit an infinite number of contexts, language-games, around any given event. The differend, for Lyotard, maintains difference as heterogeneity, not mere opposition.

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dissemination

Jacques **Derrida**, who introduced the term, has said of it: "In the last analysis *dissemination* means nothing, and cannot be reassembled into a definition ... the force and form of its disruption *explode* the semantic horizon ... It marks an irreducible and *generative* multiplicity" (1981a: 44–5). Like Derrida's term *différance*, "dissemination" cannot simply be defined precisely because it names the process by which "meaning" is generated without ever strictly being fixed or given in the way that a definition is supposed to do (see **difference**). The conventional sense of the term, "to distribute, scatter about, diffuse," suggests the process by which, in language, the meaning of any term or set of terms is distributed and diffused throughout the language system without ever coming to a final end. The word derives from the Latin *dissēmināre*, from *dis-*, apart, and *sēmināre*, to sow, from *sēmen* seed. Derrida plays on this sense of reproductive fertility: a kind of self-seeding function of language and **discourse**.

Dissemination is intimately implicated with two Derridean notions: difference (or *différance*) and the **trace**. It can be understood as operating at two interrelated levels, or with two extensions of sense. Of these, the wider in scope is the one that is associated primarily with notions of **textuality**, **intertextuality**, and **text**, but also with that of **discourse**. The narrower in scope is associated more specifically with the poststructural displacement or transformation of structural linguistics and **semiotics** (see **poststructuralism, structuralism, linguistics, Saussure, Ferdinand**).

The textual-discursive sense of dissemination may be described as operating at the general and higher order level of culture: that is, shared public systems or networks of signification, or, to use another vocabulary, large-scale discursive formations and institutions, comprising a general economy of meanings and values thoroughly implicated with the political-economic structures and practices of a given culture. At this higher order level of organization, one is concerned not with shared public language as such, but with more complex and institutionalized social structures and practices built up on the basis of language and its use (see **Foucault, Michel**).

The linguistic or semiotic sense of dissemination may be described as operating at the still more specific and lower order level of signification associated with language as such: that is, the economy of processes by which "meanings" and "concepts" are generated within a systematic network of differentiations, where the different yet related traces of the differential process are defined, in the poststructural paradigm, by the notion of the signifier, while the structuralist notions of the signified, and hence also of the sign, are rejected as unnecessary and incoherent remnants of the Western obsession with what Derrida termed the **metaphysics of presence** (see **semiosis, Kristeva, Julia**).

In practice, however, the textual-discursive and the linguistic-semiotic senses of dissemination cannot be understood in isolation from one another, and mutually determine one another. Derrida's text *Dissemination* (1981b), when considered from this perspective, is a deliberate if rather idiosyncratic exploration of the mutually determining relations between these two senses and

orders of dissemination, and of how these relations may constitute the historical genealogy of a culture and the networks of meaning (the circuits of signification) by which it both restrains, reiterates, and regenerates its identity (see ***pharmakon***).

A popular but often misconstrued analogy of the linguistic-semiotic sense of dissemination, and hence of both difference and the trace, is that of a dictionary. The analogy is typically misunderstood, and in consequence wrongly criticized, because it is mistaken to be a direct *example* of dissemination and difference, rather than an analogy. Dissemination and difference are best thought as fluid processes, not rigid structures. Dictionaries are structured products of the processes of difference and dissemination, and not examples of those processes themselves. A dictionary, even if it contained every possible word of a given language, is not a language, nor even the reserve or the system of a language. The notion of dissemination is important not least because it implies an alternative model of language as a dynamic process in which the self-perpetuating cognitive event of language is finally all that a language is; and thus the notion of dissemination pulls decisively away from static, substantialist models of language (see **arche-writing**).

What is attractive about the analogy of the dictionary is the fact that, at one level of description, a dictionary is an entirely self-referential system of inscriptions. Every word in the dictionary is defined in that same dictionary; every word to be found in the definition of any word will also be defined in that same dictionary; and so on in an infinite regress, an infinite deferral of definition, that is nevertheless a closed and finite system of differential inscriptions. The network of connections between words (that is, signifiers, traces, events) could be mapped as an extremely complex and convoluted tree structure that everywhere connects only with itself, supporting itself and perpetuating itself precisely by differencing itself along the nervures and nodes of its signifiers.

Furthermore, nothing will ever be found in a dictionary other than signifiers referring, and thus deferring, to other signifiers. This fact in itself is a concrete analogy of the non-presentable function of difference both as the *spacing*, the manifest spatial

interval, between signifiers, and as the *timing* of signification. That is, the movement along the dendritic nervures that link signifiers to signifiers is precisely the timing (the temporalization) of the spacing (the spatial interval or spatialization) of the signifiers constituting the differential system of language. Reciprocally, however, spacing is also dependent upon timing, given that a signifier is not a self-existing "thing," but nothing other than a trace (hence, an event) dependent upon its differential relations to other such traces (signifiers, events).

In terms of the displacement of the structuralist paradigm by the poststructuralist/deconstructionist one, the fact that, in the analogy of the dictionary, only signifiers will ever be found, is taken to support the related principle that signifieds, that is, "meanings" or "concepts", are nowhere to be found and do not exist. In the analogy, if the term to be defined is understood as a signifier, and the definition is understood as the signified or concept, then it is obvious that the signified is nothing other than an aggregate of signifiers. Each of these in turn will not possess a signified or concept, but can only be connected to yet more aggregates of signifiers; and so on *ad infinitum*, but only ever within a finite, closed system. There is no final, fixed, transcendental signified to be found in the pathways and processes of such a system; and this result too is a fundamental aspect of dissemination.

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KHRISTOS NIZAMIS

O

opacity

The term "opacity" can refer either to reference and meaning or to mind. As it is used to characterize meaning and reference, the term means that the referent of a given word is inscrutable, and cannot be uniquely determined, even by ostension. This claim gives rise to the problem of the indeterminacy of translation, discussed most famously in Anglo-American analytical philosophy by W.V. Quine and Donald Davidson. Quine argued that words had meaning only within a complete theory of "going concerns," and even ostension failed to define a term without such a theoretical background. Davidson argued that translation could only take place with reference to the translator's theoretical commitments and beliefs, and that any translation had to assume that the majority of the translated beliefs were true. On this basis, Davidson argued against the claim that beliefs were relative to conceptual schemes, since one could not make sense of conceptual schemes that were completely alien to one's own conceptual background.

The understanding of the mind as opaque is a response to the Cartesian understanding of the mind as transparent to itself. According to the Cartesian understanding of mind, one could access, through introspection, all the contents of consciousness, and those beliefs, intentions, and perceptions could easily be separated from each other and inspected. Freud's psychoanalytic theories called into question this understanding of the mind by postulating the subconscious as a part of the mind that influenced beliefs and desires, yet remained inaccessible or (at best) partially accessible.

See also: Freud, Sigmund

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opposition

The term "opposition" has two important technical uses: strict **binary opposition** and multiple or systemic opposition. In the former case, two mutually exclusive but mutually defining items are opposed *conceptually* to one another and therefore belong to one another, and cannot be opposed, according to conventions of sense, to any other item within the system (such as "good/bad," but not "good/wet"). However, cultural systems tend to relate such binary items into characteristic sets of implied affinity (such as "good/bad," "pure/ impure," "rational/irrational," and so on).

In the latter case, "opposition" names the *functional* relation between any item in a system and all the other items which that system comprises. No one item of a system can possess, in and of itself, a value and signification, nor can it even function as an item within such a system, except in dependence upon its relations to all the other items to which it stands opposed (spatially and temporally). In the linguistic example, the item "good" stands in *structural* and *differential* opposition to other possible (written) items such as "food," "hood," "mood," "rood," or "wood"; and to other items of the system in any particular context in which it occurs (such as in this sentence).

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KHRISTOS NIZAMIS

original intent

Original intent is the legal theory advocating recovery of the intention of the framers of the United States Constitution as a basis for current constitutional interpretation. In the mid-1980s, as **postmodernism** and **poststructuralism** questioned the conceptual value of "originality" and "intentionality," a public debate resurfaced in the United States over the role of original meaning in constitutional interpretation and the place of the judiciary in making policy. The public debate coincided with academic interest in the relations between law, literature, **history**, and theory, generating an ongoing interdisciplinary discussion encompassing practical and normative issues. Scholars divide over what kind of intention should count as original, over the recoverability of historical intentions, and over the ideological implications of allowing original intentions to govern current interpretation.

"Originalism" takes multiple forms. Some conservatives, most notably Robert Bork, maintain

that only a return to "original understanding" can prevent activist judges from "rewriting" the Constitution, while others, such as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, advocate "textualism," a theory that ignores intention in favor of the original plain meaning of the text. Legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin has offered a liberal version of originalism by distinguishing different levels of intention. In Dworkin's view, a moral reading of the Constitution discovers what the framers intended to say, while an immoral originalism reveals merely what they expected their language to do.

Legal and political historians challenge some of originalism's historical assumptions. Citing the repudiation of framer's intent by prominent framers, some historians contend that originalism cannot be justified on its own terms, while others maintain that the intention of the Constitution's ratifiers formed some part of the original intention. Jack Rakove, a historian of the constitutional era, argues that originalism discounts the dynamic, experimental quality of the Constitution in favor of a static text. For Rakove, the structure of the ratification debates (where the Constitution could only be adopted or rejected in its entirety) makes a hunt for the original meaning of individual clauses an imprecise exercise.

Literary scholars' contributions have focused on the problem of intention. While some critics advocate formalist readings, others advance interpretations grounded in Gadamerian **hermeneutics** or the **indeterminacy** of **deconstruction**. Stanley **Fish**'s provocative claim that "originalism" and "interpretation" are two names for the same thing draws strength from Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, who argue that texts mean only what their authors intended since "meaning" and "intention" are identical. For Knapp and Michaels, the term "equal" in the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) means what its authors "intended" but not what they "believed." Even if the amendment's framers and ratifiers believed segregated schooling could achieve their intention of equal protection, current justices who find those intentions and beliefs at odds should declare segregated schooling unconstitutional (as the Court did in 1954). While Knapp and Michaels's description of authorial intention

sexual organs which leaves an indelible trace in their unconscious.

The Freud–Jones debate was revisited in the 1960s in France around J. Chasseguet-Smirgel's *Sexualité féminine* (1964) and **Lacan**'s rereading of Freud in *Ecrits* (1966). Their important although still controversial contribution aims at separating conceptually the phallus and the penian organ: the phallus is a penis only in so far as it is a representative of cultural values and societal ideals; penis envy is that of an idealized penis and a necessity for some women to maintain the phallic prestige of their "fallen" fathers; the phallus plays the part of the inaccessible term needed to salvage their desire.

In the midst of the 1970s women's movement, Juliet Mitchell with *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), Luce Irigaray with *This Sex Which is not One* (1977), in particular, place the Freud–Jones debate in the political and in the linguistic arenas. French philosophers and psychoanalysts (**Derrida**, **Cixous**, **Kristeva**, and others) used the term "phallocentrism" in the broader meaning of practices which place the phallus as controlling signifier in the "always-gendered" language and metaphysics of Western thought (Derrida coins the term "phallogocentrism" to articulate it to the question of **discourse**). Language itself becomes the site of resistance where phallocentric laws of "male Reason" and grammar can be subverted. The works of *écriture féminine* by French writers and theoreticians from both sides of the Atlantic aim at founding a non-phallic logic where a quasi innate femininity rooted in an embodied imagination can express itself in a new language.

See also: difference; *jouissance*; logocentrism; speculum

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pharmakon

A *pharmakon*, in the Greek language, is a drug, either healing or harmful: a medicine; a poison; an enchanted potion, hence a charm or spell; and also a dye or paint. The term *pharmakon*, as Jacques **Derrida** deploys it in a deconstructive analysis, derives in the first instance from Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, although Derrida follows up an array of further connections and contexts in which the term and its variants occur in other Platonic dialogues. Derrida finds the term *pharmakon* of interest precisely because of its ambivalence: the fact that its signification and its value can shift and change according to context and textual motivation; and because, in *Phaedrus*, this ambivalent *pharmakon* is used as a device to define and evaluate the technology of writing.

Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination* (London, 1981), is an extended intervention seeking to unravel a prime classical example of what Derrida claimed to be the hierarchical valuation of speech over writing (phonocentrism) in Western culture; a valuation which he takes to be symptomatic of a Western **metaphysics of presence** in general. That is, speech is held to contain and present its meaning immediately, purely, and essentially. Speech is "alive," as the character of Socrates in *Phaedrus* puts it: the living inscription of the *logos* in the soul. Writing, on the other hand, is "dead" and disembodied: the mere graphic record and remnant of speech, unable to engage in dialogue, to respond to questions, and no longer located within the soul.

Derrida seeks to map out and disclose how what seems to be one "word" or "concept," the *pharmakon*, by a powerful and yet discreet economy of **dissemination**, implicates the entire repertoire of Western philosophy's concepts, questions, and problems; and thereby also the defining features of Western culture in general.

The undecidability of the value of the *pharmakon* – whether it is good/evil, genuine/spurious, life/death, serious/playful, etc. – is an effect of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of pinning down its essence: that is, its truth. One minor but significant historical symptom of this difficulty has been the problem of translating the term into other languages. As Derrida points out, however, this

difficulty is already a difficulty in the translation of Greek to Greek in Plato first of all: that is, in translating a non-philosophical term into a philosophical one.

The dialogue *Phaedrus* is a teaching on the difference between "true, living speech" and "false, dead writing," among other things: the difference between the speech of those who know and speak the truth, and those who do not know but merely write speeches that are simulacra of true speech, such as sophists, orators, politicians, and lawyers. This difference is founded upon the difference, on the one hand, between dialectics and philosophy, and, on the other, mere rhetorical craft: the former has the essence of truth and knowledge as its goal, the latter has merely the appearance of truth, that is, mere probabilities, and persuasion as its goal. Thus the distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy is entangled with the question of the nature and value of writing and of written discourse.

Writing is explicitly equated in *Phaedrus* with the *pharmakon*, and it is the undecidability of the value of writing that is in question. In Plato's pseudo-Egyptian myth, the god Theuth, the inventor of writing, presents his brainchild to the god Thamus for judgment. Theuth calls his invention a *pharmakon* of memory, but Thamus criticizes it as a *pharmakon* of forgetfulness. This is the first explicit attempt of the text to pass judgment, and so to control and restrain, the ambivalence of writing as *pharmakon*. From this preliminary condemnation in "mythic" form, the discourse moves on to a condemnation in "philosophical" form, in which dialectic is set down as the natural opposite of rhetoric, and writing is situated as no more than an external supplement to internal memory and knowledge.

Not only does the *pharmakon* oscillate between positive and negative values, it also broaches and breaches the boundary that the discourse attempts to delineate between the "inside" of philosophy and the "outside" of non-philosophy. The *pharmakon*, purportedly as a "metaphor," is assimilated and translated into the language of philosophy in order to make a philosophical point about the nature and value of writing in relation to philosophical practice. Yet it necessarily brings with it all of its ambiguous and rich connections to the "other" fields of human activity with which it is implicated (e.g., medicine, art, magic, myth, religion): and in doing so, it unravels and frays the attempt to define the internal rational purity of philosophy and of philosophical method and truth.

The "metaphor" of the *pharmakon* is used by Plato to display that whatever is undecidable is irrational and does not belong to philosophy; but the dangerous irony of his strategy is that it relies precisely on the attempt to utilize that uncertain, unstable *pharmakon* to establish a certain and stable philosophical distinction. This distinction is not a minor one, given that it is, in essence, a crucial act of self-definition: the *pharmakon* is to mark the difference between true philosophy and its "Other."

The superficial irony of the situation is that *Phaedrus* is itself a written text, albeit a philosophical one; but it provides its own manifest proviso in defence of philosophical writing. Writing is an "all-beautiful amusement," but not to be taken too seriously. It is justified if it assists the philosopher to teach and to lead others to the truth, but it must openly be discredited by the writing philosopher as, in itself, of little worth. This would have been a reasonable excuse for the *Phaedrus* as a written philosophical text; but Derrida identifies a peculiar twist in the logic of its discourse. First, there is by no means any clear separation, in the arguments constituting the discourse, between an essential rational content and a non-essential rhetorical form. Socrates's arguments comprise a weave of tropes, metaphors, analogies, and even invented myths; and this would have been the case even if Socrates had happened to be an analytic philosopher utilizing the myth of a logical notation that is capable of translating ordinary language arguments into a "pure" logical form.

Second, when at the end of the day the character of Socrates gets to the essence of the matter and draws the final "philosophical" distinction between the philosopher and the non-philosopher, and thereby puts "writing" (the *pharmakon*) in its place in relation to "speech," it is precisely the metaphor of writing to which Plato has recourse. True speech is the living and breathing *logos* of one who knows: it is truth writing itself in the soul of the speaker as rational thought (*logos*) that can be expressed as speech (*logos*),

whether it assumes the forms of myth, metaphor, or dialectic (if such a distinction were even possible). Furthermore, the true philosopher teaches the learner by means of an inner writing of true words and speeches in the soul of the learner. This pedagogical procedure is also described in terms of a sowing of seed in suitable soil that will, in turn, yield new seed to be planted in yet other souls, and so on in an eternal and immortal process.

Just when writing has been exteriorized, devalued, and restrained in the name of dialectical philosophy, it returns as the fundamental metaphor characterizing the very source, essence, and secret of philosophical truth. Although this second writing is entirely an interiorized and immaterial one (it has no graphic marks, no dye nor ink, no papyrus), the very fact that Plato can find no other analogy, no other rhetorical device of logical equivalence, with which to speak/write the truth of philosophy, immediately jeopardizes the boundary between the interior and exterior of philosophy. The *pharmakon*, as remedy/poison, has certainly done its work well: for inner writing has been set up as the opposite of outer writing, and speech has become their go-between; and if writing is the *pharmakon*, then outer writing as the maleficent *pharmakon* finds itself opposed to inner writing as the beneficent *pharmakon*. It would appear that Derrida concludes that the *pharmakon* has thereby got the better of Plato; but one may still wonder whether, perhaps, Plato may have got the better of Derrida.

Further reading

Derrida, Jacques (1981) "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson, London: The Athlone Press.

Plato (1947), *Phaedrus*, trans. H.N. Fowler, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Loeb Classical Library.

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phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical method, given definitive form by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), based on the reduction of the physical world to its manifestations in and for consciousness, in the hope of arriving at a purely "scientific" or "presuppositionless" philosophy. To accomplish this, one must suspend all judgment concerning a supposed objective world and focus strictly on the phenomena (mental presentations) by which we come to know a world. Husserl calls this the "eidetic" reduction, for it reduces the world to its "ideas." This reduction coincides with the discovery that all consciousness is "intentional," that is, always tending or "stretching" toward objects given in the world. The other, more common meaning of "intention" also comes into play, for the subject not only stretches toward the object but predetermines its mode of appearing by intending to view it in a certain way. Thus the sensation of a cool breeze that accompanies my viewing of a certain boat is already present potentially in my mind, and is later actualized in my experience of viewing that boat. The eidetic reduction, however, is only a first step. The phenomenologist must make a further, "transcendental," reduction to the pure or unmediated ego. This transcendental ego is the preconscious grounding of the conscious, "worldly" subject, and determines the intentional presentation of the world.

The transcendental ego theory is a necessary consequence of Husserl's quest for a "presuppositionless" philosophy. He questions, in the *Paris Lectures* (1964), the usefulness of the world as "the truly ultimate basis for judgement," and suggests that its existence may presuppose "a prior ground of being" (1964: 47). This "prior ground of being" can only be understood as a sort of "governing" or determining preconsciousness; perhaps even a "source." Unlike Sartre who, in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1960) asserted that "nothing but consciousness can be the source of consciousness" (Sartre 1960: 52), Husserl espied consciousness's source in an articulating pre-cognitive "intelligence," if you will, based on his view that "I and my life remain – in my sense of reality – untouched by whichever way we decide the issue of whether the world is or is not" (Husserl 1964: 50). At first glance this may seem a lapse into solipsism, but Husserl nevertheless develops, in his *Cartesian Meditations* (1960), an elegant theory of the other based on his notion of a "transcendental 'We.'"