

Who reminds us that Socrates' brand of magic is worked through *logos* without the aid of any instrument, through the effects of a voice without accessories, without the flute of the satyr Marsyas:

And aren't you a piper as well? I should think you were—and a far more wonderful piper than Marsyas, who had only to put his flute to his lips to bewitch mankind. . . . His tunes will still have a magic power, and by virtue of their own divinity they will show which of us are fit subjects for divine initiation. Now the only difference, Socrates, between you and Marsyas is that you can get just the same effect without any instrument at all (*aneu organōn*)—with nothing but a few simple words (*psilois logos⁵¹*). . . ." (215c–d)

When confronted with this simple, organless voice, one cannot escape its penetration by stopping up one's ears, like Ulysses trying to block out the Sirens (216a).

The Socratic *pharmakon* also acts like venom, like the bite of a poisonous snake (217–18). And Socrates' bite is worse than a snake's since its traces invade the soul. What Socrates' words and the viper's venom have in common, in any case, is their ability to penetrate and make off with the most concealed interiority of the body or soul. The demonic speech of this thaumaturge (en)trains the listener in dionysian frenzy and philosophic *mania* (218b). And when they don't act like the venom of a snake, Socrates' pharmaceutical charms provoke a kind of *narcosis*, numbing and paralyzing into *aporia*, like the touch of a sting ray (*narkē*):

Meno: Socrates, even before I met you they told me that in plain truth you are a perplexed man yourself and reduce others to perplexity. At this moment I feel you are exercising magic and witchcraft upon me and positively laying me under your spell until I am just a mass of helplessness (*goēteueis me kai pharmatteis kai atekhnōs karepaidēs, hōste meston aporias gegonenai*). If I may be flippant, I think that not only in outward appearance (*eidōs*) but in other respects as well you are exactly like the flat stingray (*narkē*) that one meets in the sea. Whenever anyone comes into contact with it, it numbs him, and that is the sort of thing that you seem to be doing to me now. My mind and my lips are literally numb, and I have nothing to reply to you. . . . In my opinion you are well advised not to leave Athens and live abroad. If

51. "Bare, ungarnished voice, etc.": *psilos logos* also has the sense of abstract argument or simple affirmation without proof (cf. *Theaetetus*, 165e).

you behaved like this as a foreigner in another country, you would most likely be arrested as a wizard (*goēs*). (*Meno*, 80a–b)

Socrates arrested as a wizard (*goēs* or *pharmakeus*): that will have to wait.

What can be said about this *analogy* that ceaselessly refers the socratic *pharmakon* to the sophistic *pharmakon* and, proportioning them to each other, makes us go back indefinitely from one to the other? How can they be distinguished?

Irony does not consist in the dissolution of a sophistic charm or in the dismantling of an occult substance or power through analysis and questioning. It does not consist in undoing the charlatanesque confidence of a *pharmakeus* from the vantage point of some obstinate instance of transparent reason or innocent *logos*. Socratic irony precipitates out one *pharmakon* by bringing it in contact with another *pharmakon*. Or rather, it reverses the *pharmakon's* powers and turns *its* surface over⁵²—thus taking effect, being recorded and dated, in the act of *classing* the *pharmakon*, through the fact that the *pharmakon* properly consists in a certain inconsistency, a certain impropriety, this nonidentity-with-itself always allowing it to be turned against itself.

What is at stake in this overturning is no less than science and death. Which are consigned to a single type in the structure of the *pharmakon*, the one and only name for that potion that must be awaited. And even, in Socrates' case, deserved.

52. Alternately and/or all at once, the Socratic *pharmakon* petrifies and vivifies, anesthetizes and sensitizes, appeases and anguishes. Socrates is a numbing stingray but also an animal that needles: we recall the bee in the *Phaedo* (91c); later we will open the *Apology* at the point where Socrates compares himself precisely to a gadfly. This whole Socratic configuration thus composes a bestiary. Is it surprising that the demonic inscribes itself in a bestiary? It is on the basis of this zoopharmaceutical ambivalence and of that other Socratic *analogy* that the contours of the *antbrōpos* are determined.

II

The use Socrates makes of the *pharmakon* does not have as its goal the guaranteeing of the *pharmakeus*' power. The technique of infiltration or paralysis can even eventually be turned against its user although one must always, in the symptomatological manner of Nietzsche, be careful to diagnose the *economy*, the investment and deferred benefit behind the sign of pure renunciation or the *bidding* of disinterested sacrifice.

The nakedness of the *pharmakon*, the blunt bare voice (*psilos logos*), carries with it a certain mastery in the dialogue, on the condition that Socrates overtly renounce its benefits: knowledge as power, passion, pleasure. On the condition, in a word, that he consent to die. The death of the body, at least: that is the price that must be paid for *alētheia* and the *epistēmē*, which are also powers.

The fear of death is what gives all witchcraft, all occult medicine, a hold. The *pharmakeus* is banking on that fear. Hence the Socratic pharmacy, in working to free us from it, corresponds to an operation of *exorcism*, in a form that could be envisaged and conducted from the side and viewpoint of God. After wondering whether some God had given men a drug to induce fear (*phobou pharmakon*), the Athenian of the *Laws* dismisses the idea: "Let's repeat the point we were making to the legislator: 'Agreed then: there is probably no such thing as a drug (*pharmakon*) to produce fear, either by gift or human contrivance (I leave quacks (*goētas*) out of account: they're beyond the pale). But is there a drink that will produce a lack of fear (*aphobias*) and stimulate overconfidence about the wrong thing at the wrong moment? What do we say to this?'" (649a).

It is the child in us that is afraid. The charlatans will all disappear when the "little boy within us" no longer fears death as he fears a *mormolukeion*, a scarecrow set up to frighten children, a bogeyman. And incantations must be redoubled daily in order to free the child from this fantasy: "Cebes: Probably even in us there is a little boy who has these childish terrors. Try to

persuade him not to be afraid of death as though it were a bogey.—What you should do, said Socrates, is to say a magic spell over him every day until you have charmed his fears away.—But, Socrates, said Simmias, where shall we find a magician (*epōdon*) who understands these spells now that you are leaving us?" (*Phaedo*, 77e). In the *Crito*, too, Socrates refuses to give in to the people who "conjure up fresh hordes of bogeys to terrify our childish minds, by subjecting us to chains and executions and confiscations of our property" (46c).

The counterspell, the exorcism, the antidote, is dialectics. In answer to Cebes, Socrates recommends seeking not only a magician but also—the surest incantation—training in dialectics: "Seek for him among all peoples, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of spending your money. And you must seek among yourselves, too; for you will not find others better suited for the task" (*Phaedo*, 78a–b).

To seek "among yourselves" by mutual questioning and self-examination, to seek to know oneself through the detour of the language of the other, such is the undertaking presented by Socrates, who recalls the Delphic inscription (*tu Delphikou grammatos*), to Alcibiades as the antidote (*alexipharmakon*), the counterpotion. In the text of the *Laws* which we left off quoting earlier, when the necessity of the letter has been firmly laid down, the introjection or internalization of the *grammata* into the judge's soul—their most secure dwelling-place—is then prescribed as an antidote. Let us pick up the thread of the text again:

He that would show himself a righteously equal judge must keep these matters before his eyes; he must procure books on the subject, and must make them his study. There is, in truth, no study whatsoever so potent as this of law, if the law be what it should be, to make a better man of its student—else 'twould be for nothing that the law which so stirs our worship and wonder bears a name so cognate with that of understanding [*nomos/nous*]. Furthermore, consider all other discourse, poesy with its eulogies and its satires, or utterances in prose, whether in literature or in the common converse of daily life, with their contentious disagreements and their too often unmeaning admissions. The one certain touchstone of all is the writings of the legislator (*ta tou nomothetou grammata*). The good judge will possess those writings within his own soul (*ha dei kektēmenon en hautōi*) as antidotes (*alexipharmaka*) against other discourse, and thus he will be the state's preserver as well as his own. He will secure in the good the retention and increase of their rectitude, and in the evil, or those of them whose

vicious principles admit remedy, will promote, so far as he can, conversion from folly, from profligacy, from cowardice, in a word, from all forms of wrong. As for those who are fatally attached to such principles, if our judges and their superiors prescribe death as a cure (*iama*) for a soul in that state, they will, as has been more than once said already, deserve the praise of the community for their conduct (XII, 957c–958a; emphasis mine).

Anamnestic dialectics, as the repetition of the *eidos*, cannot be distinguished from self-knowledge and self-mastery. Those are the best forms of exorcism that can be applied against the terrors of the child faced with death and the quackery of the bogeyman. Philosophy consists of offering reassurance to children. That is, if one prefers, of taking them out of childhood, of forgetting about the child, or, inversely, but by the same token, of speaking first and foremost for that little boy within us, of teaching him to speak—to dialogue—by displacing his fear or his desire.

One could play at classifying, within the weave of the *Statesman* (280a ff), that species of protection (*amuntērion*) that is called dialectics and apprehended as a counter-poison. Among the things that can be called artificial (manufactured or acquired), the Stranger distinguishes those with the function of doing something (tending toward *poiein*) and those, called defenses (*amuntēria*), with the function of preventing suffering (*ou me paskhein*). Among the latter, one can distinguish (1) *antidotes* (*alexipharmaka*), which can be either human or divine (and dialectics is from this perspective the very antidoteness of the antidote in general, before any possibility of dividing it up between the human and the divine. Dialectics is precisely the passage between the two) and (2) *problems* (*problēmata*): what stands before one—obstacles, shelters, armor, shields, defenses. Leaving antidotes aside, the Stranger pursues the division of the *problēmata*, which can function either as armaments or as fences. The *fences* (*phragmata*) are screens or protections (*alexētēria*) against storm and heat; these *protections* can be housings or coverings; *coverings* can be spread below (like rugs) or wrapped around, etc. The process of division goes on through the different techniques for manufacturing these wraps until it reaches the woven garment and the art of weaving: the *problematic* space of protection. This art would thus rule out, if one follows the divisions literally, all recourse to antidotes, and consequently, to that species of antidote or inverted *pharmakon* constituted by dialectics. The text excludes dialectics. And yet, it will nevertheless be necessary later to distinguish between two sorts of texture, if one bears in mind that dialectics is also an art of weaving, a science of the *sumplokē*.

The dialectical inversion of the *pharmakon* or of the dangerous supplement makes death both acceptable and null. Acceptable because it is annulled. In making us welcome death, the immortality of the soul, which acts like an antibody, dissipates its terrifying fantasy. The inverted *pharmakon*, which scatters all the hobgoblins, is none other than the origin of the *epistēmē*, the opening to truth as the possibility of repetition and the submission of that "greed for life" (*epithumein zēn*, *Crito*, 53e) to law (the good, the father, the king, the chief, the capital, the sun, all of which are invisible). It is the laws themselves that, in the *Crito*, urge one not to "cling so greedily to life, at the price of violating the most stringent laws."

What indeed does Socrates say when Cebes and Simmias ask him to provide them with a magician? He urges them to practice the philosophic dialogue and seek its most worthy object: the truth of the *eidos* as that which is identical to itself, always the same as itself and therefore simple, incomposite (*asuntheton*), undecomposable, invariable (78c,e). The *eidos* is that which can always be repeated as *the same*. The ideality and invisibility of the *eidos* are its power-to-be-repeated. Now, law is always a law of repetition, and repetition is always submission to a law. In the personification of the Laws in the *Crito*, Socrates is called upon to accept both death and law *at once*. He is asked to recognize himself as the offspring, the son or representative (*ekgonos*) or even the slave (*doulos*) of the law that, in uniting his father and mother, made possible his birth. Violence is thus even more sacrilegious when it offends the law of the mother/country than when it wounds the father and mother (51c). This is why, say the Laws, Socrates must die in conformity with the law and within the confines of the city—Socrates, who was (almost) always reluctant to go outside:

Are you so wise as to have forgotten that compared with your mother and father and all the rest of your ancestors your country is something far more precious, more venerable, more sacred, and held in greater honor both among gods and among all reasonable men? . . . Violence is a sin even against your country. . . . Socrates, we have substantial evidence that you are satisfied with us and with the state (*polis*). You would not have been so exceptionally reluctant to cross the borders of your country (*polis*) if you had not been exceptionally attached to it. You have never left the city to attend a festival or for any other purpose, except on some military expedition. You have never traveled abroad as other people do, and you have never felt the impulse to acquaint yourself with another country or constitution. You have been content with us and with our city (*polis*). You have definitely chosen

us, and undertaken to observe us in all your activities as a citizen. (51a,c—51b-c)

The Socratic word does not wander, stays at home, is closely watched: within autochthony, within the city, within the law, under the surveillance of its mother tongue. This will take on its full significance further on, when writing will be described as errancy as such, mute vulnerability to all aggression. In nothing does writing reside.

The *eidos*, truth, law, the *epistēmē*, dialectics, philosophy—all these are other names for that *pharmakon* that must be opposed to the *pharmakon* of the Sophists and to the bewitching fear of death. It is *pharmakeus* against *pharmakeus*, *pharmakon* against *pharmakon*. This is why Socrates heeds the Laws as though, through their voices, he were under the power of an initiatic spell, a sonorous spell, then, or rather, a phonic spell, one that penetrates and carries away the inner courts of the soul. "That, my dear friend Crito, I do assure you, is what I seem to hear them saying, just as a Corybant seems to hear the strains of music, and the sound of their arguments (*hē ēkhē toutōn tōn logōn*) rings so loudly in my head that I cannot hear the other side" (54d). Those Corybants, that music, are evoked by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* in his efforts to describe the effects of the Socratic utterance: "the moment I hear him speak I am smitten with a kind of sacred rage, worse than any Corybant, and my heart jumps into my mouth" (215e).

The philosophical, epistemic order of *logos* as an antidote, as a force inscribed within the general alogical economy of the *pharmakon* is not something we are proposing here as a daring interpretation of Platonism. Let us, rather, look at the prayer that opens the *Critias*: "I call on the god to grant us that most effective medicine (*pharmakon teleōtaton*), that best of all medicines (*ariston pharmakōn*): knowledge (*epistēmēn*)." And one could also consider the astonishing dramatic staging of the first act of the *Charmides*. It should be followed moment by moment. Dazzled by the beauty of Charmides, Socrates wants above all to undress the soul of this young man who loves philosophy. Charmides is sent for so that he can be presented to a doctor (Socrates) who can relieve him of his headaches and his weakness. Socrates accepts to pass himself off as a man who knows a cure for headaches. There then ensues a "cloak" scene similar to the one in the *Phaedrus*, involving a certain *pharmakon*:

When Critias told him that I was the person who had the cure (*ho to pharmakon epistamenos*), he looked at me in an indescribable manner, and made as though to ask me a question. And all the people in the

palaestra crowded about us, and at that moment, my good friend, I glanced through the opening of his garment, and was inflamed by his beauty. Then I could no longer contain myself. . . . But still when he asked me if I knew the cure for the headache (*to tēs kephalēs pharmakon*) . . . I replied that it was a kind of leaf, which required to be accompanied by a charm (*epōdē de tis epi tōi pharmakōi*), and if a person would repeat the charm at the same time that he used the cure, he would be made whole, but that without the charm the leaf would be of no avail. —Then I will write out the charm from your dictation, he said (155d – 156a. Cf. also 175 – 176).⁵³

But the head cannot be cured separately. Good doctors take care of "the whole," and it is by caring for the whole that they have been inspired by a Thracian physician, "one of the physicians of the Thracian king Zalmoxis who are said to be able even to give immortality," Socrates shows that the whole of the body can only be cured at the source—the soul—of all its goods and evils. "And the cure of the soul, my dear youth, has to be effected by the use of certain charms (*epōdais tisin*), and these charms are fair words, and by them temperance (*sōphrosunēn*) is implanted in the soul, and where temperance comes and stays, there health is speedily imparted, not only to the head, but to the whole body" (157a). And the discussion turns to the essence of temperance, the best *pharmakon*, the capital cure.

Philosophy thus opposes to its other this transmutation of the drug into a remedy, of the poison into a counterpoison. Such an operation would not be possible if the *pharmako-logos* did not already harbor within itself that complicity of contrary values, and if the *pharmakon* in general were not, prior to any distinction -making, that which, presenting itself as a poison, may turn out to be a cure, may retrospectively reveal itself in the truth of its curative power. The "essence" of the *pharmakon* lies in the way in which, having no stable essence, no "proper" characteristics, it is not, in any sense

53. The reader will have noted that this scene makes a strange, inverse and symmetrical pendant to the one in the *Phaedrus*. It is inverted in that the unit which, under the cloak, allowed a text and a *pharmakon* to (e)merge is preinscribed in the *Phaedrus* (the *pharmakon* is the text already written by "the ablest writer of our day"), and only prescribed in the *Charmides* (the prescription for the *pharmakon* Socrates recommends must be taken down under his dictation). The Socratic prescription here is oral, and speech accompanies the *pharmakon* as the condition of its effectiveness. Within the thickness and depth of this scene, one should reread, from the middle of the *Statesman*, the critique of the written medical prescription, the "*hypomnēmata graphein*" whose rigidity does not allow it to adapt to the specificity and the progress of the disease: this is an illustration of the political problem of written laws. Like the doctor who comes back to visit his patient, the legislator must be able to modify his initial prescriptions (294a–297b; see also 298d–e).

(metaphysical, physical, chemical, alchemical) of the word, a *substance*. The *pharmakon* has no ideal identity; it is aneidetic, firstly because it is not monoeidetic (in the sense in which the *Phaedo* speaks of the *eidos* as something simple, noncomposite: *monoieides*). This "medicine" is not a simple thing. But neither is it a composite, a sensible or empirical *suntheton* partaking of several simple essences. It is rather the prior medium in which differentiation in general is produced, along with the opposition between the *eidos* and its other; this medium is *analogous* to the one that will, subsequent to and according to the decision of philosophy, be reserved for transcendental imagination, that "art hidden in the depths of the soul," which belongs neither simply to the sensible nor simply to the intelligible, neither simply to passivity nor simply to activity. The element-medium will always be analogous to a mixed-medium. In a certain way, Plato thought about and even formulated this ambivalence. But he did so in passing, incidentally, discreetly: in connection with the union of opposites within virtue, not the union of virtue with its opposite:

Stranger: But in those of noble nature from their earliest days whose nurture too has been all it should be, the laws can foster the growth of this common bond of conviction and only in these. This is the talisman (*pharmakon*) appointed for them by the design of pure intelligence. This most godlike bond alone can unite the elements of virtue which are diverse in nature and would else be opposing in tendency. (*Statesman*, 310a)

This pharmaceutical nonsubstance cannot be handled with complete security, neither in its being, since it has none, nor in its effects, the sense of which is always capable of changing. In this way, writing, touted by Theuth as a remedy, a beneficial drug, is later overturned and denounced by the king and then, in the king's place, by Socrates, as a harmful substance, a philter of forgetfulness. Inversely, and although in a less immediately readable manner, the hemlock, that potion which in the *Phaedo* is never called anything but a *pharmakon*,⁵⁴ is presented to Socrates as a poison; yet it is transformed, through the effects of the Socratic *logos* and of the philosophical demonstration in the *Phaedo*, into a means of deliverance, a way toward salvation, a cathartic power. The hemlock has an *ontological*

54. The opening lines of the dialogue are: "Echecrates: Were you there with Socrates yourself, Phaedo, when he drank the poison (*pharmakon*) in his cell?" (57a).

Near the end of the dialogue: "Socrates: . . . I prefer to have a bath before drinking the poison (*pharmakon*), rather than give the women the trouble of washing me when I am dead" (115a). Cf. also 117a.

effect: it initiates one into the contemplation of the *eidos* and the immortality of the soul." *That is how Socrates takes it.*

Is this crossed connection-making the result of mere artifice or play? There is certainly *play* in such a movement, and this chiasmus is authorized, even prescribed, by the ambivalence of the *pharmakon*. Not only by the polarity good/evil, but by the double participation in the distinct regions of the soul and the body, the invisible and the visible. This double participation, once again, does not mix together two previously separate elements; it refers back to a *same* that is not the identical, to the common element or medium of any possible dissociation. Thus, writing is *given* as the sensible, visible, spatial surrogate of the *mnēmē*; it later turns out to be harmful and numbing to the invisible interior of the soul, memory and truth. Inversely, the hemlock is given as a poison that harms and numbs the body. But it later turns out to be helpful to the soul, which it delivers from the body and awakens to the truth of the *eidos*. If the *pharmakon* is "ambivalent," it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). It is on the basis of this play or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped by Plato. The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. It is the difference of difference. It holds in reserve, in its undecided shadow and vigil, the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out. Contradictions and pairs of opposites are lifted from the bottom of this diacritical, differing, deferring, reserve. Already inhabited by difference, this reserve, even though it "precedes" the opposition between different effects, even though it preexists differences as effects, does not have the punctual simplicity of a *coincidentia oppositorum*. It is from this fund that dialectics draws its philosophemes. The *pharmakon*, without being anything in itself, always exceeds them in constituting their bottomless fund [*fonds sans fond*]. It keeps itself forever in reserve even though it has no fundamental pro-

55. One could therefore also consider the hemlock as a sort of *pharmakon* of immortality. Such an interpretation is invited by the ritual, ceremonial form with which the *Phaedo* closes (116b-c). In his "Festin d'immortalité" (*Esquisse d'une étude de mythologie comparée indo-européenne* 1924), G. Dumézil refers to certain "traces, in Athens, of a cycle of Theseus correlated with the Thargelia" (we will later have occasion to speak of a certain relation between the Thargelia and the birth and death of Socrates), and notes: "Neither Pherecydes nor Apollodorus has set down the rites that must have corresponded, in a certain district of Greece, to the story of the *pharmakon* of immortality desired by the *Gigantes*, and to that of the 'artificial Goddess,' *Athena*, who caused the Giants to lose their immortality" (p. 89).

fundity nor ultimate locality. We will watch it infinitely promise itself and endlessly vanish through concealed doorways that shine like mirrors and open onto a labyrinth. It is also this store of deep background that we are calling the *pharmacy*.

6. The Pharmakos

It is part of the rules of this game that the game should *seem to stop*. Then the *pharmakon*, which is older than either of the opposites, is "caught" by philosophy, by "Platonism" which is constituted by this apprehension, as a mixture of two pure, heterogeneous terms. And one could follow the word *pharmakon* as a guiding thread within the whole Platonic problematic of the mixture. Apprehended as a blend and an impurity, the *pharmakon* also acts like an aggressor or a housebreaker, threatening some internal purity and security. This definition is absolutely general and can be verified even in cases where such forced entries are valorized: the good remedy, Socratic irony, comes to disturb the intestinal organization of self-complacency. The purity of the inside can then only be restored if the *charges are brought home* against exteriority as a supplement, inessential yet harmful to the essence, a surplus that *ought* never to have come to be added to the untouched plenitude of the inside. The restoration of internal purity must thus reconstitute, *recite*—and this is myth as such, the *mythology* for example of a *logos* recounting its origin, going back to the eve of the pharmakographic aggression—that to which the *pharmakon* should not have had to be added and attached like a *literal parasite*: a *letter* installing itself inside a living organism to rob it of its *nourishment* and to *distort* [like static, = "*bruit parasite*"] the pure audibility of a voice. Such are the relations between the writing supplement and the *logos-zōon*. In order to cure the latter of the *pharmakon* and rid it of the parasite, it is thus necessary to put the outside back in its place. To keep the outside out. This is the inaugural gesture of "logic" itself, of good "sense" insofar as it accords with the self-identity of *that which is*: being is what it is, the outside is outside and the inside inside. Writing must thus return to being what it *should never have ceased to be*: an accessory, an accident, an excess.

The cure by *logos*, exorcism, and catharsis will thus eliminate the excess. But this elimination, being therapeutic in nature, must call upon the very thing it is expelling, the very surplus it is *putting out*. The pharmaceutical operation must therefore *exclude itself from itself*.

What does this mean about what (it is) to write?

Plato does not make a show of the chain of significations we are trying progressively to dig up. If there were any sense in asking such a question, which we don't believe, it would be impossible to say to what extent he manipulates it voluntarily or consciously, and at what point he is subject to constraints weighing upon his discourse from "language." The word "language," through all that binds it to everything we are putting in question here, is not of any pertinent assistance, and to follow the constraints of a language would not exclude the possibility that Plato is playing with them, even if his game is neither representative nor voluntary. It is in the back room, in the shadows of the pharmacy, prior to the oppositions between conscious and unconscious, freedom and constraint, voluntary and involuntary, speech and language, that these textual "operations" occur.

Plato seems to place no emphasis on the word *pharmakon* at the point where writing's effects swerve from positive to negative, when poison, under the eyes of the king, appears as the truth of the remedy. It is not said that the *pharmakon* is the locus, the support, and the executor of this mutation. Later—we will come to this—while expressly comparing writing to painting, Plato will not explicitly put this judgment together with the fact that elsewhere he refers to painting as a *pharmakon*. For in Greek, *pharmakon* also means paint, not a natural color but an artificial tint, a chemical dye that imitates the chromatic scale given in nature.

Yet all these significations nonetheless appear, and, more precisely, all these words appear in the text of "Plato." Only the chain is concealed, and, to an inappreciable extent, concealed from the author himself, if any such thing exists. One can say in any event that all the "pharmaceutical" words we have been pointing out do actually make an "act of presence," so to speak, in the text of the dialogues. Curiously, however, there is another of these words that, to our knowledge, is never used by Plato. If we line it up with the series *pharmakeia-pharmakon-pharmakeus*, we will no longer be able to content ourselves with reconstituting a chain that, for all its hiddenness, for all it might escape Plato's notice, is nevertheless something that passes through certain discoverable *points of presence* that can be seen in the text. The word to which we are now going to refer, which is present in the language and which points to an experience that was present in Greek culture even in Plato's day, seems strikingly absent from the "Platonic text."

But what does *absent* or *present* mean here? Like any text, the text of "Plato" couldn't not be involved, at least in a virtual, dynamic, lateral manner, with all the words that composed the system of the Greek language. Certain forces of association unite—at diverse distances, with

different strengths and according to disparate paths—the words “actually present” in a discourse with all the other words in the lexical system, whether or not they appear as “words,” that is, as relative verbal units in such discourse. They communicate with the totality of the lexicon through their syntactic play and at least through the subunits that compose what we call a word. For example, “pharmakon” is already in communication with all the words from the same family, with all the significations constructed out of the same root, and these communications do not stop there. The textual chain we must set back in place is thus no longer simply “internal” to Plato’s lexicon. But in going beyond the bounds of that lexicon, we are less interested in breaking through certain limits, with or without cause, than in putting in doubt the right to posit such limits in the first place. In a word, we do not believe that there exists, in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its outside. Not that one must then consider that it is leaking on all sides and can be drowned confusedly in the undifferentiated generality of its element. Rather, provided the articulations are rigorously and prudently recognized, one should simply be able to untangle the hidden forces of attraction linking a present word with an absent word in the text of Plato. Some such force, given the *system* of the language, cannot *not* have acted upon the writing and the reading of this text. With respect to the weight of such a force, the so-called “presence” of a quite relative verbal unit—the word—while not being a contingent accident worthy of no attention, nevertheless does not constitute the ultimate criterion and the utmost pertinence.

The circuit we are proposing is, moreover, all the more legitimate and easy since it leads to a word that can, on one of its faces, be considered the synonym, almost the homonym, of a word Plato “actually” used. The word in question is *pharmakos* (wizard, magician, poisoner), a synonym of *pharmakeus* (which Plato uses), but with the unique feature of having been overdetermined, overlaid by Greek culture with another function. Another *role*, and a formidable one.

The character of the *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city—these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual.

Harpocration, commenting on the word *pharmakos*, describes them thus: “At Athens they led out two men to be purifications for the city; it was at the Thargelia, one was for the men and the other for the women.”⁵⁶ In

56. The principal sources that enable us to describe the ritual of the *pharmakos* are collected in W. Mannhardt’s *Mythologische Forschungen* (1884). These sources are themselves referred to in particular by J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (New York: S. G. Phillips,

1959), pp. 540 ff; by J. E. Harrison in *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (New York: Meridian, 1903), pp. 95 ff, and in *Themis, a Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912, p. 416); by Nilsson in *History of Greek Religion* (1925), p. 27; and by P. M. Schuhl in *Essai sur la formation de la pensée grecque* (1934), pp. 36–37. One can also consult the chapter Marie Delcourt devoted to Oedipus in her *Légendes et culte des héros en Grèce* (1942), p. 101; see also by the same author, *Pyrrhos et Pyrrha: Recherches sur les valeurs du feu dans les légendes helléniques* (1965), p. 29, and especially *Oedipe ou la légende du conquérant* (1944), pp. 29–65.

This is doubtless the moment to point out, in connection with the clear necessity of bringing together the figures of Oedipus and the *pharmakos*, that, despite certain appearances, the discourse we are holding here is not in a strict sense a psychoanalytical one. This is true at least to the extent that we are drawing upon the same textual stores (Greek culture, language, tragedy, philosophy, etc.) which Freud had to begin by tapping and to which he never ceased to refer. It is precisely these stores, this fund, that we propose to interrogate here. This does not, however, mean that the distance we have thus taken with respect to a psychoanalytical discourse which might evolve naïvely within an insufficiently deciphered Greek text is of the same order as that maintained for example by Delcourt, *Légendes*, pp. 109, 113, etc.; or J. P. Vernant “Oedipe sans complexe,” in *Raison présente* (1967).

After the first publication of this text, there appeared the remarkable essay by J. P. Vernant, “Ambiguïté et renversement: sur la structure énigmatique d’Oedipe-Roi” in *Echanges et Communications, mélanges offerts à Claude Lévi-Strauss* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) [translated by Page du Bois as “Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex”, in *New Literary History* 10, no. 3 (1978)]. One can read, in particular, the following passage, which seems to confirm our hypothesis (cf. note 52): “How could the city admit into its heart one who, like Oedipus, ‘has shot his bolt beyond the others’ and has become *isotheos*? When it establishes ostracism, it creates an institution whose role is symmetrical to and the inverse of the ritual of the Thargelia. In the person of the ostracized, the city expels what in it is too elevated, what incarnates the evil which can come to it from above. In the evil of the *pharmakos*, it expels what is the vilest in itself, what incarnates the evil that menaces it from below. By this double and complementary rejection it delimits itself in relation to what is not yet known and what transcends the known: it takes the proper measure of the human in opposition on one side to the divine and heroic, on the other to the bestial and monstrous” [Eng. trans. pp. 491–92]. See also (notably on the *poikilon* which we will mention later) “La metis d’Antiloque,” *Revue des Etudes grecques*, January/December 1967, and “La metis du renard et du poulpe,” *ibid.* July/December 1969. An additional confirmation can be found in the *Oeuvres* of Marcel Mauss, which appeared in 1969. One can read the following:

“Moreover, all these ideas are double-faced. In other Indo-European languages, it is the notion of poison which is not certain. Kluge and the etymologists are right in comparing the *potio*, “Poison,” series with *gift*, *gift* [“gift,” which means “present” in English, means “poison” or “married” in other Germanic languages.—Trans.]. One can also read with interest the lively discussion by Aulus-Gellius (12) on the ambiguity of the Greek *pharmakon* and the Latin *venenum*. Indeed, the *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis et veneficis*, of which Cicero has fortunately preserved for us the actual “recitation,” still specifies *venenum malum* (13). The magic brew, the delectable charm (14), can be either good or bad. The Greek *philtion* is not necessarily a sinister word, either, and the potion of friendship or love is only dangerous if the enchanter so desires.”

(12) 12, 9, with apt quotations from Homer.

(13) *Pro Cluentio*, 148. In the *Digesta*, it is still recommended that one specify what sort of “venenum,” “bonus sive malum,” is intended.

(14) If the etymology linking *venenum* (see Walde, Lat. etym. Wört.) with Venus and the skr. *van*, *vanati* is correct, which seems probable.

(“Gift-gift” (1924), first published in *Mélanges offerts à Charles Andler par ses amis et élèves*, Istra, Strasbourg; in *Oeuvres* III, 50 (Editions de Minuit, 1969).)

general, the *pharmakoi* were put to death. But that, it seems,⁵⁷ was not the essential end of the operation. Death occurred most often as a secondary effect of an energetic fustigation. Aimed first at the genital organs.⁵⁸ Once the *pharmakoi* were cut off from the space of the city, the blows⁵⁹ were designed to chase away or draw out the evil from their bodies. Did they burn them, too, in order to achieve purification? In his *Thousand Histories*,

This brings us to *The Gift* [*L'Essai sur le don*], which refers to the above article:

"(*Gift, gift*: *Mélanges*. Ch. Andler, Strasburg, 1924.) We asked why we do not examine the etymology of *gift* as coming from the Latin *dosis*, Greek *δόσις*, a dose (of poison). It would suppose that High and Low German had retained a scientific word for a common event, and this is contrary to normal semantic rules. Moreover, one would have to explain the choice of the word *Gift*. Finally, the Latin and Greek *dosis*, meaning poison, shows that with the Ancients as well there was association of ideas and moral rules of the kind we are describing.

"We compare the uncertainty of the meaning of *Gift* with that of the Latin *venenum* and the Greek *φάρμακον* and *φάρμακον*. Cf. also *venia*, *venus*, *venenum*—*vanati* (Sanskrit, to give pleasure) and *gewinnen* and win." [trans. Ian Cunnison (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954), p. 127.]

57. Cf. Harrison, p. 104

58. "Similarly, the object of beating the human scapegoat on the genital organs with squills [a herbaceous, bulbous plant, sometimes grown for its pharmaceutical, esp. diuretic, properties] must have been to release his reproductive energies from any restraint or spell under which they might be laid by demoniacal or other malignant agency . . ." Frazer (1954 ed.), p. 541.

59. We recall the presumed etymology of *pharmakon/pharmakos*, detailed in E. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*. "*Pharmakon*: charm, philter, drug, remedy, poison. *Pharmakos*: magician, wizard, poisoner; the one sacrificed in expiation for the sins of a city (cf. Hipponax; Aristophanes), hence, rascal; **pharmassō*: Attic, *-itō*, work on or alter by means of a drug.

*Havers, *Indogermanische Forschungen* XXV, 375–92, on the basis of the relation *parem-pharaktos: parakekammenoi*, derives *pharmakon* from *pharma*: "blow," and the latter from *R. bber*: to strike, cf. Lith. *buriu*, so that *pharmakon* can be said to signify: "that which pertains to an attack of demonic possession or is used as a curative against such an attack," given the common popular belief that illnesses are caused by the doings of demons and cured in the same way. Kretschmer Glotta III, 388 ff, objects that *pharmakon*, in epic, always designates a substance, an herb, a lotion, a drink, or other matter, but not the act of healing, charming, or poisoning; Havers' etymology adds only one possibility among others, for example the derivation from *pherō*, *pharma*, "quod terra fert."

Cf. also Harrison, p. 108: ". . . *pharmakos* means simply 'magic-man.' Its Lithuanian cognate is *burin*, magic; in Latin it appears as *forma*, formula, magical spell; our *formulary* retains some vestige of its primitive connotation. *Pharmakon* in Greek means healing drug, poison, and dye, but all, for better or worse, are magical."

In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), Northrop Frye sees in the figure of the *pharmakos* a permanent archetypal structure in Western literature. The exclusion of the *pharmakos*, who is, says Frye, "neither innocent nor guilty" (p. 41), is repeated from Aristophanes to Shakespeare, affecting Shylock as well as Falstaff, Tartuffe no less than Charlie Chaplin. "We meet a *pharmakos* figure in Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, in Melville's Billy Budd, in Hardy's Tess, in the Septimus of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in stories of persecuted Jews and Negroes, in stories of artists whose genius makes them Ishmaels of a bourgeois society" (p. 41, cf. also pp. 45–48, p. 148–49).

Tzetzes gives the following account, based on certain fragments by the satirical poet Hipponax, of the ceremony: "The (rite of the) *pharmakos* was a purification of this sort of old. If a calamity overtook the city by the wrath of God, whether it were famine or pestilence or any other mischief, they led forth as though to a sacrifice the most unsightly of them all as a purification and a remedy to the suffering city. They set the sacrifice in the appointed place, and gave him cheese with their hands and a barley cake and figs, and seven times they smote him with leeks and wild figs and other wild plants. Finally they burnt him with fire with the wood of wild trees and scattered the ashes into the sea and to the winds, for a purification, as I said, of the suffering city."

The city's body *proper* thus reconstitutes its unity, closes around the security of its inner courts, gives back to itself the word that links it with itself within the confines of the agora, by violently excluding from its territory the representative of an external threat or aggression. That representative represents the otherness of the evil that comes to affect or infect the inside by unpredictably breaking into it. Yet the representative of the outside is nonetheless *constituted*, regularly granted its place by the community, chosen, kept, fed, etc., in the very heart of the inside. These parasites were as a matter of course domesticated by the living organism that housed them at its expense. "The Athenians regularly maintained a number of degraded and useless beings at the public expense; and when any calamity, such as plague, drought, or famine, befell the city, they sacrificed two of these outcasts as scapegoats."⁶⁰

The ceremony of the *pharmakos* is thus played out on the boundary line between inside and outside, which it has as its function ceaselessly to trace and retrace. *Intra muros/extra muros*. The origin of difference and division, the *pharmakos* represents evil both introjected and projected. Beneficial insofar as he cures—and for that, venerated and cared for—harmful insofar as he incarnates the powers of evil—and for that, feared and treated with caution. Alarming and calming. Sacred and accursed. The conjunction, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, ceaselessly undoes itself in the passage to decision or crisis. The expulsion of the evil or madness restores *sāphrosunē*.

These exclusions took place at critical moments (drought, plague, famine). *Decision* was then repeated. But the mastery of the critical instance requires that surprise be prepared for: by rules, by law, by the regularity of repetition, by fixing the date. This ritual practice, which took place in Abdera, in Thrace, in Marseilles, etc., was reproduced *every year* in Athens.

60. Frazer, (1954 ed.), pp. 540–41. Cf. also Harrison, p. 102.

And up through the fifth century. Aristophanes and Lysias clearly allude to it. Plato could not have been unaware of it.

The date of the ceremony is noteworthy: the sixth day of the Thargelia. That was the day of the birth of him whose death—and not only because a *pharmakon* was its direct cause—resembles that of a *pharmakos* from the inside: Socrates.

Socrates, affectionately called the *pharmakeus* in the dialogues of Plato; Socrates, who faced with the complaint (*graphē*) lodged against him, refused to defend himself, declined the logographic offer of Lysias, "the ablest writer of our time," who had proposed to ghost-write a defense for him; Socrates was born on the sixth day of the Thargelia. Diogenes Laertius testifies to this: "He was born on the sixth day of Thargelion, the day when the Athenians purify the city."

7. The Ingredients: Phantasms, Festivals, and Paints

The rite of the *pharmakos*: evil and death, repetition and exclusion.

Socrates ties up into a system all the counts of indictment against the *pharmakon* of writing at the point at which he adopts as his own, in order to uphold it, interpret it, and make it explicit, the divine, royal, paternal, solar word, the capital sentence of Thamus. The worst effects of writing were only predicted by that word. The king's speech was not demonstrative; it did not pronounce knowledge—it pronounced itself. Announcing, presaging, cutting. It is a *manteia*, Socrates suggests (275c). The discourse of Socrates will hence apply itself to the task of translating that *manteia* into philosophy, cashing in on that capital, turning it to account, taking account of it, giving accounts and reasons, upholding the reasoning of that basileo-patro-helio-theological dictum. Transforming the *mythos* into *logos*.

What indeed would be the first thing a disdainful god would find to criticize in that which seems to lie outside his field of effectiveness? Its ineffectiveness, of course, its unproductiveness, a productiveness that is only apparent, since it can only repeat what in truth is already there. This is why—Socrates' first argument—writing is not a good *tekhne*, by which we should understand an art capable of engendering, producing, bringing forth: the clear, the sure, the secure (*saptes kai bebaion*). That is, the *alētheia* of the *eidōs*, the truth of being in its figure, its "idea," its nonsensible visibility, its intelligible invisibility. The truth of what is: writing literally

hasn't a damn sight to do with it. It has rather a blindness to do with it. Whoever might think he has produced truth through a grapheme would only give proof of the greatest foolishness (*euētheia*). Whereas the sage Socrates knows that he knows nothing, that nitwit would not know that he already knows what he thinks he is learning through writing, and which he is only recalling to mind through the types. Not remembering, by anamnesis, the *eidōs* contemplated before the fall of the soul into the body, but reminding himself, in a hypomnesic mode, of that of which he already has mnemonic knowledge. Written *logos* is only a way for him who already knows (*ton eidōta*) to remind himself (*hupomnēsai*) of the things writing is about (*ta gegrammena*) (275d). Writing thus only intervenes at a time when a subject of knowledge already possesses the signifieds, which are then only given to writing on consignment.

Socrates thus adopts the major, decisive opposition that cleaves the *manteia* of Thamus: *mnēmē hupomnēsis*, the subtle difference between knowledge as memory and nonknowledge as remembrance, between two forms and two moments of repetition: a repetition of truth (*alētheia*) which presents and exposes the *eidōs*; and a repetition of death and oblivion (*lēthē*) which veils and skews because it does not present the *eidōs* but re-presents a presentation, repeats a repetition.⁶¹

Hupomnēsis, which is here what forecasts and shapes the thought about writing, not only does not coincide with memory, but can only be constructed as a thing dependent on memory. And consequently, on the presentation of truth. At the moment it is summoned to appear before the paternal instance, writing is determined within a problematic of knowing-remembering. It is thus from the start stripped of all its own attributes or path-breaking powers. Its path-breaking force is cut not by repetition but by the ills of repetition, by that which within repetition is doubled, redoubled, that which repeats repetition and in so doing, cut off from "good" repetition (which presents and gathers being within living memory), can always, left to itself, stop repeating itself. Writing would be pure repetition, dead repetition that might always be repeating nothing, or be unable *spontaneously* to repeat itself, which also means unable to repeat anything *but* itself: a hollow, cast-off repetition.

This pure repetition, this "bad" reissue, would thus be tautological. Written *logoi* "seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if

61. It could be shown that all of Husserl's phenomenology is systematically organized around an analogous opposition between presentation and re-presentation (*Gegenwärtigung/Vergegenwärtigung*), and between primary memory (which is part of the originary "in an extended sense") and secondary memory. Cf. *La Voix et le phénomène* (*Speech and Phenomena*).

you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever (*ben ti sēmainei monon tauton aei*)" (275d). Pure repetition, absolute self-repetition, repetition of a self that is already reference and repetition, repetition of the signifier, repetition that is null or annulling, repetition of death—it's all one. Writing is not the living repetition of the living.

Which makes it similar to painting. And just as the *Republic*, in its condemnation of the imitative arts, links poetry and painting together; just as Aristotle's *Poetics* associates them under the single heading of *mimēsis*; so too Socrates here compares a piece of writing to a portrait, the *graphēma* to the *zōgraphēma*. "You know, Phaedrus, that's the strange (*deinon*) thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting (*homoion zōgraphiai*). The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive (*hōs zōnta*), but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic (*semnōs*) silence. It is the same with written words. . . ." (275d).

The impotence to answer for itself, the unresponsiveness and irresponsibility of writing, is decried again by Socrates in the *Protagoras*. Bad public speakers, those who cannot answer "a supplementary question," are "like books: they cannot either answer or ask a question on their own account" (329a). That is why, says the Seventh Letter, "no intelligent man will ever be so bold as to put into language those things which his reason has contemplated, especially not into a form that is unalterable—which must be the case with what is expressed in written symbols" (343a; cf. also *Laws* XII, 968d).

What, in depth, are the resemblances underlying Socrates' statements that make writing homologous to painting? From out of what horizon arise their common silence, their stubborn muteness, their mask of solemn, forbidding majesty that so poorly hides an incurable aphasia, a stone deafness, a closedness irremediably inadequate to the demands of *logos*? If writing and painting are convoked together, summoned to appear with their hands tied, before the tribunal of *logos*, and to respond to it, this is quite simply because both are being *interrogated*: as the presumed representatives of a spoken word, as agents capable of speech, as depositaries or even fences for the words the court is trying to force out of them. If they should turn out not to be up to testifying in this hearing, if they turn out to be impotent to represent a live word properly, to act as its interpreter or spokesman, to sustain the conversation, to respond to oral questions, then bam! they are good for nothing. They are mere figurines, masks, simulacra.

Let us not forget that painting is here called *zōgraphia*, inscribed representation, a drawing of *the living*, a portrait of an animate model. The model

for this type of painting is representative painting, which conforms to a live model. The word *zōgraphēma* is indeed sometimes shortened to *gramma* (*Cratylus*, 430e and 431c). Similarly, writing was supposed to paint a living word. It thus resembles painting to the extent that it is conceived—in this whole Platonic problematic, this massive and fundamental determination can be stated in a word—on the basis of the particular model of phonetic writing, which reigned in Greek culture. The signs of writing functioned within a system where they were supposed to represent the signs of voice. They were signs of signs.

Thus, just as painting and writing have faithfulness to the model as their model, the resemblance between painting and writing is precisely *resemblance itself*: both operations must aim above all at resembling. They are both apprehended as mimetic techniques, art being first determined as mimesis.

Despite this resemblance of resemblance, writing's case is a good deal more serious. Like any imitative art, painting and poetry are of course far away from truth (*Republic* X, 603b). But these two both have mitigating circumstances. Poetry imitates, but it imitates voice by means of voice. Painting, like sculpture, is silent, but so in a sense is its model. Painting and sculpture are arts of silence, as Socrates, the son of a sculptor who at first wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, very well knows. He knows this and says it in the *Gorgias* (450c-d). The silence of the pictorial or sculptural space is, as it were, normal. But this is no longer the case in the scriptural order, since writing gives itself as the image of speech. Writing thus more seriously denatures what it claims to imitate. It does not even substitute an image for its model. It inscribes in the space of silence and in the silence of space the living time of voice. It displaces its model, provides no image of it, violently wrests out of its element the animate interiority of speech. In so doing, writing estranges itself immensely from the truth of the thing itself, from the truth of speech, from the truth that is open to speech.

And hence, from the king.

Let us recall the famous indictment of pictorial mimetics in the *Republic* (X, 597).⁶² First, it is a question of banning poetry from the city, and this time, in contrast to what occurs in books II and III, for reasons linked essentially with its mimetic nature. The tragic poets, when they practice imitation, corrupt the minds of the listeners (*iēs tōn akouontōn dianoias*) if these do not possess an antidote (*pharmakon*, 595a). This counterpoison is "knowledge of the real nature of things" (*to eidenai auta hoia tungkhanei*

62. I shall study this passage from another viewpoint in a forthcoming text, "Entre deux coups de dés."

onta). If one considers that imitators and masters of illusion will later be presented as charlatans and thaumaturges (602d)—species of the genus *pharmakeus*—then once again ontological knowledge becomes a pharmaceutical force opposed to another pharmaceutical force. The order of knowledge is not the transparent order of forms and ideas, as one might be tempted retrospectively to interpret it; it is the antidote. Long before being divided up into occult violence and accurate knowledge, the element of the *pharmakon* is the combat zone between philosophy and its other. An element that is *in itself*, if one can still say so, *undecidable*.

Of course, in order to define the poetry of imitation, one has to know what imitation in general is. This is where that most *familiar* of examples comes in: the origin of the bed. Elsewhere, we will be able to take the time to inquire about the necessity governing the choice of this example and about the switch in the text that makes us slide insensibly from the table to the bed. The already made bed. In any case, God is the true father of the bed, of the clinical *eidōs*. The carpenter is its "Demiurge." The painter, who is again called a zoographer, is neither its generator (*phutourgos*: author of the *phusis*—as truth—of the bed), nor its demiurge. Only its imitator. It is thus by three degrees that he is separated from the original truth, the *phusis* of the bed.

And hence, from the king.

"This, then, will apply to the maker of tragedies also, if he is an imitator and is in his nature at three removes from the king and the truth, as are all other imitators" (597e).

As for couching this *eidōlon* in written form, writing down the image that poetic imitation has already made, that would be equivalent to moving to a *fourth degree* of distance from the king, or rather, through a change of order or of element, wandering into an excessive estrangement from him, if Plato himself did not elsewhere assert, speaking of the imitative poet in general, that "he is always at an infinite remove from truth" (*tou de alēthous porrō panu apestōta*) (605c). For in contrast to painting, writing doesn't even create a phantasm. The painter, of course, does not produce the being-true but the appearance, the *phantasm* (598b), that is, what is already a simulation of the copy (*Sophist*, 236b). In general, *phantasma* (the copy of a copy) has been translated as "simulacrum."⁶³ He who writes with the alphabet no longer

63. On the place and evolution of the concept of *mimēsis* in Plato's thought, we refer the reader primarily to V. Goldschmidt's *Essai sur le Cratyle* (1940) (esp. pp. 165 ff). What is made clear there is the fact that Plato did not always and everywhere condemn *mimēsis*. But one can at any rate conclude this: whether or not Plato condemns imitation, he poses the question of poetry by determining it as *mimēsis*, thus opening the field in which Aristotle's

even imitates. No doubt because he also, in a sense, imitates perfectly. He has a better chance of reproducing the voice, because phonetic writing decomposes it better and transforms it into abstract, spatial elements. This *de-composition* of the voice is here both what best conserves it and what best corrupts it. What imitates it perfectly because it no longer imitates it at all. For imitation affirms and sharpens its essence in effacing itself. Its essence is its nonessence. And no dialectic can encompass this self-inadequation. A perfect imitation is no longer an imitation. If one eliminates the tiny difference that, in separating the imitator from the imitated, by that very fact refers to it, one would render the imitator absolutely different: the imitator would become another being no longer referring to the imitated.⁶⁴ Imitation does not correspond to its essence, is not what it is—imitation—unless it is in some way at fault or rather in default. It is bad by nature. It is only good insofar as it is bad. Since (de)fault is inscribed within it, it has no nature; nothing is properly its own. Ambivalent, playing with itself by hollowing itself out, good and evil at once—undecidably, *mimēsis* is akin to the *pharmakon*. No "logic," no "dialectic," can consume its reserve even though each must endlessly draw on it and seek reassurance through it.

And as it happens, the technique of imitation, along with the production of the simulacrum, has always been in Plato's eyes manifestly magical, thaumaturgical:

And the same things appear bent and straight to those who view them in water and out, or concave and convex, owing to similar errors of vision about colors, and there is obviously every confusion of this sort in our souls. And so scene painting (*skiagraphia*) in its exploitation of

Poetics, entirely subsumed under that category, will produce *the concept* of literature that reigned until the nineteenth century, up to but not including Kant and Hegel (not including them at least if *mimēsis* is translated as *imitation*).

On the other hand, Plato condemns under the name *phantasm* or *simulacrum* what is being advanced today, in its most radical exigency, as writing. Or at any rate that is what one can call, *within* philosophy and "mimetology," that which exceeds the conceptual oppositions within which Plato defines the phantasm. Beyond these oppositions, beyond the values of truth and nontruth, this excess (of) writing can no longer, as one might guess, be qualified simply as a simulacrum or phantasm. Nor can it indeed be named by the classical concept of writing.

64. "Let us suppose the existence of two objects (*pragmata*). One of them shall be Cratylus, and the other the image of Cratylus, and we will suppose, further, that some god makes not only a representation such as a painter would make of your outward form and color, but also creates an inward organization like yours, having the same warmth and softness, and into this infuses motion, and soul, and mind, such as you have, and in a word copies all your qualities, and places them by you in another form. Would you say that this was Cratylus and the image of Cratylus, or that there were two Cratyluses? *Cratylus*: I should say that there were two Cratyluses" (432b-c).

this weakness of our nature falls nothing short of witchcraft (*thaumato-poia*), and so do jugglery (*goēteia*) and many other such contrivances. (*Republic* X, 602c-d; cf. also 607c).⁶⁵

The antidote is still the *epistēmē*. And since *hybris* is at bottom nothing but that excessive momentum that (en)trains being in(to) the simulacrum, the mask, the festival, there can be no antidote but that which enables one to remain *measured*. The *alexipharmakon* will be the science of measure, in every sense of the word. The text goes on:

But satisfactory remedies have been found for dispelling these illusions by measuring (*metrein*), counting (*arithmein*), and weighing (*histanai*). We are no longer at the mercy of an appearance (*phainomenon*) of difference in size and quantity and weight; the faculty which has done the counting and measuring or weighing takes control instead. And this can only be the work of the calculating or reasoning element (*tou logistikou ergon*) in the soul. (The word translated as "remedies" is the word used in the *Phaedrus* to qualify the attendance, the assistance [*boētheia*] that the father of living speech ought always to provide for writing, which is quite helpless in itself.)

The illusionist, the technician of sleight-of-hand, the painter, the writer, the *pharmakeus*. This has not gone unnoticed: ". . . isn't the word *pharmakon*, which means color, the very same word that applies to the drugs of sorcerers or doctors? Don't the casters of spells resort to wax figurines in pursuing their evil designs?"⁶⁶ Bewitchment [*l'envoûtement*] is always the effect of a *representation*, pictorial or scriptural, capturing, captivating the form of the other, par excellence his face, countenance, word and look, mouth and eye, nose and ears: the *vultus*.

The word *pharmakon*, then, also designates pictorial color, the material in which the *zōgraphēma* is inscribed. Turn to the *Cratylus*: in his exchange with Hermogenes, Socrates examines the hypothesis according to which names imitate the essence of things. He compares, in order to make a distinction between them, musical or pictorial imitation, on the one hand, and nominal imitation, on the other. What he does then is interesting to us not only because he refers to the *pharmakon* but also because another necessity imposes itself on him, one on which we will henceforth progressively attempt to shed some light: at the moment he takes up the question of the differential elements of nominal language, he is obliged, as is

65. On all these themes, see esp. P. M. Schuhl, *Platon et l'Art de son temps*.

66. Schuhl, p. 22. Cf. also *l'Essai sur la formation de la pensée grecque*, pp. 39 ff.

Saussure after him, to suspend the insistence on voice as sonority imitative of sounds (imitative music). If the voice names, it is through the differences and relations that are introduced among the *stoikbeia*, the elements or letters (*grammata*). The same word (*stoikbeia*) is used for both elements and letters. And one ought to reflect upon what here appears to be a conventional or pedagogical necessity: phonemes in general, vowels—*phōnēenta*⁶⁷—and consonants, are designated by the letters that inscribe them.

Socrates: . . . But how shall we further analyze them, and when does the imitator begin? Imitation of the essence is made by syllables and letters. Ought we not, therefore, first to separate the letters, just as those who are beginning rhythm first distinguish the powers of elementary sounds (*stoikbeion*) and then of compound sounds, and when they have done so, but not before, proceed to the consideration of rhythms?

Hermogenes: Yes.

Socrates: Must we not begin in the same way with letters—first separating the vowels (*phōnēenta*), and then the consonants and mutes (*aphōna kai aphthonga*), into classes, according to the received distinctions of the learned, also the semivowels, which are neither vowels nor yet mutes, and distinguishing into classes the vowels themselves. And when we have perfected the classification of things, we shall give their names, and see whether, as in the case of letters, there are any classes to which they may all be referred, and hence we shall see their natures, and see, too, whether they have in them classes as there are in the letters. And when we have well considered all this, we shall know how to apply them to what they resemble, whether one letter is used to denote one thing, or whether there is to be an admixture of several of them, just as, in painting, the painter who wants to depict anything sometimes uses purple only, or any other color (*allo tōn pharmakōn*), and sometimes mixes up several colors, as his method is when he has to paint flesh color or anything of that kind—he uses a particular color (*pharmakou*) as his figures appear to require it. And so, too, we shall apply letters to the expression of objects, either single letters when required, or several letters, and so we shall form syllables, as they are called, and from syllables make nouns and verbs, and thus, at last, from the combination of nouns and verbs arrive at language,

67. Cf. also *Philebus*, 18a-b.

large and fair and whole, just as the painter used his paint (*tēi graphikēi*) to reproduce a living creature (*zōon*). (424b – 425a)

And further on:

Socrates: Very good, but if the name is to be like the thing, the letters out of which the first names are composed must also be like things. Returning to the image of the picture, I would ask how anyone could ever compose a picture which would be like anything at all, if there were not pigments (*pharmakeia*) in nature which resembled the things imitated, and out of which the picture is composed. (434a–b)

The *Republic* also calls the painter's colors *pharmaka* (420c). The magic of writing and painting is like a cosmetic concealing the dead under the appearance of the living. The *pharmakon* introduces and harbors death. It makes the corpse presentable, masks it, makes it up, perfumes it with its essence, as it is said in Aeschylus. *Pharmakon* is also a word for perfume. A perfume without essence, as we earlier called it a drug without substance. It transforms order into ornament, the cosmos into a cosmetic. Death, masks, makeup, all are part of the festival that subverts the order of the city, its smooth regulation by the dialectician and the science of being. Plato, as we shall see, is not long in identifying writing with festivity. And play. A certain festival, a certain game.

8. The Heritage of the Pharmakon: Family Scene

We have now penetrated into another level of the Platonic reserves. This pharmacy is also, we begin to perceive, a theater. The theatrical cannot here be summed up in speech: it involves forces, space, law, kinship, the human, the divine, death, play, festivity. Hence the new depth that reveals itself to us will necessarily be another scene, on another stage, or rather another tableau in the unfolding of the play of writing. After the presentation of the *pharmakon* to the father, after the put-down of Theuth, Socrates takes the spoken word back to his own account. He seems to want to substitute *logos* for myth, discourse for theater, demonstration for illustration. And yet, within his very explanations, another scene slowly comes to light, less immediately visible than the preceding one, but, in its muffled latency, just as tense, just as violent as the other, composing with it, within

the pharmaceutical enclosure, an artful, living organization of figures, displacements, repetitions.

This scene has never been read for what it is, for what is at once sheltered and exposed in its metaphors: its *family* metaphors. It is all about fathers and sons, about bastards unaided by any public assistance, about glorious, legitimate sons, about inheritance, sperm, sterility. Nothing is said of the mother, but this will not be held against us. And if one looks hard enough as in those pictures in which a second picture faintly can be made out, one might be able to discern her unstable form, drawn upside-down in the foliage, at the back of the garden. In the garden of Adonis, *eis Adōnidōs kēpous* (276b).

Socrates has just compared the offspring (*ekgona*) of painting with those of writing. He has ridiculed their self-satisfied unsatisfactoriness, the solemn tautological monotony of the responses they give whenever we interrogate them. He goes on:

And once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn't know how to address the right people, and not address the wrong. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its aid, being unable to defend itself or attend to its own needs. (275e)

The anthropomorphic or even animistic metaphor can doubtless be explained by the fact that what is written down is *speech* (*logos gegrammenos*). As a living thing, *logos* issues from a father. There is thus for Plato no such thing as a written thing. There is only a *logos* more or less alive, more or less distant from itself. Writing is not an independent order of signification; it is weakened speech, something not completely dead: a living-dead, a reprieved corpse, a deferred life, a semblance of breath. The phantom, the phantasm, the simulacrum (*eidōlon*, 276a) of living discourse is not inanimate; it is not insignificant; it simply signifies little, and always the same thing. This signifier of little, this discourse that doesn't amount to much, is like all ghosts: errant. It rolls (*kulindeitai*) this way and that like someone who has lost his way, who doesn't know where he is going, having strayed from the correct path, the right direction, the rule of rectitude, the norm; but also like someone who has lost his rights, an outlaw, a pervert, a bad seed, a vagrant, an adventurer, a bum. Wandering in the streets, he doesn't even know who he is, what his identity—if he has one—might be, what his name is, what his father's name is. He repeats the same thing every time he

is questioned on the street corner, but he can no longer repeat his origin. Not to know where one comes from or where one is going, for a discourse with no guarantor, is not to know how to speak at all, to be in a state of infancy. Uprooted, anonymous, unattached to any house or country, this almost insignificant signifier is at everyone's disposal,⁶⁸ can be picked up by both the competent and the incompetent, by those who understand and know what to do with it [*ceux qui entendent et s'y entendent*] (*tois epaiōusin*), and by those who are completely unconcerned with it, and who, knowing nothing about it, can inflict all manner of impertinence upon it.

At the disposal of each and of all, available on the sidewalks, isn't writing thus essentially democratic? One could compare the trial of writing with the trial of democracy outlined in the *Republic*. In a democratic society, there is no concern for competence: responsibilities are given to anyone at all. Magistracies are decided by lots (557a). Equality is equally dispensed to equal and unequal alike (558c). Excess, anarchy; the democratic man, with no concern for hierarchy, "establishes and maintains all his pleasures on a footing of equality, forsooth, and so lives turning over the guardhouse of his soul to each as it happens along until it is sated, as if it had drawn the lot for that office, and then in turn to another, disdaining none but fostering them all equally. . . . And he does not accept or admit into the guardhouse reason (*logon*) or truth (*alēthē*) when anyone tells him that some pleasures arise from honorable and good desires, and others from those that are base, and that we ought to practice and esteem the one and control and subdue the others, but he shakes his head at all such admonitions and avers that they are all alike and to be equally esteemed" (561b—c).

68. J. P. Vernant calls attention to such "democratization" of and through writing in classical Greece. "To this importance assumed by speech, which from that time forward became the instrument par excellence of political life, there also corresponds a change in the social significance of writing. In the kingdoms of the Near East, writing was the privilege and specialty of scribes. Writing enabled the royal administration to control the economic and social life of the State by keeping records of it. Its purpose was to constitute archives which were always kept more or less secret inside the palace. . . ." In classical Greece, "instead of being the exclusive privilege of one caste, the secret belonging to a class of scribes working for the palace of the king, writing becomes the 'common property' of all citizens, an instrument of publicity. . . . Laws had to be written down. . . . The consequences of this change in the social status of writing will be fundamental for intellectual history" (Vernant, *Mythe et Pensée*, pp. 151–52; cf. also pp. 52, 78, and *Les Origines de la pensée grecque*, pp. 43–44). Could it not be said, then, that Plato is continuing to think of writing from the viewpoint of the king, presenting it within the outmoded structures of the *basileia*? Structures which no doubt adhere to the mythemes informing his thought? But on the other hand, Plato believes in the need for written laws; and the suspicion against the occult virtues of writing would be aimed rather toward a non-"democratic" politics of writing. One must untangle all these threads and respect all these strata and discrepancies. In any event, the development of phonetic writing is inseparable from the movement of "democratization."

This errant democrat, wandering like a desire or like a signifier freed from *logos*, this individual who is not even perverse in a regular way, who is ready to do anything, to lend himself to anyone, who gives himself equally to all pleasures, to all activities—eventually even to politics or philosophy—"at another time seeming to occupy himself with philosophy, and frequently he goes in for politics and bounces up and says and does whatever enters his head" (561a)—this adventurer, like the one in the *Phaedrus*, simulates everything at random and is really nothing. Swept off by every stream, he belongs to the masses; he has no essence, no truth, no patronym, no constitution of his own. Moreover, democracy is no more a true constitution than the democrat has a character of his own: "I certainly think, said I, that he is a manifold man stuffed with the most excellent differences, and that like that city he is the fair and many-colored (*poikilon*) one whom many a man and woman would count fortunate in his life, as containing within himself the greatest number of patterns of constitutions and qualities" (561e). Democracy is orgy, debauchery, flea market, fair, "a bazaar (*pan-topōlion*) of constitutions where one can choose the one to make one's own" (557d).

Whether it is seen as graphics or as politics, or, better—as the whole eighteenth century in France will do, especially Rousseau—as politico-graphics, such degradation can always be explained in terms of a bad relation between father and son (cf. 559a–560b). Desires, says Plato, should be raised like sons.

Writing is the miserable son. *Le misérable*. Socrates' tone is sometimes categorical and condemnatory—denouncing a wayward, rebellious son, an immoderation or perversion—and sometimes touched and condescending—pitying a defenseless living thing, a son abandoned by his father. In any event the son is *lost*. His impotence is truly that of an orphan⁶⁹ as much

69. The orphan is always, in the text of Plato—and elsewhere—the model of the persecuted creature. We had begun by stressing the affinity between writing and *mythos* created by their common opposition to *logos*. Orphanhood is perhaps another side of their kinship. *Logos* has a father; the father of a myth is almost impossible to find. Hence the need for assistance (*boētheia*) mentioned by the *Phaedrus* in connection with writing as an orphan. This also appears elsewhere: "Socrates: . . . And no one was left to tell Protagoras' tale, or yours either, about knowledge and perception being the same thing. *Theaetetus*: So it appears. *Socrates*: I fancy it would be very different if the author of the first story were still alive. He would have put up a good fight for his offspring. But he is dead, and here we are trampling on the orphan. Even its appointed guardians, like Theodorus here, will not come to the rescue (*boēthein*). However, we will step into the breach ourselves and see that it has fair play (*boēthein*). *Theodorus*: . . . I shall be grateful for any succor (*boētheia*) you can give him. *Socrates*: Very good, Theodorus. You shall see what my help (*boētheian*) will amount to. . . ." (*Theaetetus*, 164d–165a).

as that of a justly or unjustly persecuted patricide. In his commiseration, Socrates sometimes gets quite carried away: alongside the living discourses persecuted and deprived of the aid of a logographer (this was the case with Socrates' own spoken words), there are also half-dead discourses—writings—persecuted for lack of the dead father's voice. Writing can thus be attacked, bombarded with unjust reproaches (*ouk en dikēi loidorētheis*) that only the father could dissipate—thus assisting his son—if the son had not, precisely, killed him.

In effect, the father's death opens the reign of violence. In choosing violence—and that is what it's all about from the beginning—and violence against the father, the son—or patricidal writing—cannot fail to expose himself, too. All this is done in order to ensure that the dead father, first victim and ultimate resource, not be there. Being-there is always a property of paternal speech. And the site of a fatherland.

Writing, the outlaw, the lost son. Plato, we recall, always associates speech and law, *logos* and *nomos*, and laws speak. In the personification in the *Crito*, they speak to Socrates directly. And in the tenth book of the *Republic*, they address themselves precisely to the father who has lost his son, they console him and urge him to resist his grief:

When a good and reasonable man, said I, experiences such a stroke of fortune as the loss of a son or anything else that he holds most dear, we said, I believe, then too, that he will bear it more easily than the other sort. . . . Now is it not reason and law (*logos kai nomos*) that exhorts him to resist, while that which urges him to give way to his grief is the bare feeling itself (*auto to pathos*)? . . . The law declares (*legei pou ho nomos*) that it is best to keep quiet as far as possible in calamity. . . . (603e—604a—b)

What is the father? we asked earlier. The father is. The father is (the son lost). Writing, the lost son, does not answer this question—it writes (itself): (that) the father *is not*, that is to say, is not present. When it is no longer a spoken word fallen away from the father, writing suspends the question *what is*, which is always, tautologically, the question "what is the father?" and the reply "the father is what is." At that point a flap is produced that can no longer be thought about within the familiar opposition of father to son, speech to writing.

The time has come to recall the fact that Socrates, in the dialogues, plays the role of father, *represents* the father. Or the elder brother. We will see in a minute what the story is with the elder brother. And Socrates reminds the Athenians, like a father speaking to his children, that in killing him it is

themselves they will hurt most. Let us listen to him in his prison cell. His ruse is infinite—and therefore naive or null (keep me alive—since I am already dead—for you):

Remember my request to give me a hearing without interruption. . . . I assure you that if I am what I claim to be, and you put me to death, you will harm yourselves more than me. . . . If you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true, even if it sounds rather comical, that God has specially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly, and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, reproving every one of you. You will not easily find another like me, gentlemen, and if you take my advice you will spare my life. I suspect, however, that before long you will awake from your drowsing, and in your annoyance you will take Anytus' advice and finish me off with a single slap, and then you will go on sleeping till the end of your days, unless God in his care for you sends someone to take my place (*epipempseie*). If you doubt whether I am really the sort of person who would have been sent to this city as a gift from God, you can convince yourselves by looking at it in this way. Does it seem natural that I should have neglected my own affairs and endured the humiliation of allowing my family to be neglected for all these years, while I busied myself all the time on your behalf, going to see each one of you privately like a father or an elder brother (*bōsper patera ē adelphon presbuteron*), and urging you to set your thoughts on goodness? (*Apology*, 30c—31b).

And what pushes Socrates to take the place [*supplēer*] of the father or elder brother toward the Athenians—a role in which he, too, will have to be replaced—is a certain voice. Which forbids, moreover, more than it bids; and which he obeys spontaneously, like the good horse in the *Phaedrus*, for whom the commands of the voice, of *logos*, suffice:

The reason for this is what you have often heard me say before on many other occasions—that I am subject to a divine or supernatural experience [*phōnē*], which Meletus saw fit to travesty in his indictment (*ho dē kai en tēi graphēi epikōmōidōn Meletos egrapsato*). It began in my early childhood—a sort of voice (*phōnē*) which comes to me, and when it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do, and never urges me on. (31c—d)

As the bearer of this sign from God (*to tou theou sēmeion*, 40 b, c ; *to daimonion sēmeion*, *Republic* VI, 496c), Socrates thus takes voice from the father; he is the father's spokesman. And Plato writes *from out of his death*. All Plato's writing—and we are not speaking here about what it means, its intended content: the reparations of and to the father made against the *graphē* that decided his *death*—is thus, *when read from the viewpoint of Socrates' death*, in the situation of writing as it is indicted in the *Phaedrus*. These scenes enclose and fit into each other endlessly, abysally. The pharmacy has no foundation.

Now, what about the accused? Up to now writing—written speech—has had no other status, as it were, than that of an orphan or moribund parricide. And while it becomes perverted in the course of its adventures by breaking with its origin, nothing has yet indicated that that origin was itself already bad. But it now appears that written discourse, in its "proper" meaning—that which is inscribed in sensible space—is deformed at its very birth. It is not well born: not only, as we have seen, because it is not entirely viable, but because it is not of good birth, of legitimate birth. It is not *gnēsiōs*. It is not exactly a commoner; it is a bastard. By the voice of its father it cannot be avowed, recognized. It is outside the law. After *Phaedrus* has agreed, Socrates goes on (276a–b):

Socrates: But now tell me, is there another sort of discourse, that is brother to the written speech, but of unquestioned legitimacy (*adelphōn gnēsion*)? Can we see how it originates, and how much better and more effective it is than the other?

Phaedrus: What sort of discourse have you now in mind, and what is its origin?

Socrates: The sort that goes together with knowledge and is written in the soul of the learner (*hos met' epistēmēs graphetai en tēi tou manthanontos psuchēi*), that can defend itself (*dunatos men amunai beautōi*), and knows to whom it should speak and to whom it should say nothing.

Phaedrus: Do you mean the discourse of a man who really knows (*tou eidotos logon*), which is living and animate (*zōnta kai empsukhon*)?

Would it be fair to call the written discourse only a kind of ghost (*eidōlon*) of it?

Socrates: Precisely.

In its content, this exchange has nothing original about it. Alcidas⁷⁰ said more or less the same thing. But it marks a sort of reversal in the

70. Cf. M. J. Milne, *A study in Alcidas and his relation to contemporary sophistic* (1924) and P. N. Schuhl, *Platon et l'Art de son temps*, p. 49.

There is another allusion to the legitimate sons in 278a. On the opposition between

functioning of the argument. While presenting writing as a false brother—traitor, infidel, and simulacrum—Socrates is for the first time led to envision the brother of this brother, the legitimate one, as *another sort of writing*: not merely as a knowing, living, animate discourse, but as an *inscription* of truth in the soul. It is no doubt usually assumed that what we are dealing with here is a "metaphor." Plato—why not and so what?—thought so, too, perhaps, at the moment the history of this "metaphor" (inscription, imprint, mark, etc., in the wax of the mind or soul) was being engaged, or even inaugurated; a "metaphor" philosophy will never thereafter be able to do without, however uncritical its treatment might be. But it is not any less remarkable here that the so-called living discourse should suddenly be described by a "metaphor" borrowed from the order of the very thing one is trying to exclude from it, the order of its simulacrum. Yet this borrowing is rendered necessary by that which structurally links the intelligible to its repetition in the copy, and the language describing dialectics cannot fail to call upon it.

According to a pattern that will dominate all of Western philosophy, good writing (natural, living, knowledgeable, intelligible, internal, speaking) is opposed to bad writing (a moribund, ignorant, external, mute artifice for the senses). And the good one can be designated only through the metaphor of the bad one. Metaphoricity is the logic of contamination and the contamination of logic. Bad writing is for good a model of linguistic designation and a simulacrum of essence. And if the network of opposing predicates that link one type of writing to the other contains in its meshes all the conceptual oppositions of "Platonism"—here considered the dominant structure of the history of metaphysics—then it can be said that philosophy is played out in the play between two kinds of writing. Whereas all it wanted to do was to distinguish between writing and speech.

It is later confirmed that the conclusion of the *Phaedrus* is less a condemnation of writing in the name of present speech than a preference for one sort of writing over another, for the fertile trace over the sterile trace, for a seed that engenders because it is planted inside over a seed scattered wastefully outside: at the risk of *dissemination*. This, at least, is presumed by that. Before trying to account for this in terms of the general structure of Platonism, let us follow this movement.

The entrance of the *pharmakon* on the scene, the evolution of the magic powers, the comparison with painting, the politico-familial violence and

bastards and well-born sons (*nothoi/gnēsioi*), cf. notably, *Republic* (496a: "sophisms" have nothing "gnēsion" about them), and the *Statesman* (293e: "imitations" of constitutions are not "well born") Cf. also *Compassion* 511d.

perversion, the allusion to makeup, masks, simulacra—all this couldn't not lead us to games and festivals, which can never go without some sort of urgency or outpouring of sperm.

The reader will not be disappointed, provided he accepts a certain scansion of the text and agrees not to consider as mere rhetorical contingencies the terms of the analogy proposed by Socrates.

Here is the analogy: simulacrum-writing is to what it represents (that is, true writing—writing which is true because it is authentic, corresponds to its value, conforms to its essence, is the writing of truth in the soul of him who possesses the *epistēmē*) as weak, easily exhausted, superfluous seeds giving rise to ephemeral produce (floriferous seeds) are to strong, fertile seeds engendering necessary, lasting, nourishing produce (fructiferous seeds). On the one hand, we have the patient, sensible farmer (*bo noun ekhōn geōrgos*); on the other, the Sunday gardener, hasty, dabbling, and frivolous. On the one hand, the serious (*spoudē*); on the other, the game (*paidia*) and the holiday (*heortē*). On the one hand cultivation, agri-culture, knowledge, economy; on the other, art, enjoyment and unreserved spending.

Socrates: . . . and now tell me this. If a sensible farmer⁷¹ had some seeds to look after (*hōn spermatōn kēdoito*) and wanted them to bear fruit,

71. An analogous allusion to the farmer or husbandman is found in the *Theaetetus* (166a, ff); it is caught in a similar problematic, in the middle of the extraordinary defense Socrates puts in Protagoras' mouth, making him sound off about his four (non)truths, which are of the utmost importance to us here: it is a point at which all the corridors of this pharmacy intersect.

"Socrates: No doubt, then, Protagoras will make all the points we have put forward in our attempt to defend him, and at the same time will come to close quarters with the assailant, dismissing us with contempt. Your admirable Socrates, he will say, finds a little boy who is scared at being asked whether one and the same person can remember and at the same time not know one and the same thing. When the child is frightened into saying no, because he cannot foresee the consequence, Socrates turns the conversation so as to make a figure of fun of my unfortunate self. . . . For I do indeed assert that the truth is as I have written (*hōs gegrapha*). Each one of us is a measure of what is and of what is not, but there is all the difference in the world between one man and another (*murion mentoi diapherein heteron heterou antiōi toutōi*). . . . In this statement (*logon*), again, don't set off in chase of words (*toi rhēmati*), but let me explain still more clearly what I mean. Remember how it was put earlier in the conversation. To the sick man his food appears sour and is so; to the healthy man it is and appears the opposite. Now there is no call to represent either of the two as wiser—that cannot be—nor is the sick man to be pronounced unwise because he thinks as he does, or the healthy man wise because he thinks differently. What is wanted is a change (*metablēteon*) to the opposite condition, because the other state is better.

"And so too in education a change has to be effected from the worse condition to the better; only whereas the physician produces a change by means of drugs (*pharmakois*) the Sophist does it by discourse (*logois*). . . . And as for the wise (sophous), my dear Socrates, so far

would he with serious intent (*spoudēi*) plant them during the summer in a garden of Adonis,⁷² and enjoy watching it produce fine fruit within eight days? If he did so at all wouldn't it be in a holiday spirit (*heortēs . . . Kharin*) just for fun (*paidias*)?⁷³ For serious purposes wouldn't he behave like a scientific farmer, sow his seeds in suitable soil, and be well content if they came to maturity within eight months? . . . And are we to maintain that he who has knowledge of what is just, honorable, and good has less sense than the farmer in dealing with his seeds? . . . Then it won't be with serious intent (*spoudēi*) that he will "write them in water" (*en hudati grapsei*, an expression equivalent to "writing in sand") or in that black fluid we call ink, using his pen to sow words (*melani speirōn dia kalamou meta logōn*) that can't either speak in their own support (*boēthein*) or teach the truth adequately. (276b-c)

from calling them frogs, I call them, when they have to do with the body, physicians, and when they have to do with plants, husbandmen. . . . In this way it is true both that some men are wiser (*sophōteroi*) than others and that no one thinks falsely. . . ."

72. "At the feasts of Adonis," notes Robin, "it was customary to grow, out of season, in a seashell, in a basket, in a vase, certain short-lived plants: offerings that symbolized the premature end of Aphrodite's beloved." Adonis, who was born in a tree—a metamorphosis of Myrrha—was loved and pursued by Venus, then hunted by Mars, who, jealous, changed into a boar, killed him with a wound in the thigh. In the arms of Venus who arrived too late, he became an anemone, an ephemeral spring flower. Anemone: that is, breath.

The opposition farmer/gardener (fruits/flowers; lasting/ephemeral; patience/haste; seriousness/play, etc.) can be juxtaposed to the theme of the double gift in the *Laws*:

"As to the fruit harvest, there must be an accepted general understanding to some effect as this. Two gifts are bestowed on us by the bounty of the goddess of harvest, one the 'ungarnered nursling of Dionysus' (*paidian Dionusiada*), the other destined for storage. So our law of fruits shall impose the following rules. If a man taste the common sort of fruit, whether grapes or figs, before Arcturus have brought round the season of vintage . . . he shall incur a fine in honor of Dionysus, of fifty drachmas" (VIII, 844d-e).

Within the problematic space that brings together, by opposing them, writing and agriculture, it could easily be shown that the paradoxes of the supplement as *pharmakon* and as writing, as engraving and as bastardy, etc., are the same as those of the graft [*greffe*], of the operation of grafting [*greffer*] (which means "engraving"), of the grafter [*greffeur*], of the *greffier* (a clerk of the court; a registrar), of the grafting-knife [*greffoir*], and of the scion [*greffon*]. [The sense of "graft" in English as political or financial corruption is not irrelevant here, either.—Trans.] It could also be shown that all the most modern dimensions (biological, psychical, ethical) of the problem of graft, even when they concern parts believed to be hegemonic and perfectly "proper" to what one thinks belongs to the individual (the intellect or head, the affect or heart, the desires or loins) are caught up and constrained within the graphics of the supplement.

73. Alcidas, too, had defined writing as a game (*paidia*). Cf. Paul Friedlander, *Platon: Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit*, part 1, chap. 5, and A. Diès, p. 427.

Sperm, water, ink, paint, perfumed dye: the *pharmakon* always penetrates like a liquid; it is absorbed, drunk, introduced into the inside, which it first marks with the hardness of the type, soon to invade it and inundate it with its medicine, its brew, its drink, its potion, its poison.

In liquid, opposites are more easily mixed. Liquid is the element of the *pharmakon*. And water, pure liquidity, is most easily and dangerously penetrated then corrupted by the *pharmakon*, with which it mixes and immediately unites. Whence, among all the laws governing an agricultural society, comes the one severely protecting water. Principally against the *pharmakon*:

Water, above all things, is exceptionally necessary for the growth of all garden produce, but is easily corrupted. It is not easy to affect the other contributory causes of the growth of products of the ground—the soil, the sunlight, the winds—by doctoring (*pharmakeusesin*), diverting, or intercepting the supply, but water can be tampered with in all these ways and the law must accordingly come to the rescue. So we shall meet the case by enacting as follows. If one man intentionally tampers with another's supply, whether of spring water or standing water, whether by way of drugging (*pharmakeiais*), of digging, or of abstraction, the injured party shall put the amount of damage on record, and proceed at law before the urban commissioners. A party convicted of putting poison (*pharmakeiais*) in the waters, shall, over and above the payment of the fine imposed, undertake the purification of the contaminated springs or reservoir in such fashion as the canon law may direct this purification to be performed in the individual case. (*Laws VIII, 845d-e*)

Writing and speech have thus become two different species, or values, of the trace. One, writing, is a lost trace, a nonviable seed, everything in sperm that overflows wastefully, a force wandering outside the domain of life, incapable of engendering anything, of picking itself up, of regenerating itself. On the opposite side, living speech makes its capital bear fruit and does not divert its seminal potency toward indulgence in pleasures without paternity. In its seminar, in its seminary, it is in conformity with the law. In it there is still a marked unity between *logos* and *nomos*. What is the law in question? Here is how the Athenian states it:

That was exactly my own meaning when I said I knew of a device for establishing this law of restricting procreative intercourse to its natural function by abstention from congress with our own sex, with its deliberate murder of the race and its wasting of the seed of life on a

stony and rocky soil, where it will never take root and bear its natural fruit, and equal abstention from any female field whence you would desire no harvest. Once suppose this law perpetual and effective—let it be, as it ought to be, no less effective in the remaining cases than it actually is against incest with parents—and the result will be untold good. It is dictated, to begin with, by nature's own voice, leads to the suppression of the mad frenzy of sex, as well as marriage breach of all kinds, and all manner of excess in meats and drinks, and wins men to affection of their wedded wives. There are also numerous other blessings which will follow, if one can only compass the establishment of such a law. Yet should some young and lusty bystander of exuberant virility (*pollou spermatos mestos*) overhear us as we propose it, he might probably denounce our enactments as impracticable folly and make the air ring with his clamor. (*Laws VIII, 838e-839b*)

One could cite here both the writing and the pederasty of a young man named Plato. And his ambiguous relation to the paternal supplement: in order to make up for the father's death, he transgressed the law. He repeated the father's death. These two gestures contradict each other or cancel each other out. Whether it be a question of sperm or of writing, the transgression of the law is a priori subject to a law of transgression. Transgression is not thinkable within the terms of classical logic but only within the graphics of the supplement or of the *pharmakon*. Of that *pharmakon* which can equally well serve the seed of life and the seed of death, childbirth and abortion. Socrates was well aware of that:

Socrates: Moreover, with the drugs (*pharmakia*) and incantations they administer, midwives can either bring on the pains of labor or allay them at their will, make a difficult labor easy, and at an early stage cause a miscarriage if they so decide. (*Theaetetus, 149c-d*)

The scene becomes more complicated: while condemning writing as a lost or parricidal son, Plato behaves like a son writing this condemnation, at once repairing and confirming the death of Socrates. But in this scene where we have remarked the apparent absence of the mother, Socrates is not really the father, either; only the surrogate father. This *accoucheur*, the son of a midwife, this intercessor, this go-between is neither a father, even though he takes the father's place, nor a son, even though he is the son's comrade or brother and obeys the paternal voice of God. Socrates is the supplementary relation between father and son. And when we say that Plato writes from out of the father's death, we are thinking not only of some event entitled "the death of Socrates" which, it is said, Plato did not attend (*Phaedo, 59b*: "I

believe that Plato was ill"); but primarily of the sterility of the Socratic seed left to its own devices. Socrates knows that he will never be a son, nor a father, nor a mother. The knowledge the go-between needs for matchmaking should have been the same as the knowledge the midwife needs for delivering ("Consider the knowledge of that sort of plant or seed that should be sown in any given soil. Does that not go together with skill in tending and harvesting the fruits of the earth?" *Theaetetus*, 149e), if prostitution and transgression of the law had not kept them separate. If Socrates' art is still better than that of a matchmaker-midwife, it is no doubt because his task is to distinguish between apparent or false fruit (*eidōlon kai pseudos*) and true living fruit (*gonimon te kai alēthes*). But for the essential, Socrates shares the lot of the midwife: sterility. "I am so far like the midwife that I cannot myself give birth to wisdom. . . . Heaven constrains me to serve as a midwife, but has debarred me from giving birth." And let us recall the ambiguity of the Socratic *pharmakon*, both anxiogenic and tranquilizing: "My art has power to bring on these pangs or to allay them" (150a–151b).

The seed must thus submit to *logos*. And in so doing, it must do violence to itself, since the natural tendency of sperm is opposed to the law of *logos*: "The marrow . . . we have named semen. And the semen, having life and becoming endowed with respiration, produces in that part in which it respire a lively desire of emission, and thus creates in us the love of procreation. Wherefore also in men the organ of generation becoming rebellious and masterful, like an animal disobedient to reason (*tou logou*), and maddened with the sting of lust, seeks to gain absolute sway" (*Timaeus*, 91b).

One must here take care: at the moment Plato seems to be raising writing up by turning live speech into a sort of psychic *graphē*, he maintains this movement within a problematic of *truth*. Writing *en tēi psuchēi* is not pathbreaking writing, but only a writing of transmission, of education, of demonstration, or at best, of dis-covering, a writing of *alētheia*. Its order is didactic, maieutic, or at any rate elocutionary. Dialectical. This type of writing must be capable of sustaining itself in living dialogue, capable most of all of properly teaching the true, as it is *already* constituted.

This authority of truth, of dialectics, of seriousness, of presence, will not be gainsaid at the close of this admirable movement, when Plato, after having in a sense reappropriated writing, pushes his irony—and his seriousness—to the point of rehabilitating a certain form of play. Compared with other pastimes, playful hypomnesic writing, second-rate writing, is preferable, should "go ahead." Ahead of the other brothers, for there are even worse seeds in the family. Hence the dialectician will sometimes write,

amass monuments, collect *hypomnēmata*, just for fun. But he will do so while still putting his products at the service of dialectics and in order to leave a trace (*ikhnos*) for whoever might want to follow in his footsteps on the pathway to truth. The dividing line now runs less between presence and the trace than-between the dialectical trace and the nondialectical trace, between play in the "good" sense and play in the "bad" sense of the word.

Socrates: He will sow his seed in literary gardens, I take it, and write when he does write by way of pastime (*paidias kharin*), collecting a store of reminders (*hypomnēmata*) both for his own memory, against the day "when age oblivious comes," and for all such as tread in his footsteps (*tauton ikhnos*), and he will take pleasure in watching the tender plants grow up. And when other men resort to other pastimes, regaling themselves with drinking parties and suchlike, he will doubtless prefer to indulge in the recreation I refer to.

Phaedrus: And what an excellent one it is, Socrates! How far superior to the other sort is the recreation that a man finds in words (*en logois*), when he discourses about justice and the other topics you speak of.

Socrates: Yes indeed, dear Phaedrus. But far more excellent, I think, is the serious treatment (*spoudē*) of them, which employs the art of dialectic. The dialectician selects a soul of the right type, and in it he plants and sows his words founded on knowledge (*phuteuēi te kai speirēi me' epistēmēs logous*), words which can defend (*boēthein*) both themselves and him who planted them, words which instead of remaining barren contain a seed whence new words grow up in new characters (*en allois ēthesi*), whereby the seed is vouchsafed immortality, and its possessor the fullest measure of blessedness that man can attain unto. (276d–277a)

9. Play: From the Pharmakon to the Letter and from Blindness to the Supplement

"Kai tēi tēs spoudēs adelphēi paidiai"

—Letter VI, 323d

"Logos de ge ēn hē tēs sēs diaphorotētos hermēneia"

—Theaetetus, 209a

It has been thought that Plato simply condemned play. And by the same token the art of *mimēsis* which is only a type of play.⁷⁴ But in all questions involving play and its "opposite," the "logic" will necessarily be baffling. Play and art are lost by Plato as he saves them, and his logos is then subject to that untold constraint that can no longer even be called "logic." Plato does very well speak of play. He speaks in praise of it. But he praises play "in the best sense of the word," if this can be said without eliminating play beneath the reassuring silliness of such a precaution. The best sense of play is play that is supervised and contained within the safeguards of ethics and politics. This is play comprehended under the innocent, innocuous category of "fun." Amusement: however far off it may be, the common translation of *paidia* by *pastime* [*divertissement*] no doubt only helps consolidate the Platonic repression of play.

The opposition *spoudēlpaidia* will never be one of simple symmetry. Either play is *nothing* (and that is its only *chance*); either it can give place to no activity, to no discourse worthy of the name—that is, one charged with truth or at least with meaning—and then it is *alogos* or *atopos*. Or else play begins to *be* something and its very presence lays it open to some sort of dialectical confiscation. It takes on meaning and works in the service of seriousness, truth, and ontology. Only *logoi peri ontōn* can be taken seriously. As soon as it comes into being and into language, play *erases itself as such*. Just as writing must erase itself as such before truth, etc. The point is that

74. Cf. *Republic*, 60a–b ff; *Statesman*, 288c–d; *Sophist*, 234 b–c; *Laws* II, 667e–668a; *Epinomis*, 975d, etc.

there is no *as such* where writing or play are concerned. Having no essence, introducing difference as the condition for the presence of essence, opening up the possibility of the double, the copy, the imitation, the simulacrum—the game and the *graphē* are constantly disappearing as they go along. They cannot, in classical affirmation, be affirmed without being negated.

Plato thus plays at taking play seriously. That is what we earlier called the stunning hand Plato has dealt himself. Not only are his writings defined as games,⁷⁵ but human affairs in general do not in his eyes need to be taken seriously. One thinks of the famous passage in the *Laws*. Let us reread it despite its familiarity, so as to follow the theological assumption of play into games, the progressive neutralization of the *singularity* of play:

To be sure, man's life is a business which does not deserve to be taken too seriously (*megalēs men spoudēs ouk axia*); yet we cannot help being in earnest with it, and there's the pity. Still, as we are here in this world, no doubt, for us the becoming thing is to show this earnestness in a suitable way (*hēmin summetron*). . . . I mean we should keep our seriousness for serious things, and not waste it on trifles, and that, while God is the real goal of all beneficent serious endeavor (*makariou spoudēs*), man, as we said before,⁷⁶ has been constructed as a toy (*paignion*) for God, and this is, in fact, the finest thing about him. All of us, then, men and women alike, must fall in with our role and spend life in making our *play* as perfect as possible—to the complete inversion of current theory. . . . It is the current fancy that our serious work should be done for the sake of our play; thus it is held that war is serious work which ought to be well discharged for the sake of peace. But the truth is that in war we do not find, and we never shall find, either any real play or any real education worth the name, and *these* are the things I count supremely serious for such creatures as ourselves.

75. Cf. *Parmenides*, 137b; *Statesman*, 268d; *Timaeus*, 59c–d. On the context and historical background of this problematic of play, cf. notably Schuhl, pp. 61–63.

76. Cf. *Laws* I, 644d–e: "Let us look at the whole matter in some such light as this. We may imagine that each of us living creatures is a puppet made by gods, possibly as a plaything (*hōs paignion*) or possibly with some more serious purpose (*hōs spoudēi tini*). That, indeed, is more than we can tell, but one thing is certain. These interior states are, so to say, the cords, or strings, by which we are worked; they are opposed to one another, and pull us with opposite tensions in the direction of opposite actions, and therein lies the division of virtue from vice. In fact, so says our argument (*logos*) a man must always yield to one of these tensions without resistance, but pull against all the other strings—must yield, that is, to that golden and hallowed drawing of judgments (*tēn tou logismou agōgēn kbrusēn kai hieran*) which goes by the name of the public law of the city. The others are hard and ironlike, it soft, as befits gold, whereas they resemble very various substances."

Let us henceforth keep hold of this rein called *kbrusus* or *chrysoloy*.

Hence it is peace in which each of us should spend most of his life and spend it best. What, then, is our right course? We should pass our lives in the playing of games—*certain* games, that is, sacrifice, song, and dance—with the result of ability to gain heaven's grace, and to repel and vanquish an enemy when we have to fight him. . . . (803b-e)

Play is always lost when it seeks salvation in games. We have examined elsewhere, in "Rousseau's era,"⁷⁷ this disappearance of play into games. This (non)logic of play and of writing enables us to understand what has always been considered so baffling:⁷⁸ why Plato, while subordinating or condemning writing and play, should have written so much, presenting his writings, *from out of Socrates' death*, as games, *indicting* writing in writing, lodging against it that complaint (*graphē*) whose reverberations even today have not ceased to resound.

What law governs this "contradiction," this opposition to itself of what is said against writing, of a dictum that pronounces itself against itself as soon as it finds its way into writing, as soon as it writes down its self-identity and carries away what is proper to it *against* this ground of writing? This "contradiction," which is nothing other than the relation-to-self of diction as it opposes itself to scription, as it *chases* itself (away) in hunting down what is properly its *trap*—this contradiction is not contingent. In order to convince ourselves of this, it would already suffice to note that what seems to inaugurate itself in Western literature with Plato will not fail to re-edit itself at least in Rousseau, and then in Saussure. In these three cases, in these three "eras" of the repetition of Platonism, which give us a new thread to follow and other knots to recognize in the history of *philosophia* or the *epistēmē*, the exclusion and the devaluation of writing must somehow, in their very affirmation, come to terms with:

1. a generalized sort of writing and, along with it,
2. a "contradiction": the written proposal of logocentrism; the simultaneous affirmation of the being-outside of the outside and of its injurious intrusion into the inside;
3. the construction of a "literary" work. Before Saussure's *Anagrams*, there were Rousseau's; and Plato's work, outside and independent of its logocentric "content," which is then only one of its inscribed "functions," can be read in its anagrammatical texture.

Thus it is that the "linguistics" elaborated by Plato, Rousseau, and Saussure must both put writing out of the question and yet nevertheless

77. Cf. *Of Grammatology*.

78. The principal references are collected in Robin's *La Théorie platonicienne de l'amour*, pp. 54-59.

borrow from it, for fundamental reasons, all its demonstrative and theoretical resources. As far as the Genevans are concerned, we have tried to show this elsewhere. The case is at least equally clear for Plato.

Plato often uses the example of letters of the alphabet in order to come to grips with a problem. They give him a better grip on things; that is, he can use them to explain dialectics—but he never "comes to grips with" the writing he uses. His intentions are always apparently didactic and analogical. But they conform to a constant necessity, which is never thematized as such: what always makes itself apparent is the law of difference, the irreducibility of structure and relation, of proportionality, within analogy.

We noted earlier that *tupos* can designate with equal pertinence the graphic unit and the eidetic model. In the *Republic*, even before he uses the word *tupos* in the sense of model-form (*eidos*) Plato finds it necessary to turn to the example of the letter, still for apparently pedagogical ends, as a model that must be known before one can recognize its copies or icons reflected in water or in a mirror:

It is, then, said I, as it was when we learned our letters and felt that we knew them sufficiently only when the separate letters did not elude us, appearing as a few elements in all the combinations that convey them, and when we did not disregard them in small things or great and think it unnecessary to recognize them, but were eager to distinguish them everywhere, in the belief that we should never be literate and letter-perfect till we could do this. . . . And is it not also true that if there are any likenesses of letters (*eikonas grammatōn*) reflected in water or mirrors, we shall never know them until we know the originals, but such knowledge belongs to the same art and discipline? (402a-b)

We have no doubt already been warned by the *Timaeus*: in all these comparisons with writing, we are not supposed to take the letters *literally*. The *stoikbeia tou pantos*, the elements (or letters) of the whole are not assembled like syllables (48c). "They cannot reasonably be compared by a man of any sense even to syllables."⁷⁹ And yet, in the *Timaeus*, not only is the entire mathematical play of proportionalities based on a *logos* that can do without voice, God's calculation (*logismos theou*) (34a) being able to express itself in the silence of numbers; but, in addition, the introduction of the *different* and the *blend* (35a), the problematic of the *moving* cause and the *place*—the third irreducible class—the duality of paradigms (49a), all these things "require" (49a) that we define the origin of the world as a *trace*, that

79. As for the use of letters, in the context of a comparison between the *Timaeus* and the *Jafā*, the Islamic science of letters as a science of "permutation," cf. notably H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*. (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions, 1964), p. 100.

is, a receptacle. It is a matrix, womb, or receptacle that is never and nowhere offered up in the form of presence, or in the presence of form, since both of these already presuppose an inscription within the mother. Here, in any case, the turns of phrase that are somewhat awkwardly called "Plato's metaphors" are exclusively and irreducibly scriptural. Let us, for example, point to a sign of this awkwardness in a certain preface to the *Timaeus*: "In order to conceive of place, one must always, through a process of abstraction that is almost unrealizable in practice, separate or detach an object from the 'place' it occupies. This abstraction, however difficult, is nevertheless imposed upon us by the very fact of change, since two different objects cannot coexist in the same place, and since, without changing place, a same object can become 'other.' But then, we find ourselves unable to represent 'place' itself except by metaphors. Plato used several quite different ones, which have greatly confused modern readers. The 'Place,' the 'locus,' 'that in which' things appear, 'that upon which' they manifest themselves, the 'receptacle,' the 'matrix,' the 'mother,' the 'nurse'—all these expressions make us think of space, which contains things. But later on it is a question of the 'impression-bearer,' the formless 'base,' the completely inodorous substance on which the perfume-maker can fix the scent, the soft gold on which the jeweller can impress many diverse figures" (Rivaud, Budé edition, p. 66). Here is the passage beyond all "Platonic" oppositions, toward the aporia of the originary inscription:

. . . Then we made two classes; now a third must be revealed. The two sufficed for the former discussion. One, we assumed, was a pattern (*paradeigmatos*) intelligible and always the same, and the second was only the imitation of the pattern, generated and visible. There is also a third kind which we did not distinguish at the time, conceiving that the two would be enough. But now the argument seems to require that we should set forth in words another kind, which is difficult of explanation and dimly seen. What nature are we to attribute to this new kind of being? We reply that it is the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse (*bupodokhēn autēn hoion tithēnēn*), of all generation (*pasēi geneseōs*). . . . [This nurse] must be always called the same, for, inasmuch as she always receives all things, she never departs at all from her own nature and never, in any way or at any time, assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her; she is the natural recipient of all impressions (*ekmageion*), and is stirred and informed by them, and appears different from time to time by reason of them. But the forms which enter into and go out of her are the likenesses of eternal realities (*tōn ontōn aei mimēmata*) modeled within her after their

patterns (*tupōtenta*) in a wonderful and mysterious manner, which we will hereafter investigate. For the present we have only to conceive of three natures: first, that which is in process of generation; secondly, that in which the generation takes place; and thirdly, that of which the thing generated is a resemblance naturally produced. And we may liken the receiving principle to a mother, and the source or spring to a father, and the intermediate nature to a child, and may remark further that if the model is to take every variety of form, then the matter in which the model is fashioned will not be duly prepared unless it is formless and free from the impress of any of those shapes which it is hereafter to receive from without. . . . Wherefore the mother and receptacle of all created and visible and in any way sensible things is not to be termed earth or air or fire or water, or any of their compounds, or any of the elements from which these are derived, but is an invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible (48e-51b; The *khōra* is big with everything that is disseminated here. We will go into that elsewhere).

Whence the recourse to dream a bit further on, as in that text of the *Republic* (533b) where it is a question of "seeing" what cannot simply be conceived in terms of the opposition between sensible and intelligible, hypothetical and anhypothetical, a certain *bastardy* whose notion (*notos*) was probably not unknown to Democritus (cf. Rivaud; *Le Problème du devenir et la notion de la matière* . . . p. 310, n. 744):

And there is a third nature, which is space and is eternal, and admits not of destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended, when all sense is absent, by a kind of spurious reason (*logismōi tini notōi: bastard reasoning*), and is hardly real—which we, beholding as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space, but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence. Of these and other things of the same kind, relating to the true and waking reality of nature, we have only this dreamlike sense, and we are unable to cast off sleep and determine the truth about them. (52b-c)

Inscription is thus the *production of the son* and at the same time the constitution of *structurality*. The link between structural relations of proportionality on the one hand and literality on the other does not appear only in cosmogonic discourse. It can also be seen in political discourse, and in the discourse of linguistics.

In the political order, structure is a sort of writing. At the moment of ultimate difficulty, when no other pedagogical resource is available, when theoretical discourse cannot find any other way of formulating the order, the world, the *cosmos* of politics, Socrates turns to the grammatical "metaphor." The analogy of the "large letters" and "small letters" comes up in the famous text of the *Republic* (368c-e) at the point where "keen vision" is necessary, and where it seems to be lacking. Structure is read as a form of writing in an instance where the intuition of sensible or intelligible presence happens to fail.

The same thing occurs in the domain of linguistics. As in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, the scriptural reference becomes absolutely indispensable at the point at which the principle of difference and diacritic-ity in general must be accounted for as the very condition of signification. This is how Theuth comes to make his second appearance on the Platonic scene. In the *Phaedrus*, the inventor of the *pharmakon* gave a long speech in person and presented his letters as credentials to the king. More concise, more indirect, more allusive, his other intervention seems to us just as philosophically remarkable. It occurs in the name not of the invention of graphics but of grammar, of the science of grammar as a science of differences. It is in the beginning of the *Philebus*: the debate is open on the relations between pleasure (*khairein*) and intelligence or prudence (*phronēin*) (11d). The discussion soon founders on the problem of *limits*. And hence, as in the *Timaeus*, on the composition of the same and the other, the one and the multiple, the finite and the infinite. ". . . the men of old, who were better than ourselves and dwelt nearer the gods, passed on this gift in the form of a saying. All things, as it ran, that are ever said to be consist of a one and a many, and have in their nature a conjunction (*en bautois sumphuton*) of limit and unlimitedness (*peras de kai apeirian*)." Socrates opposes dialectics, the art of respecting the intermediate forms (*ta mesa*), to eristic, which immediately leaps toward the infinite (16c-17a). This time, in contrast to what happens in the *Phaedrus*, letters are charged with the task of introducing clarity (*saphēneia*) into discourse:

Protarchus: I think I understand, more or less, part of what you say, Socrates, but there are some points I want to get further cleared up.

Socrates: My meaning, *Protarchus*, is surely clear in the case of the alphabet; so take the letters of your school days as illustrating it.

Protarchus: How do you mean?

Socrates: The sound (*phōnē*) that proceeds through our mouths, yours and mine and everybody's, is one, isn't it, and also an unlimited variety?

Protarchus: To be sure.

Socrates: And we have no real understanding if we stop short at knowing it either simply as an unlimited variety, or simply as one.

What makes a man "lettered" is knowing the number and the kinds . . . of sounds. (17a-b)

After a detour through the example of musical intervals (*diastēmata*), Socrates goes back to letters in an effort to explain phonic intervals and differences:

Socrates: . . . We might take our letters again to illustrate what I mean now. . . . The unlimited variety of sound was once discerned by some god, or perhaps some godlike man; you know the story that there was some such person in Egypt called Theuth. He it was who originally discerned the existence, in that unlimited variety, of the vowels (*ta phōnēenta*)—not "vowel" in the singular but "vowels" in the plural—and then of other things which, though they could not be called articulate sounds, yet were noises of a kind. There were a number of them, too, not just one, and as a third class he discriminated what we now call the mutes (*aphōna*). Having done that, he divided up the noiseless ones or mutes (*aphthonga kai aphōna*) until he got each one by itself, and did the same thing with the vowels and the intermediate sounds; in the end he found a number of the things, and affixed to the whole collection, as to each single member of it, the name "letters" (*stoikheion*). It was because he realized that none of us could get to know one of the collection all by itself, in isolation from all the rest, that he conceived of "letter" as a kind of bond of unity (*desmon*) uniting as it were all these sounds into one, and so he gave utterance to the expression "art of letters," implying that there was one art that dealt with the sounds. (18b-d)

The scriptural "metaphor" thus crops up every time difference and relation are irreducible, every time otherness introduces determination and puts a system in circulation. The play of the other within being must needs be designated "writing" by Plato in a discourse which would like to think of itself as spoken in essence, in truth, and which nevertheless is written. And if it is written *from out of the death of Socrates*, this is no doubt the profound reason for it. From out of Socrates' death—that is, it would here be just as well to say, from out of the parricide in the *Sophist*. Without that violent eruption against the venerable paternal figure of Parmenides, against his thesis of the unity of being; without the disruptive intrusion of otherness and nonbeing, of nonbeing as other in the unity of being, writing and its

play would not have been necessary. Writing is parricidal. Is it by chance that, for the Stranger in the *Sophist*, the necessity and inevitability of parricide, "plain enough, as they say, for even the blind (*tuphlōi*) to see" (one ought to say, *especially* for the blind to see), are the condition of possibility of a discourse on the false, the idol, the icon, the mimeme, the phantasm, and "the arts concerned with such things"? And thus, of writing? Writing is not named at this point but that does not prevent—on the contrary—its relation with all the aforementioned concepts from remaining systematic, and we have recognized it as such:

Stranger: We shall find it necessary in self-defense to put to the question that pronouncement of father Parmenides (*Ton tou patros Parmenidou logon*), and establish by main force that what is not (*mē on*), in some respect has a being, and conversely that what is (*on*), in a way is not.

Theaetetus: It is plain that the course of the argument requires us to maintain that at all costs (*Phainetai to toiouton diamakbeteon en tois logos*).

Stranger: Plain enough even for the blind to see, as they say. Unless these propositions are either refuted or accepted, anyone who talks of false statements or false judgment as being images or likenesses or copies or semblances, or of any of the arts concerned with such things, can hardly escape becoming a laughingstock by being forced to contradict himself.

Theaetetus: Quite true.

Stranger: That is why we must now dare to lay unflinching hands on that paternal pronouncement (*tōi patrikōi logōi*), or else, if some scruple holds us back, drop the matter entirely.

Theaetetus: As for that, we must let no scruple hinder us. (241d–242a)

This parricide, which opens up the play of difference and writing, is a frightening decision. Even for an anonymous Stranger. It takes superhuman strength. And one runs the risk of madness or of being considered mad in the well-behaved, sane, sensible society of grateful sons.⁸⁰ So the Stranger

80. It would be interesting to articulate with this analysis that passage from the *Laws* (VIII, 836b–c), in which a *pharmakon* is sought as a "protection (*diaphugēn*) against this peril," namely, pederasty. The Athenian wonders, without holding out much hope, what would happen "were one to follow the guidance of nature and adopt the law of the old days before Laius (*tēi phusei thēsei ton pro tou Laiou nomon*)—I mean, to pronounce it wrong that male should have to do carnally with youthful male as with female. . . ." Laius, to whom the oracle

is still afraid of not having the strength, not only to play the fool, but also to maintain a discourse that might—for real—be without head or tail; or, to put it another way, to set off on a path where he might not be able to avoid ending up walking on his head. In any event, this parricide will be just as decisive, cutting, and redoubtable as capital punishment. With no hope of return. One lays one's head, as well as one's chief, on the line. Thus, after having begged Theaetetus, without illusions, not to consider him a parricide (*patraloian*), the Stranger asks another favor:

Stranger: In that case, for the third time, I have a small favor to ask.

Theaetetus: You have only to mention it.

Stranger: I believe I confessed just now that on this point the task of refutation has always proved too much for my powers, and still does so.

Theaetetus: You did say that.

Stranger: Well, that confession, I am afraid, may make you think me scatterbrained (*manikos*) when at every turn I shift my position to and fro (*para poda metabalon emauton anō kai katō*). (242a–b)

The discourse, then, is off. Paternal *logos* is upside down. Is it then by chance if, once "being" has appeared as a *triton ti*, a third irreducible to the dualisms of classical ontology, it is again necessary to turn to the example of grammatical science and of the relations among letters in order to explain the interlacing that weaves together the system of differences (solidarity-exclusion), of kinds and forms, the *sumplokē tōn eidōn* to which "any discourse we can have owes its existence" (*ho logos gegonen hēmin*) (259e)? The *sumplokē*, too, of being and nonbeing (240c)? As far as the rules of concordance and discordance, of union and exclusion among different things are concerned, this *sumplokē* "might be said to be in the same case with the letters of the alphabet" (253a; cf. the *Statesman* where the "paradigm" of the *sumplokē* is equally *literal*, 278a–b).⁸¹

had predicted that he would be killed by his son, was also the representative of unnatural love. Cf. "Oedipe," in Delcourt, p. 103.

We also know that according to the *Laws*, there is no greater crime or sacrilege than the murder of the parents: such a murderer should be put to "repeated deaths" (IX, 869b). And even receive punishment worse than death, which is not the ultimate chastisement. "Hence we must make the chastisements for such crime here in this present life, if we can, no less stern than those of the life to come" (881b).

81. On the problem of the letters of the alphabet, particularly as it is treated in the *Statesman*, cf. V. Goldschmidt, *Le Paradigme dans la dialectique Platonicienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), pp. 61–67.

Grammatical science is doubtless not in itself dialectics. Plato indeed explicitly subordinates the former to the latter (253b-c). And, to him, this distinction can be taken for granted; but what, in the final analysis, justifies it? Both are in a sense sciences of language. For dialectics is also the science that guides us "*dia tōn logōn*," on the voyage through discourses or arguments (253b). At this point, what distinguishes dialectics from grammar appears twofold: on the one hand, the linguistic units it is concerned with are larger than the word (*Cratylus*, 385a-393d); on the other, dialectics is always guided by an intention of *truth*. It can only be satisfied by the presence of the *eidos*, which is here both the signified and the referent: the thing itself. The distinction between grammar and dialectics can thus only in all rigor be established at the point where truth is fully present and fills the *logos*.⁸² But what the parricide in the *Sophist* establishes is not only that any *full, absolute* presence of what *is* (of the being-present that most truly "is": the good or the sun that can't be looked in the face) is impossible; not only that any full intuition of truth, any truth-filled intuition, is impossible; but that the very condition of discourse—*true or false*—is the diacritical principle of the *sumplokē*. If truth is the presence of the *eidos*, it must always, on pain of mortal blinding by the sun's fires, come to terms with relation, nonpresence, and thus nontruth. It then follows that the absolute precondition for a rigorous difference between grammar and dialectics (or ontology) cannot in principle be fulfilled. Or at least, it can perhaps be fulfilled *at the root of the principle*, at the point of arche-being or arche-truth, but that point has been crossed out by the necessity of parricide. Which means, by the very necessity of *logos*. And that is the difference that prevents there being *in fact* any difference between grammar and ontology.

But now, what *is* the impossibility of any truth or of any full presence of being, of any fully-being? Or inversely, since such truth would be death as the absolute form of blindness, what is death as truth? Not *what is?* since the form of that question is produced by the very thing it questions, but how is

82. The structure of this problematic is entirely *analogous* in the *Logical Investigations* of Husserl. See *Speech and Phenomena*. One will also reread in a new way, since it is a matter of *sumplokē* and *pharmakon*, the end of the *Statesman*. In his work of weaving (*sumplokē*), the royal weaver will be able to interweave his web through the joining of the opposites of which virtue is composed. Literally, the *sumplokē*, the weaving, is *intrigued* with the *pharmakon*: "But in those of noble nature from their earliest days whose nurture too has been all it should be, the laws can foster the growth of this common bond of conviction (*kata phusin monois dia nomōn emphuesthai*). This is the talisman (*pharmakon*) appointed for them by the design of pure intelligence. This most godlike bond alone can unite the elements of goodness which are diverse in nature and would else be opposing in tendency." (310a).

the impossible plenitude of any absolute presence of the *ontōs on* written? How is it inscribed? How is the necessity of the multiplicity of genres and ideas, of relation and difference, prescribed? How is dialectics traced?

The absolute invisibility of the origin of the visible, of the good-sun-father-capital, the unattainment of presence or beingness in any form, the whole surplus Plato calls *epekeina tēs ousias* (beyond beingness or presence), gives rise to a structure of replacements such that all presences will be supplements substituted for the absent origin, and all differences, within the system of presence, will be the irreducible effect of what remains *epekeina tēs ousias*.

Just as Socrates supplements and replaces the father, as we have seen, dialectics supplements and replaces the impossible *noēsis*, the forbidden intuition of the face of the father (good-sun-capital). The withdrawal of that face both opens and limits the exercise of dialectics. It welds it irremediably to its "inferiors," the mimetic arts, play, grammar, writing, etc. The disappearance of that face is the movement of difference which violently opens writing or, if one prefers, which opens itself to writing and which writing opens for itself. All these "movements," in all these "senses," belong to the same "system." Also belonging to that same system are the proposition in the *Republic*, describing in nonviolent terms the inaccessibility of the father *epekeina tēs ousias*, and the patricidal proposal which, proffered by the Stranger, threatens the paternal *logos*. And which by the same token threatens the domestic, hierarchical interiority of the pharmacy, the proper order and healthy movement of goods, the lawful prescription of its controlled, classed, measured, labeled products, rigorously divided into remedies and poisons, seeds of life and seeds of death, good and bad traces, the unity of metaphysics, of technology, of well computed binarism. This philosophical, dialectical mastery of the *pharmaka* that should be handed down from legitimate father to well-born son is constantly put in question by a family scene that constitutes and undermines at once the passage between the pharmacy and the house. "Platonism" is both the general *rehearsal* of this family scene and the most powerful effort to master it, to prevent anyone's ever hearing of it, to conceal it by drawing the curtains over the dawning of the West. How can we set off in search of a different guard, if the pharmaceutical "system" contains not only, in a single stranglehold, the scene in the *Phaedrus*, the scene in the *Republic*, the scene in the *Sophist*, and the dialectics, logic, and mythology of Plato, but also, it seems, certain non-Greek structures of mythology? And if it is not certain that there are such things as non-Greek "mythologies"—the

opposition *mythos/logos* being only authorized *following* Plato—into what general, unnamable necessity are we thrown? In other words, what does Platonism signify as repetition?

To repeat: the disappearance of the good-father-capital-sun is thus the precondition of discourse, taken this time as a moment and not as a principle of *generalized* writing. That writing (is) *epekeima tēs ousias*. The disappearance of truth as presence, the withdrawal of the present origin of presence, is the condition of all (manifestation of) truth. Nontruth is the truth. Nonpresence is presence. Differance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of truth. At once. "At once" means that the being-present (*on*) in its truth, in the presence of its identity and in the identity of its presence, *is doubled* as soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself. *It appears, in its essence, as* the possibility of its own most proper non-truth, of its pseudo-truth reflected in the icon, the phantasm, or the simulacrum. What is is not what it is, identical and identical to itself, unique, unless it *adds to itself* the possibility of being *repeated* as such. And its identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself in the supplement that presents it.

The disappearance of the Face or the structure of repetition can thus no longer be dominated by the value of truth. On the contrary, the opposition between the true and the untrue is entirely comprehended, *inscribed*, within this structure or this generalized writing. The true and the untrue are both species of repetition. And there is no repetition possible without the *graphics of supplementarity*, which supplies, for the lack of a full unity, another unit that comes to relieve it, being enough the same and enough other so that it can replace by addition. Thus, on the one hand, repetition is that without which there would be no truth: the truth of being in the intelligible form of ideality discovers in the *eidōs* that which can be repeated, being the same, the clear, the stable, the identifiable in its equality with itself. And only the *eidōs* can give rise to repetition as anamnesis or maieutics, dialectics or didactics. Here repetition gives itself out to be a repetition of life. Tautology is life only going out of itself to come home to itself. Keeping close to itself through *mnēmē*, *logos*, and *phōnē*. But on the other hand, repetition is the very movement of non-truth: the presence of what is gets lost, disperses itself, multiplies itself through mimemes, icons, phantasms, simulacra, etc. Through phenomena, already. And this type of repetition is the possibility of becoming-perceptible-to-the-senses: nonideality. This is on the side of non-philosophy, bad memory, hypomne-

sia, writing. Here, tautology is life going out of itself beyond return. Death rehearsal. Unreserved spending. The irreducible excess, through the play of the supplement, of any self-intimacy of the living, the good, the true. These two types of repetition relate to each other according to the graphics of supplementarity. Which means that one can no more "separate" them from each other, think of either one apart from the other, "label" them, than one can in *the pharmacy* distinguish the medicine from the poison, the good from the evil, the true from the false, the inside from the outside, the vital from the mortal, the first from the second, etc. Conceived within this original reversibility, the *pharmakon* is the *same* precisely because it has no identity. And the same (is) as supplement. Or in differance. In writing. If he had *meant* to say something, such would have been the speech of Theuth making of writing as a *pharmakon* a singular present to the King.

But Theuth, it should be noted, spoke not another word.

The great god's sentence went unanswered.

.....
After closing the pharmacy, Plato went to retire, to get out of the sun. He took a few steps in the darkness toward the back of his reserves, found himself leaning over the *pharmakon*, decided to analyze.

Within the thick, cloudy liquid, trembling deep inside the drug, the whole pharmacy stood reflected, repeating the abyss of the Platonic phantasm.

The analyst cocks his ears, tries to distinguish between two repetitions.

He would like to isolate the good from the bad, the true from the false.

He leans over further: they repeat each other.

Holding the *pharmakon* in one hand, the calamus in the other, Plato mutters as he transcribes the play of formulas. In the enclosed space of the pharmacy, the reverberations of the monologue are immeasurably amplified. The walled-in voice strikes against the rafters, the words come apart, bits and pieces of sentences are separated, disarticulated parts begin to circulate through the corridors, become fixed for a round or two, translate each other, become rejoined, bounce off each other, contradict each other, make trouble, tell on each other, come back like answers, organize their exchanges, protect each other, institute an internal commerce, take themselves for a dialogue. Full of meaning. A whole story. An entire history. All of philosophy.

"*hē ekhē toutōn tōn logōn*... the sound of these arguments rings so loudly in my head that I cannot hear the other side."

In this stammering buzz of voices, as some philological sequence or other floats by, one can sort of make this out, but it is hard to hear: *logos* beds itself [*le logos s'aime lui-même* = *logos* loves itself; *s'aime* is a homonym for *sème*: to sow, as in a flower bed.—Trans.] . . . *pharmakon* means *coup* . . . “so that *pharmakon* will have meant: that which pertains to an attack of demoniac possession [*un coup démoniaque*] or is used as a curative *against* such an attack” . . . an armed enforcement of order [*un coup de force*] . . . a shot fired [*un coup tiré*] . . . a planned overthrow [*un coup monté*] . . . but to no avail [*un coup pour rien*] . . . like cutting through water [*un coup dans l'eau*] . . . *en udati grapsei* . . . and a stroke of fate [*un coup du sort*] . . . Theuth who invented writing . . . the calendar . . . dice . . . *kubeia* . . . the calendar trick [*le coup du calendrier*] . . . the unexpected dramatic effect [*le coup de théâtre*] . . . the writing trick [*le coup de l'écriture*] . . . the dice-throw [*le coup de dés*] . . . two in one blow [*le coup double*] . . . *kolaphos* . . . *gluph* . . . *colpus* . . . *coup* . . . *glyph* . . . *scalpel* . . . *scalp* . . . *kbrusos* . . . *chrysolite* . . . *chrysology* . . .

Plato gags his ears [*Platon se bouche les oreilles*; *boucher* = to plug up; *bouche* = mouth. —Trans.] the better to hear-himself-speak, the better to see, the better to analyze.

He listens, means to distinguish, between two repetitions.

He is searching for gold. *Pollakis de legomena kai aei akouomena* . . . “Often repeated and constantly attended to for many years, it is at last with great effort freed from all alloy, like gold . . .” and the philosopher’s stone. The “golden rule.”

One ought to distinguish, between two repetitions.

—But they repeat each other, still; they substitute for each other . . .

—Nonsense: they don’t replace each other, since they are added . . .

—Precisely . . .

One still has to take note of this. And to finish that Second Letter: “. . . Consider these facts and take care lest you sometime come to repent of having now unwisely published your views. It is a very great safeguard to learn by heart instead of writing . . . *to mē graphein all'ekmanthanein* . . . It is impossible for what is written not to be disclosed. That is the reason why I have never written anything about these things . . . *oud'estin sungramma Platōnos ouden oud'estai*, and why there is not and will not be any written work of Plato’s own. What are now called his . . . *Sōkratous estin kalou kai neou gegonotos* . . . are the work of a Socrates embellished and modernized. Farewell and believe. Read this letter now at once many times and burn it”

—I hope this one won’t get lost. Quick, a duplicate . . . graphite . . . carbon . . . reread this letter . . . burn it. *Il y a là cendre*. And now, to distinguish, between two repetitions . . .

The night passes. In the morning, knocks are heard at the door. They seem to be coming from outside, this time . . .

Two knocks . . . four . . .

—But maybe it’s just a residue, a dream, a bit of dream left over, an echo of the night . . . that other theater, those knocks from without . . .