

The Rhetoric of Drugs. An Interview

The following interview originally appeared in a special issue of Autrement 106 (1989) edited by J.-M. Hervieu and then in the collection, Points de suspension: Entretiens (Paris: Galilée, 1992). Michael Israel's translation was first published in 1-800 2 (1991). Eds.

When the sky of transcendence comes to be emptied, a fatal rhetoric fills the void, and this is the fetishism of drug addiction.

A: You are not a specialist in the study of drug addiction, yet we suppose that as a philosopher you may have something of particular interest to say on this subject. At the very least, we assume that your thinking might be pertinent here, if only by way of those concepts common both to philosophy and addictive studies, for example dependency, liberty, pleasure, *jouissance*.

JD: O.K. Let us speak then from the point of view of the non-specialist which indeed I am. But certainly you will agree that in this case we are dealing with something other than a delimitable domain. The criteria for competence, and especially for professional competence, are very problematic here. In the end, it is just these criteria that, whether directly or not, we will be led to discuss. Having identified me as a philosopher, a non-specialist in this thing called "drug addiction," you have just named a number of highly philosophical concepts, concepts that philosophy is obliged to consider as priorities: "liberty," "dependency," "pleasure" or "jouissance," etc. So be it. But I propose to begin quite simply with "concept," with the concept of concept. "Drugs" is both a word and a concept, even before one adds quotation marks to indicate that one is only mentioning and not using, that one is not buying, selling or ingesting the "stuff itself" (*la chose même*).

Such a remark is not neutral, innocently philosophical, logical, or speculative. Nor is it for the same reasons, nor in the same manner that one might note, and quite rightly, that such and such a plant, root, or substance is also for us a concept, a "thing" apprehended through the name of a concept and the device of an interpretation. No, in the case of "drugs" the regime of the concept is different: there are no drugs "in nature." There may be natural poisons and indeed naturally lethal poisons, but they are not as such "drugs." As with addiction, the concept of drugs supposes an instituted and an institutional definition: a history is required, and a culture, conventions, evaluations, norms, an entire network of intertwined discourses, a rhetoric, whether explicit or elliptical. We will surely come back to this rhetorical dimension. There is not in the case of drugs any objective, scientific, physical (physicalistie), or "naturalistic" definition (or rather there is: this definition could be "naturalistic," if by this we understand that it attempts to naturalize that which defies any natural definition or any definition of natural reality). One can claim to define the nature of a toxin; however, not all toxins are drugs, nor are they considered as such. Already one must conclude that the concept of drugs is not a scientific concept, but is rather instituted on the basis of moral or political evaluations: it carries in itself both norm and prohibition, allowing no possibility of description or certification -- it is a decree, a buzzword (*mot d'ordre*). Usually the decree is of a prohibitive nature; occasionally, on the other hand, it is glorified and revered: malediction and benediction always call to and imply one another. As soon as one utters the word "drugs," even before any "addiction," a prescriptive or normative "diction" is already at work, performatively, whether one likes it or not. This "concept" will never be a purely theoretical or theorizable concept. And if there is never a theorem for drugs, there can never be a scientific competence for it either, one attestable as such and which would not be essentially overdetermined by ethico-political norms. For this reason I have seen fit to begin with some reservations about the division "specialist/non-specialist." No doubt the division may prove difficult for other reasons.

From these premises one may draw different, indeed contradictory ethico-political conclusions. On the one hand, there would be the argument advocating a sort of *naturalism* and a return to nature: " 'Drugs' and 'drug addiction,' " one might say, "are nothing but normative concepts, institutional evaluations or prescriptions. They are artificial and their artificial flavor leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. Let us return to true natural freedom. Natural law dictates that each of us be left the freedom to do as we will with our desire, our soul, and our body, as well as with that stuff known as 'drugs.' Let us then do away with this law which the history of conventions and of ethical norms has so deeply inscribed in the concept of 'drugs'; let's get rid of this suppression or repression; let's return to nature."

In response to this liberal, naturalistic, and indeed permissivist decree (*mot d'ordre*) one may, on the basis of the same premises, oppose an *artocialist* politics and a deliberately repressive position. Occasionally, this may, just like its liberal counterpart, prove to be therapeutic, if you prefer, preventative, inclined to persuasion and pedagogy: "we recognize," such a one might say, "that this concept of drugs is an instituted norm. Its origin and its history are obscure. Such a norm does not follow analytically from any scientific concept of natural toxicity, nor, despite all our best efforts to establish it in this sense, will it ever do so. Nonetheless, entirely accepting the logic of this prescriptive and repressive convention, we believe that our society, our culture, our conventions require this prohibition. Let us rigorously enforce it. We have at stake here the health, security, productivity, and the orderly functioning of these very institutions. By means of this law, at once supplementary and fundamental, these institutions protect the very possibility of the law in general, for by prohibiting drugs we assure the integrity and responsibility of the legal subject, of the citizens, etc.

There can be no law without the conscious, vigilant, and normal subject, master of her intentions and desires. This prohibition and this law are thus not simply products of artifice, not artifacts like any other -- they are the very condition for the possibility of a respect for the law in our society. A prohibition is not necessarily bad, nor must it necessarily assume brutal forms -- its methods may be complex and symbolically overdetermined; however, no one can deny that the survival of our culture presupposes this prohibition. It belongs fundamentally to the very concept of our culture, etc.

From the moment we recognize the institutional character of a certain concept of drugs, drug addiction, narcotics, and poisons, two ethicopolitical axiomatics appear in conflict. Briefly put, I am not sure that this contradiction is more than superficial; nor am I convinced that both of these logics can follow through to their conclusions; and finally I am not sure that the two so radically exclude each other. Let us not forget that both start from the same premises -- that is, the opposition of nature and institution. And not simply of nature and the law, but indeed already of two laws, of two decrees. Naturalism is no more natural than conventionalism.

A: The word *toxicomanie* first came into use just before the end of the last century; the kind of behavior which we now understand as the progressive disease of *addiction* previously was not considered a medical, nosological phenomenon. In England one used the old term *addiction*, which emphasized the subject's dependency on a given product, but there was as yet no question of a drug pathology, of a *toxicomania* as such. *Toxicomania*, the notion of drug addiction as a disease, is contemporaneous with modernity and with modern science. Electronic circuitry got hooked up in the argot of drugs and the addict got wired.¹ And at some point, someone, abusively consuming certain products, was for the first time called a *toxicomaniac*.

JD: Actually, in the eyes of the law, dependency on a toxic product or even on harmful medications is not, in itself, what constitutes drug addiction. But let's try to slow down and take a moment to consider this modernity. As always, drugs are here the effect of an interpretation. Drugs are "bad" but the evil in them is not simply a "harmfulness." Alcohol and tobacco are, as objects of consumption, just as artificial as any drug, and no one will now dispute their harmfulness. One may prescribe -- as does the medical community and a certain segment of society -- abstinence from drinking (especially while driving -- a decisive question for the public/private distinction) and abstinence from smoking (especially in *public* places). Still, even if they are considered as somehow "bad," as driving or health hazards, alcohol and tobacco are never denounced as narcotics, they are never branded with such a moral stigma. The relation to "public safety" thus must lie elsewhere.

One can, of course, refer to alcohol or tobacco as "drugs," but this will necessarily imply a sort of irony, as if in so doing one only marked a sort of rhetorical displacement. Tobacco and alcohol, we tranquilly assume, are not really drugs. Of course, their harmfulness can form the object of dissuasive campaigns and of a whole quasi-moral pedagogy, but the simple consumption of these products, in and of itself, does not form the object of moral reprobation nor certainly of criminal prosecution. One can prosecute a drunkard because he is also a dangerous driver, but not because alcohol might have been "classified" as a narcotic (to use the legal terminology of the articles defining the *War on Drugs*). The (secular) prohibition of alcohol, if I'm not mistaken, will be seen as a brief and unique interlude in the history of mankind; and, for well-known reasons, more unthinkable in France than anywhere else. This should remind us that in France drugs, unlike wine, are

supplied mainly by foreign productions. And this is also the case in most Western nations. But of course this fact hardly suffices to explain our modern legislation, that of the [French] laws of 1970 in particular.

What, then, is the modernity, if indeed there is one, of the phenomenon of drug addiction, of its definition, which, as we were just saying, always involves a normative or prescriptive interpretation? This is a very difficult question -- really rather a swarm of obscure questions. One of these leads back to the entire, intimidatingly intertwined history of the division between public and private. I wouldn't presume to take on the issue here. Let us simply note that the legislation of 1970 also condemns the use, whether public *or private*, and not just the dealing of drugs -- what article 626 calls "production, conveyance, importation, exportation, holding, tender, transfer, acquisition." One might have thought this would be enough to prosecute anyone who used drugs, for one cannot very well use drugs without having in one way or another "acquired" them. Were such the case, the principle dictating respect for private life and a right to the free disposal of one's person would at least have been formally and hypocritically respected. But no, the law explicitly specifies that the "use" of classified substances will be punished by fine and imprisonment. The word "use" completes the list of acts that I cite above.²

And the opening of title VI of the law establishing the War on Drugs also speaks of simple *use*: "Any person who illicitly uses plants or substances classified as narcotics is to be placed under the surveillance of the sanitary authorities." The non-illicit use of substances thus classified would be the supervised, medical use, the other version of the same *pharmakon* (an enormous problem, and now more timely than ever before).

Another question is tied up with technical considerations and with any given technological mutation. Drug addiction, as you have made clear, suggests not just a casual use, but rather more a frequent and repeated drug use: thus, not simply an ample supply (numerous techno-economical transformations of the market-place, transportation, international communication, etc.), but the technical possibility for an individual to reproduce the act, even when alone (the question of the syringe, for example, to which we shall have to return). It is this crossing of a quantitative threshold that allows us to speak of a modern phenomenon of drug addiction: namely, the number of individuals that have easy access to the possibility of repeating the act, alone or otherwise, in private or in public, and throughout that zone where this distinction loses all pertinence or rigor.

I think that now, at this moment, it is no longer possible to dissociate this narcotic "modernity" from what is now one of the major events facing humanity, one of the most revealing and, what amounts to the same thing, one of the most "apocalyptic" in its most essential and "interior" history -- that is, AIDS. But we will no doubt have to come back to this. . . .

A: Then do you link this modernity to mass production? to repetition? Do we rediscover here a questioning of writing, of the *pharmakon*?

JD: I have indeed attempted to link up the problematic of the *pharmakon* with the very disconcerting "logic" of what we casually call "repetition." In the *Phaedrus* writing is presented to the king, before the law, before the political authority of power, as a beneficial *pharinakon* because, as Theuth claims, it enables us to repeat, and thus to remember. This then would be a good repetition, in the service of anamnesis. But the king discredits this repetition. This is not good repetition. "You have found a *pharmakon* not for memory (*mneme*), but rather for recollection (*hypomnesis*)." The *pharmakon* "writing" does not serve the good, authentic memory. It is rather the mnemotechnical auxiliary of a bad memory. It has more to do with forgetting, the simulacrum, and bad repetition than it does with anamnesis and truth. This *pharmakon* dulls the spirit and rather than aiding, it wastes the memory. Thus in the name of authentic, living memory and in the name of truth, power accuses this bad drug, writing, of being a drug that leads not only to forgetting, but also to irresponsibility. Writing is irresponsibility itself, the orphanage of a wandering and playing sign. Writing is not only a drug, it is a game, *paidia*, and a bad game if not guided by a concern for philosophical truth. Thus, in the idiom of the familial scene, there is no father to answer for it, and no living, purely living speech can help it. The bad *pharmakon* can always parasitize the good *pharmakon*, bad repetition can always parasitize good repetition. This parasitism is at once accidental and essential. Like any good parasite, it is at once inside and outside -- the outside feeding on the inside. And with this model of feeding we are very close to what in the modern sense of the word we call drugs, which are usually to be "consumed." "Deconstruction" is always attentive to this

indestructible logic of parasitism. As a discourse, deconstruction is always a discourse about the parasite, itself a device parasitic on the subject of the parasite, a discourse "on parasite" and in the logic of the "super-parasite."

Thus, however tempting and instructive it might be, the transposition of this problematic (which for lack of time I have very much simplified) toward what you call "modern drug addiction," together with its theoretical and practical interpretations, requires, as you may well imagine, the greatest prudence.

A: Certain drug-users unwittingly tell us that by writing they seek to end their addiction. When they carry out this project, we often witness an intensification of their agony and of their addiction. And yet, some psychoanalysts insist on the function of writing in providing a release from the symptoms of addiction: in writing itself, does drug addiction end?

JD: We cannot trust in the simple opposition of symptom and cause, of repression and the release from repression, no more than we can count on a simple opposition of memory and forgetting, especially considering the paradoxes of repetition and of the rapport to the other. "Good" repetition is always haunted or contaminated by "bad" repetition, so much the better and so much the worse for it. The *pharmakon* will always be understood both as antidote and as poison. As you were just saying, the drug addict may seek to forget even as he takes on the job of an anamnestic analysis, may at once seek repression and a release from repression (which may well portend that this is not the important boundary, and that it has other, more twisted forms . . .). To this end the addict uses a "technique," a technical supplement which he also interprets as being "natural". . . . Another way of thinking would bring us to that distrust so common at the site of the artificial, of the instrumentalization of memory, thus at the site of the *pharmakon*, both as poison and as antidote, at which point we would also feel that supplementary discomfort inherent in the indecidability between the two. . . .

A: In this regard, we might also consider the consequences of Platonic *mimesis*, itself the product of a technique which at once recalls and opposes itself to an original model.

JD: The question of *mimesis*, or, if I might risk a shortcut, the question of drugs as the question -- the grand question -- of truth. Neither more nor less. What do we hold against the drug addict? Something we never, at least never to the same degree, hold against the alcoholic or the smoker: that he cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality, far from objective reality and the real life of the city and the community; that he escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction. We disapprove of his taste for something like hallucinations. No doubt, we should have to make some distinction between so-called hallucinogens and other drugs, but the distinction is wiped out in the rhetoric of fantasy that is at the root of any prohibition of drugs: drugs make us lose any sense of true reality. In the end, it is always, I think, under this charge that the prohibition is declared. We do not object to the drug user's pleasure per se, but we cannot abide the fact that his is a pleasure taken in an experience without truth. Pleasure and play (now still as with Plato) are not in themselves condemned unless they are inauthentic and void of truth. This then is the system we will have to consider carefully and which we will need to articulate with the political question of fiction or literature. If he does not at least subordinate his poetics to philosophy and to the politics of the philosopher, the man of the simulacrum will find himself driven from the community by Plato (etc.). If in "modernity" we still suppose there to be some affinity between, on the one hand, the experience of fiction (literary or otherwise, whether from the perspective of the "producer," the distributor, or the consumer) and, on the other hand, the world of drug use; and if we imagine this affinity even when the poet does not search for any "artificial paradise," in that case the writer can be acceptable only to the degree that he allows himself to be reincorporated in the institution. He restores the normal order of intelligible production; he produces and his production generates value. Such a justification has its roots in the evaluation of a productivity which is at least interpreted as a source of truth, albeit one that comes through the medium of fiction. The drug addict, in our common conception, the drug addict as such produces nothing, nothing true or real. He is legitimate only in certain cases, secretly and inadmissibly, for certain portions of society, and only in as much as he participates, at least indirectly, in the production and consumption of goods. . . .

A: With certain writers, those of the "Grand Jeu,"³Burroughs currently, Artaud when he was with the surrealists, in his "Letter to the Legislator", drugs are advanced as the object of a political battle, indeed the definitive political battle. With Burroughs, drugs are a

"weapon" used in an endless war, as the final form of "world trade." Such a consideration seems rather timely.

JD: Certainly, for Artaud, in any case, there was the project of uncovering a system of norms and prohibitions which themselves constitute European culture and especially European religion. He hoped that Mexican drugs would allow the emancipation of the subject; provide an end to that subjection which from birth had somehow expropriated the subject; and most of all, provide an end to the very concept of the subject. Already at birth, God had stolen his body and his name. Indeed, at stake in this experience was a desire to be done with the judgment of God. But speaking thus extemporaneously we oversimplify the matter, and I would rather go back to Artaud's texts, to those written not simply "on drugs" and under the influence, but which moreover, in their very language, call into question and wrestle with systems of interpreting drugs. And then we shall have to distinguish carefully between discourses, practices, and experiences of writing, literary or not, which imply or justify what we call drugs. Abysses often lie between them. There is not any *single* world of drugs. Artaud's text is not Michaux's or Benjamin's (I am thinking in particular of his "Hashish in Marseilles"), neither of which should be confused with Baudelaire's text which in turn is not that of Coleridge nor of De Quincey. To conflate such differences in a homogeneous series would be delirious, indeed narcotizing. But then, can one ever condemn or prohibit without also somehow confusing?

A: In literature at least, we can date the concept of drug addiction (*toxicomanie*), in the modern sense of the word, from the publication of De Quincey's *Diaries of an Opium-Eater*. By the same token, alcoholism first appeared in French literature with Zola.

JD: This path deserves to be followed. Pending a more thorough investigation, we might perhaps risk an hypothesis. Let us consider literature, in a fairly strict sense, distinguishing it, at least in Europe, from poetry and belles lettres, as a modern phenomenon (dating from the sixteenth or seventeenth century). Well then, is it not thus contemporaneous with a certain European drug addiction? In fact, one that was tolerated? You've mentioned De Quincey, but we also have Coleridge. We might, just this once, add a word on coffee and tobacco: whole theses, even whole departments of literature (general or comparative) should perhaps be consecrated to the study of coffee and tobacco in our literatures. Consider Balzac or Valéry: two otherwise and obviously very different cases. Would we not be rather hard pressed to find anything analogous, from Homer to Dante, before this literary modernity? We will soon enough come back to Homer. But first consider the figures of dictations, in the dissymmetrical experience of the other (of the being given over to the other, of the being as prey of the other, of quasi-possession) which dictates and compels a certain writing, perhaps all writing, even the most masterful (gods, the daemon, the muses, inspiration, etc.). These forms of originary alienation, in the most positive, productive and irreducible sense of the word, these figures of dictations -- are they not implicated in a history in which drugs, following "the flight of the gods," might one day move into a place that has been left vacant, or otherwise play the role of an enfeebled phantom? Rather it would be a matter of methodical provocation, of a technique for calling the phantom: the spirit, the ghost (*Geist*), inspiration, dictation. More precisely, and what makes the matter even more convoluted, we would be dealing here with a methodology of the contra-phantom. What is a contra-phantom? It is the phantom that one plays against another phantom, yet it is also the phantom of the phantom, the alibi phantom, the other phantom. Thus do we not have a choice between phantoms, or between the simulacra of phantoms?

But let's not act as if we knew just what a phantom or a phantasm was, and as if it would be enough simply to set out the consequences of such a knowledge. In as much as we may not have recognized the full magnitude of this enigma ("What is a phantom?" "What is a phantasm?" "What is the flight of the gods?"), beyond the opposition of presence and absence, of the real and the imaginary, even beyond the properly ontological question, the philosophical, political and ideological "answers" to what we call "the drug problem" will remain expedients incapable of any radical autojustification. We're back where we began, back to the problem of the criteria for competence and the impossibility of any theorem. The responsibilities which anyone (and first and foremost the "decision maker" -- the legislator, educator, citizen in general, etc.) should accept in such an emergency are only all the more serious, difficult, and ineluctable. Depending on the circumstances (tirelessly analyzed, whether macroscopically or microscopically) a discourse of "prohibition" can be justified just as well or just as badly as a discourse of liberalization. A repressive practice (in all its brutal or sophisticated, punitive or reeducational forms) can be justified *just as*

well or just as badly as a permissive practice (with all its ruses). As one can never fully explicate neither the one nor the other of these practices, so one can never absolutely condemn either of them. In an emergency this can only lead to equivocations, negotiations, and unstable compromises. And in any given, progressively evolving situation, these will need to be guided by a concern for the singularity of each individual experience and by a socio-political analysis that is at once as broadly and as finely tuned as possible, I say this not to avoid the question, no more than I do to argue for relativism or opportunism; rather, I would simply describe the lay of the land on which such decisions ought to be made, though the ultimate extent and boundaries of the problem remain unanalyzed and unthought.

This "lay of the land," this equivocation of discourses incapable of any radical justification, this is just what we observe both in the customs and in the discourses that now dominate our society. The only attitude (the only politics -- judicial, medical, pedagogical, etc.) I would absolutely condemn is one which, directly or indirectly, cuts off the possibility of an essentially interminable questioning, that is a critical and thus transforming questioning.

By critical and transforming questioning I mean, of course, a work of analysis (in every sense, from psychoanalysis to the socio-economic-political study of the conditions of drug addiction: unemployment, the geopolitics of the market-place, the "real" condition of what we call democracy, the police, the state of criminal law and of medical institutions, etc.), but also a thoughtful reflection on the axioms of this problematic and on all those discourses which inform it. We have just spoken of the phantom and of ontology, before that we were talking about the simulacrum, truth and repetition. Thus we have at stake here the very genealogy of a vast number of conceptual oppositions: nature/culture or nature/convention, nature/artifice, emancipation/alienation, public/private, etc.

Coming back to the role of the inspired trance in what we habitually call writing, are we not obliged to attempt some sort of a history of dictations, and more precisely, of what we call *inspiration*: if possible, literally, that is to say "physically" (for example, inhalation), or figuratively? What is still "inspired," what "inspires," and who "inspires," in the proper or the figural sense, in the experience of drugs? Where is the boundary between poetry and prose, between poetry and the novel, and between various types of novels and various structures of fictionality, etc.?

There are those who would say, and not without "common sense": when the sky of transcendence comes to be emptied, and not just of Gods, but of any Other, a fatal rhetoric fills the void, and this is the fetishism of drug addiction. Not religion as the opiate of the people, but drugs as the religion of the atheist poets -- and of some others, more or less atheists, more or less poets.

We have neither enough time nor enough space to do it, but were we to follow this thread further, we might come back to those questions we have just touched upon, questions of nature and of production. These two concepts themselves belong to a series of oppositions and lead back to their "history." But let us for the moment put this aside for it is not something that lends itself to improvisation (a brief treatise, in parentheses, on the question of drugs and improvisation, in the arts and elsewhere). We imagine that the drug addict-writer seeks to discover a sort of gracious and graceful inspiration, a passivity that welcomes what repression or suppression would otherwise inhibit: "By the grace of the technical or artificial, and ever *interiorizing* violence of an injection, inhalation or ingestion, by taking into my self, inside myself a foreign body, and actually a nutriment, I will excite a state of productive receptivity: the word being at once received and sent forth, in a sort of creative spontaneity or transcendental imagination, I will let it go, and the violence will have put an end to violence. Reappropriation will be induced by the foreign body and production will take place without effort, etc." This transcendental-imaginary discourse (imaginary for anyone who would profess it as well as for anyone who might hope to unmask it), this is what is condemned by a society based on work and on the subject answerable as subject. A poem ought to be the product of *real* work, even if the traces of that work should be washed away. It is always non-work that is stigmatized. The authentic work (*oeuvre*), as its name suggests, ought to be the result of an effort (with merit and rewards) and of a responsible effort, even up to the point where the effort effaces itself, erasing its traces or erasing itself before that which is given to it. And even if the work (*oeuvre*) comes from an effortless work, a work without work, subordinate to the dictation of the other, still we require that this alterity be authentic and not factitious, neither simulated nor stimulated by artificial projections. It is in the name of this authenticity that drug addiction is condemned or deplored. This authenticity can be *appropriated* -- either

simultaneously (in confusion) or successively (in denial) to the values of natural or symbolic normality, of truth, of a real rapport to true reality, of free and responsible subjectivity, of productivity, etc. And it *appropriates* such values, makes them *proper* to itself the more so in that it is itself founded on the value of *properness or property*, and of the appropriation or reappropriation of self. It is the making proper of the proper itself (*appropriation du propre même*), at least in as much as the proper is opposed to the heterogeneity of the improper, and to every mode of foreignness or alienation that might be recognized in someone's resorting to drugs. And this value might just as easily be the mainstay of a right-wing as of a left-wing discourse, and just as easily in the Orient as in the West.

This specularity should not surprise you. It is inexhaustible. Anyway, some form of drug addiction might just as well have this same fantasy of reappropriation. It might do so naively or with a great "cultivation," dreaming of emancipation and of the restoration of an "I," of a self or of the self's own body, and indeed dreaming of the restoration of a subject once and for all taken back to the forces of alienation, to repression and suppression and to the law which speaks in religion, metaphysics, politics, the family, etc.

As convoluted and paradoxical as this "logic" of reappropriation may be, especially when it's mixed up with the simulacrum, still one can never quite get beyond it. Certainly, for example, it is not missing from certain of Artaud's texts. This logic goes together with a thinking or an experience of the proper which no doubt carries it beyond itself, which carries away and otherwise expropriates itself, which takes itself out of its self. The boundaries here are not between two opposed camps nor between two metaphysics in which one might clearly recognize certain commonalities. They are not the boundaries between "repression" and "release from repression," between suppression and non-suppression. Rather, even if up to a point they could or should yield to certain more or less refined typologies, these boundaries run between an endless number of experiences.

And I find no better word than *experience*, that is to say the voyage that crosses the boundary. An experience between two experiences: on the one hand, the passage, the odyssey, with or without *nostalgia* -- you are perhaps familiar with the work of Adorno and Horkheimer on the lotus-eaters and on this Homeric *nostos*⁴ -- the wandering from which one cannot return, so many possibilities wrapped up in a certain etymology of the word "experience," occasionally associated, like the "trip," with the experience of "drugs," with the rapport to the other and with an opening up to the world in general; and, on the other hand, we have the organized experiment, the *experimental* as an "organized voyage." What does this *between* signify? Perhaps it means that the experience to which I now refer, the thought of this experience or this experience as thought does not as yet yield to a determination within the usual series of oppositions, for example nature/artifice, non-work/work, natural experience/artificial experimentation, etc. Thus I do not speak merely of drug experiences or drug-free experiences (which, after all, are no more natural than drugs), but rather of experiences which are qualitatively highly nuanced, occasionally even for the same "individual," and which we cannot mention without multiplying qualifications and points of view. Every name and every concept by which one might hope to define these criteria, these qualifications and points of view, is already caught up in the most embarrassing discursive sequences. All of them answer to an exceedingly rigidified program, one that is particularly difficult to disentangle. We are here dealing with a metaphysical burden and a history which we must never stop questioning. We have at stake here no less than the self, consciousness, reason, liberty, the responsible subject, alienation, one's own body or the foreign body, sexual difference, the unconscious, repression or suppression, the different "parts" of the body, injection, introjection, incorporation (oral or not), the relationship to death (mourning and interiorization), idealization, sublimation, the real and the law, and I could go on.

A: Do all drug addicts then tell of a lost body or a body they seek to discover, an ideal body, a perfect body?

JD: Here again the opposition between *dominant or canonical* is not at the root of the problem. It seems rather secondary to an axiomatic that remains common to the majority of those who speak and act *against* drug addiction as well as to the majority of those who act and argue *for* it -- or who would at least redirect the prohibition toward more liberal, softer forms (for example, the legalization of "soft" drugs) or toward more intelligent forms, compromises, mediations, negotiations (after all, in our society one rarely finds anyone who publicly advocates drug use). From the prohibitionist, then, we hear of a need to protect society from everything we associate with drug use: irresponsibility, non-work,

irrationality, unproductivity, delinquency, promiscuity, illness and the social costs it implies, and more generally, the destruction of the social bond. But this protection of the social bond, and thus of a certain symbolicity, indeed of rationality in general -- this is almost always presented as the protection of a "natural" normality of the body, of the body politic and the body of the individual-member.

In the name of this organic and originary naturalness of the body we declare and wage the war on drugs, the war against these artificial, pathogenic and foreign aggressions. Again we find a desire to reconstitute what you just called the "ideal body," the "perfect body." But you mentioned this speaking from the user's point of view, from the other side of the problem, if we can so call it (for you see how this opposition remains problematic). Those "products" otherwise considered as dangerous and unnatural are often considered fit for the liberation of this same "ideal" or "perfect body" from social oppression, suppression and repression, or from the reactive violence which constricts originary forces or desire, and indeed constricts the "primary processes." And this is the same naturalistic metaphysics that in order to restore a "prior" body -- we could almost say prior to the fall -- is translated through codes that can occasionally turn out to be quite diverse (of a sort that is vaguely "Nietzschean," "Freudian," "Artaudian," "Marcusian," etc.).

In outlining this false opposition and exaggerating its characteristics, I have spoken of *canonical or dominant* discourses. Now, in analyzing, as I intend to do, the common grounds of these two discourses, we must ask ourselves how and why, precisely, they have become "canonical or dominant." Where does their force or their authority come from? What contract binds them together? What do the two together exclude, etc.? What contradictions or tensions are at work even inside the canonical? As I see it these are the fundamental questions, or rather, and by the same token, the most indispensable philosophical moves. Their necessity cannot, moreover, fail to be felt throughout every "crisis" or "symptom" of "crisis" that our societies are currently undergoing.

Neither of the two opposed "canons" takes into account what we might call the technological condition. The natural, originary body does not exist: technology has not simply added itself, from outside or after the fact, as a foreign body. Certainly, this foreign or dangerous supplement is "originarily" at work and in place in the supposedly ideal interiority of the "body and soul." It is indeed at the heart of the heart. Rushing things a bit, I would say that what, without being absolutely new, now takes on particular and macroscopic forms, is this paradox of a "crisis," as we superficially call it, of naturalness. This alleged "crisis" also comes up, for example, throughout the problems of biotechnology and throughout the new and so-called artificial possibilities for dealing with life, from the womb to the grave, as if a naturalness had never been in circulation and as if the boundary between nature and its other were susceptible to objectification. Let me just quickly add that in certain always unusual circumstances, the recourse to dangerous experimentation with what we call "drugs" may be guided by a desire to consider this alleged boundary from both sides at once, to think this boundary as such, in any case to approach its formation, its simulation, or its simulacrum as it forms (for this boundary does not exist, is never *present* and has no essence). This experience (one to which artists and thinkers occasionally devote themselves, but which is by no means the unique privilege of those who claim or in whom we recognize such a status), this experience may be sought with or without "drugs," at least without any "narcotic" "classified" as such by the law. We will always have unclassified or unclassifiable supplements of drugs or narcotics. Basically everybody has his own, and I don't just mean stuff that is patently comestible, smokable, or shootable. As you know, the introjection or incorporation of the other has so many other resources, stratagems, and detours. . . . It can always invent new orifices, in addition to and beyond those, for example the mouth, which we think we naturally possess. Besides, orality does not open up only to receive, but also, as they say, to emit, and we should have to wonder whether drug addiction consists simply and essentially in receiving and taking in, rather than in "expressing" and pushing outside, for example in a certain form of speaking or of chanting, whether or not we drink what we "spit." There is no doubt, at least for orality, for the hearing and the hearing-oneself-speak, a zone of experience where giving and receiving, inspiration and expiration, impression and expression, passivity and activity can only with great difficulty be opposed to one another, or even distinguished. And then, even supposing that we could draw the lines around it, oral consumption is not limited to any particular classified narcotic, but covers all sorts of non-classified objects of compulsive eating or drinking, things like peanut butter, chocolate, coffee, liquor, and tobacco.

And since I've just mentioned coffee and tobacco you might think of that really very "French," very "Cartesian" writer, one who was also a philosopher of vigilance and freedom, of the will, self-awareness and selfmastery both in thinking and in writing -- I have in mind Valéry, who everyday at dawn organized his trances of writing and lucidity in a secular temple dedicated to the cult of coffee and cigarettes. Another very "French," very "Cartesian" writer, himself also a philosopher of vigilance and freedom, of the will, self-awareness, etc. -- I have here in mind Sartre, who was at one time, so they say, a serious user of pharmaceutical drugs, etc., and "abused" these non-"classified" substances for his writing. . . . Fine, enough of that, but as you see this *coincidentia oppositorum* always takes us back to the question of consciousness, reason and work, truth, the good memory, and of the anamnesis of allegedly primary or natural processes. In the final analysis, or in the very long run (for by definition there will never be any absolutely final analysis) a thinking and a politics of this thing called "drugs" would involve the displacement of these two ideologies *at once* opposed in their common metaphysics.

I would rather you didn't just yet ask whether I am for or against either one of these. Today, here and now, in my private-public life, and in the fixed situation of "our" society, I feel rather more inclined towards an *ethos*, shall we say, that, according to the dominant codes, would be understood as somewhat repressive or prohibitory, at least in the case of the "classified" drugs. (As I have suggested above, one might extend the concept and the experience of drugs far beyond its legal, medical definition, and in a space at once idiosyncratic and public, arrange all sorts of practices, pleasures and pains that no one could rigorously show to be unrelated and without analogy to drug addiction. The possibilities are innumerable and quasi-idiomatic. Every phantasmatic organization, whether collective or individual, is the invention of a drug, or of a rhetoric of drugs, be it aphrodisiac or not, with production, consumption, semi-secrecy, and a semi-private market. . . .) But to justify the *ethos* which draws me towards an apparently "repressive" attitude (in the case of "classified" drugs) I should not, in the final analysis, rely on any of those discourses or axiomatics which I have here sketched out. This much would be strictly necessary, and yet so hard! Thus, in an unprepared interview, in the space of a few pages I cannot, so to speak, do right by this justification. However, what most matters to me, as you might guess, is precisely the necessity -- or the difficulty -- of such a justification, and it is this that guides me in all that I say or do, whether in "public" or in "private," and even when there is apparently no question of drugs as such. And if you consider that I believe neither in the infallible pertinence of the distinction between public and private (a distinction threatened by the very structure of language, and even before language, by the iterability of any mark) nor in the simple essence of the aphrodisiac (the economy of pleasure is so very convoluted . . .) so much the more will you understand my reserve. . . .

As we were saying, the logic of *technological supplementarity* is not much tolerated by either of these two sides, by either of these two "canons." The "new" (new thinking, new behavior, new politics) here supposes a formalization powerful enough to allow us to understand *both canons at once*, even as we displace their shared axiomatics. On the subject of this newness one may have two contradictory feelings. On the one hand, as they say, "you can't get there from here." Such a formalization can never be fully accessible. Granted, but then "fully accessible," plenitude and absolute access, is this not still the language of these two "canons," the shared desire of the drug user and of the one who would "just say no"? On the other hand, and no less obviously, this formalization and displacement are *practically* underway and following a laborious, turbulent, apparently chaotic course; indeed, this is itself the experience of our current "crisis." If today so many socio-ethicopolitical problems intersect and condense in the problem of drugs, it is not simply because of the modern technology we were just talking about. The indissociability of all these emergencies, the impossibility of isolating a "drug problem" only becomes all the more clear; and, by the same token, so does the necessity of treating as such a "general logic" of discourses on the subject of drugs, and *simultaneously* discourses on the subject of, for instance, artificial insemination, sperm banks, the market for surrogate mothers, organ transplants, euthanasia, sex changes, the use of drugs in sports, and *especially, especially* on the subject of AIDS, which we will finally have to discuss. For isn't it true that henceforth AIDS will offer us an opportune and inevitable entry into all these questions?

A: It is ironic that athletes, the role models of our children, should find themselves, because of steroids, in the front lines of the war on drugs. A bike racer says that he does drugs in order to be the first one at the top of the hill. And yet, doesn't the drug addict

also say that he wants to come in, if not in first place, in any case at the top of the hill that is life?

JD: Yes, basically, the farther we go, the more the question of drugs seems inseparable not only from such tremendous questions as "the concept," "reason," "truth," "memory," "work," and so forth, but inseparable also from the emergency rooms where all these things appear to gather symptomatically: for example, what does a society make of literature? What of birth, death, and AIDS? And, yes, you are quite correct, what of sports? etc. Right now everything about the politics of sports (discourses, markets, entertainment) opens up a new main line for the analysis of the social bond. And in this case we can never get around the problem of athletic drug use: where does it begin? How can we classify and track its products? And by what authority do we condemn this drug use or such-and-such a chemical prosthesis? And what about women athletes who get pregnant for the stimulating, hormonal effects and then have an abortion after their event? In any case, as the basis of this condemnation, one still supposes that the athletic hero should treat his body *naturally*. As such he works out, he makes his body work in a production that is not simply individual. Through the socialization of sports, whether it be professional or not, this so-called disinterested work brings into play everything that relates to education: and first and foremost to the education of the will as in itself the overcoming of the self. In this sense not only should sports avoid drugs, but as the anti-drug itself, the antidote for drugs, the *pharmakon of the pharmakon*, it is the very thing which should be kept safe from drugs, far from any possible contamination. Thus, and nothing could have been easier to foresee, we have here the zone closest, most analogous, and most exposed to the evil it excludes. And not merely because, whether as exercise or as entertainment, sports can become literally intoxicating and depoliticizing (if you prefer, the arena for a certain drunkenness) -- and as such, moreover, sports can be manipulated by the political powers that be -- but rather more because competition seeks to stretch, and precisely by the use of such things as steroids, the body's "natural" powers (and also the soul's: there are no sports without soul! I would bet that someone may recognize in sports the essence of man. Man, the rational, political animal, alone privileged with the possession of language and laughter, with the experience of death and with other experiences "proper to man" -- among them drugs! -- let us not forget that he is also an athletic animal). In seeking to stretch out these "natural powers," it is only natural, indeed I should say inevitable that one should think of using such artificially natural methods to go beyond man, toward the hero, the superman, and other figures of a man who would be (no) more man, more man than man. The use of drugs in sports is condemned because it cheats nature, but also because it cheats a certain idea of justice (the equality of all participants in the contest). One wants to uphold the integrity not only of the natural body, but also of good will, of conscience, and of the spirit which runs the body in the athletic effort, in this free work or in this politically healthy game which is, and from Plato on has been, athletic competition.

And yet those who, under certain prescribed conditions, would defend the use of steroids for example, claim that, after all, such drug use does not corrupt an independent will, and thus cannot constitute drug addiction. And furthermore, steroids do not provide any pleasure as such, none that is individual and desocializing. Anyway, as I think we've made clear, drugs in general are not condemned for the pleasure they bring, but rather because this aphrodisiac is not the right one: it leads to suffering and to the disintegration of the self, in short, it desocializes. It belongs to that diabolical couple, pleasure and suffering, denounced in every indictment of drugs. The hierarchy of pleasures goes together with that metaphysics of work and activity (practical and theoretical, thus occasionally contemplative) which is mixed up in the history of Western reason. Here again, Adorno and Horkheimer correctly point out that drug culture has always been associated with the other of the Occident, with oriental ethics and religion (Dialectic 63).

So it cannot be said that the pleasure of drug use (*la jouissance toxicomanique*) is in itself forbidden. Rather we forbid a pleasure that is at once solitary, desocializing, and yet contagious for the *socius*. We pretend to believe that if it were purely private, if the drug user only availed himself of the inalienable right to do as one will with one's own body and soul, then even the most insidious delights would be permissible. But such an hypothesis is ruled out in advance: the consumer is a buyer and so takes part in dealing which means that he participates in the open market, and thereby partakes in public discourse. Besides,

you might even say that the act of drug use itself is structured like a language and so could not be purely private. Straightaway, drug use threatens the social bond. Again, and now just when we had only rather obscurely and dogmatically gotten beyond it, we come back to the problematic instability of the boundary between public and private. The luminaries of the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), identified essentially by the motif of publicity and with the public character of every act of reason, are in themselves a declaration of war on drugs.

Apparently, in the case of what we call sexual perversion, the boundary between public and private lies elsewhere. In fact, here again the matter is very twisted, but since you have asked about a certain modernity of the problem, we might just limit ourselves to this fact that I believe to be absolutely unique to our time and which has left an indelible mark on us:

AIDS. This is not just an event that will immeasurably affect humanity, both on the world's surface and within the experience of the social bond. The various forms of this deadly contagion, its spatial and temporal dimensions will from now on deprive us of everything that desire and a rapport to the other could invent to protect the integrity, and thus the inalienable identity of anything like a subject: in its "body," of course, but also even in its entire symbolic organization, the ego and the unconscious, the *subject* in its separateness and in its absolute secrecy. The virus (which belongs neither to life nor to death) may *always already* have broken into any "intersubjective" space. And considering its spatial and temporal dimensions, its structure of relays and delays, no human being is ever safe from AIDS. This possibility is thus installed at the heart of the social bond as intersubjectivity. And at the heart of that which would preserve itself as a dual intersubjectivity it inscribes the mortal and indestructible trace of the third -- not the third as the condition for the symbolic and the law, but the third as destructuring structuration of the social bond, as social disconnection (*déliasion*) and even as the disconnection of the interruption, of the "without rapport" that can constitute a rapport to the other in its alleged normality. The third itself is no longer a third, and the history of this normality more clearly displays its simulacra, almost as if AIDS painted a picture of its exposed anatomy. You may say this is how it's always been, and I believe it. But now, exactly as if it were a painting or a giant movie screen, AIDS provides an available, daily, massive readability to that which the canonical discourses we mentioned above should deny, which in truth they are designed to deny, founded as they are on this very denial. If I have spoken of an event and of indestructibility, it is because already, at the dawn of this very new and ever so ancient thing, we know that, even should humanity some day come to control the virus (it will take at least a generation), still, even in the most unconscious symbolic zones, the traumatism has irreversibly affected our experience of desire and of what we coolly call intersubjectivity, the rapport to the alter ego, etc.

Enough said; I'll stop my little digression. You may tell me that this is not our subject. Quite right, for if there is no theorem for drugs, it is only because there is no longer any purely identifiable and delimitable subject here. But let's at least remember this: the modern problem of drugs has already been judged to be indissociable, in its genesis and thus in its treatment, from the general problem of delinquency (and not just of delinquency as drug addiction). From now on it is indissociably tied up with and subordinate to the problem of AIDS. If we consider the fact that AIDS could not, as some had thought or hoped it would, be confined to the margins of society (delinquency, homosexuality, drug addiction), we are facing something within the social bond that we might still want to consider as a destructuring and depoliticizing poly-perversion: an historic (historial!) knot or *dénouement* which is no doubt unique. In these circumstances the (restructuring and supposedly repoliticizing) reactions are largely unforeseeable and entirely capable of bringing forth the worst political violence.

In any case, were we to attempt the impossible and limit our discussion to drugs, you know that henceforth, in order to treat all these problems as we should, simultaneously and systematically, we can organize a hierarchy, play the bad against the worse, tolerate the sale of syringes in order to fight the spread of AIDS, liberalize sex education like never before, ever *econdomizing* the full range of social visibility, starting with the schools and the media. AIDS is in the process of redrawing the political front lines and the face of politics, the structures of civil society and of the state, at the very moment when governments thought they could organize against an identifiable enemy, the international

counter-state of the drug lord. And this is a result in particular, though not solely, of the fact that, as I recently read in *Libération*, "AIDS Plagues Junkies."

A: We see, for example in Latin America, how the drug lords have organized themselves as a state within the state. We hear the mayors of major American cities talk about a need for "tolerance" in order to control drug-related crime. As we've said, and all this is evoked in terms of war, the major dealers are notoriously allied with the extreme right-wing. A strange paradox with the drug addict seen as a marginal figure. The legalization of crack? The state as dealer?

JD: One very brief remark. People hardly talk about it, but in this case the opposition between different regimes and types of society becomes more paradoxical than ever. In so-called socialist societies, those based on a philosophy of work and the ideal of its reappropriation by the worker, certain forms of unemployment and unproductivity need to be disguised, and the phenomena of drugs need to be dissembled. A book written in Czechoslovakia has recently revealed a considerable drug problem in the Eastern bloc nations, despite the severity of their laws and criminal prosecution. (In Prague on my way back from a forbidden seminar, the authorities planted and pretended to discover a quantity of drugs in my luggage. Once I was charged and in jail, I learned that no one ever gets off without at least two solid years of prison, *for the slightest contact* with anything to do with drugs.) If AIDS will not respect international borders, how are these regimes going to react when, as in the West, they may have to adopt a more liberal attitude toward one problem in order to better cope with the other, for example by relaxing restrictions on the sale of syringes? And what if they should need to work together with the international police to control this double network? If the AIDS virus were spliced onto a computer virus, you may well imagine what might happen to Interpol's computers and the geopolitical unconscious.⁵ What then would become of the diplomatic corps? What would become of spies? And let's not even talk about soldiers -- we can now no more distinguish between military and civilian than we can between public and private.

We are left with a small and from now on only secondary contradiction: the production and distribution of drugs are, of course, primarily organized by right-wing forces or regimes, by a certain form of capitalism. But in Western Europe drug consumption and a certain drug-culture are commonly associated with a vaguely anti-establishment, left-leaning ideology, whereas the brutality of repressive politics generally has the characteristics of the right, and indeed of the extreme right-wing. We can in principle account for all these phenomena: they are not so strange as they first appear. In its particulars and within its boundaries, the code of these paradoxes is destined for an upheaval, and, to tell the truth, it is already undergoing one. But by recording, transcribing or translating such an upheaval, we can only hope to mitigate its danger. To economize it. This is always possible and it always works: up to a point. As sudden and overwhelming as it may be, this event had broadcast itself even before we could talk about history or memory. The virus has no age.

Translator's note: I would like to express my deep appreciation to Avital Ronell for giving me the opportunity to do this translation and for her invaluable advice and comments on the work. Thanks are due as well to Peter T. Connor and Elisabeth Bloomfield for their very generous help. Any inaccuracies or infelicities of expression are, of course, entirely my own responsibility.

JACQUES DERRIDA is Directeur d'Études at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. His most recent books include *Donner le temps, 1. La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991) and *Points de suspension: Entretien* (Paris: Galilée, 1992), a collection of interviews edited by Elisabeth Weber and from which this interview is drawn.

Notes

- 1 Translator's note: The interviewer here uses the term *le flash*, which was imported into French drug jargon from the vocabulary of photography. The word is roughly equivalent to the English slang "rush."
- 2 Article L. 626: "A penalty of two months to two years imprisonment, or of a fine of 2,000FF to 10,000FF, or of both these penalties together is established for any person who will have contravened the provisions of those regulations of public administration concerning the production, conveyance, importation, exportation, holding, tender, transfer, acquisition, and use of substances or plants, or the cultivation of plants classified by statutory decree as harmful, as well as any act relating to these operations" (emphasis added).
- 3 Translator's note: Le Grand Jeu (the Big Game) was a literary movement in France contemporary with the surrealists that included among its numerous members Georges Gilbert LeComte.
- 4 4 "One of the first adventures of the nostos proper reaches much further back. The story of the Lotus-eaters goes back well beyond the barbaric age of demonic caricatures and magic deities. Whoever browses on the lotus succumbs, in the same way as anyone who heeds the Sirens' song or is touched by Circe's wand. But the victim does not die: 'Yet the Lotus-eaters did not harm the men of our company.' The only threats are oblivion and the surrender of will. The curse condemns them to no more than the primitive state without work and struggle in the 'fertile land': 'All who ate the lotus, sweeter than honey, thought no more of reporting to us, or of returning. Instead they wished to stay there in the company of the Lotus-eater, picking the lotus and forgetting their homeland.' " Obliteration of the will, unproductivity (a society of foragers), non-work, oblivion as the forgetting of the city. Adorno and Horkheimer correctly tie all these motifs tightly together, and, by contrast, tie them to the history of truth or of Western rationality. Moreover, they propose a modern political reading: "This kind of idyll, which recalls the happiness of narcotic drug addicts reduced to the lowest level in obdurate social orders, who use their drugs to help them endure the unendurable, is impermissible for the adherents of the rationale of self-preservation. It is actually the mere illusion of happiness, a dull vegetation, as meager as an animal's bare existence, and at best only the absence of the awareness of misfortune. But happiness holds truth, and is of its nature a result, revealing itself with the abrogation of misery. Therefore the sufferer who cannot bear to stay with the Lotus-eaters is justified. He opposes their illusion with that which is like yet unlike: the realization of utopia through historical labor . . ." (Dialectic62-63). I find this reading compelling, at least within the general perspective of the book. But this would raise other types of questions which I cannot go into here.

- 5 I propose the word telerhetoric or metatelerhetoric to designate that general and more than general space in which these matters would be treated. For example: in the case of computers, is the use of the word "virus" simply a metaphor? And we might pose the same question for the use of the word "parasite." The preliminary to this sort of problematic should deal with rhetoric itself, as a parasitic or viral structure: in its origins and in general. Whether viewed from up close or from far away, does not everything that comes to affect the proper have the form of a virus (neither alive nor dead, neither human nor "reappropriable by the proper of man," nor generally subjectivable)? And doesn't rhetoric always obey a logic of parasitism? Or rather, doesn't the parasite logically and normally disrupt logic? If rhetoric is viral or parasitic (without being the AIDS of language it at least opens up the possibility of such an affection) how should we consider the rhetorical-semantic drift of words like "virus," "parasite," etc.? And furthermore, the computer virus, just like its "literal" counterpart, attacks, in this case telephonically, something like the "genetic code" of the computer (cf. Fabien Gruhier, "Votre Ordinateur a la vérole" ["Your Infected Computer"]). The author notes that computer viruses are "contagious" and "travel through telephone lines at the speed of an electron. . . . One need only be equipped with a modern to be contaminated by a virus from Asia, America, or Timbuktu.") Even now "software vaccines" are being developed. Once again we have the question of the pharmakon as the familial scene and the question of paternity: last year it was a student at Cornell, the son of an official responsible for electronic security, who sent out the virus "guilty" of spreading this "infection" (and will we put quotation marks everywhere, these speech act condoms, to protect our language from contamination?). This so-called computer infection, spliced onto the AIDS virus itself grafted onto drugs, this is more than a modern, worldwide figure of the plague; we know that it mobilized the entire network of American security forces, including the FBI -- and the DST (Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire) and the DGSE (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure). . . . I bring this up to revive our initial exchange concerning the determination of competence. Who will determine the pertinence of these questions? By what authority? According to what criteria? These questions should in return affect everything that we have up to now said about drug addiction. I might take the liberty of mentioning the many places where I have attempted to treat the alogic of the parasite (for example: Of Grammatology, "Plato's Pharmacy" in Dissemination, "Signature Event Context" in Margins of Philosophy, Limited Inc abc . . . and passim).

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. John Cumming. London: Verso, 1979 .
- Artaud, Antonin. "Letter to the Legislator of the Drug Act". Collected Works of Antonin Artaud. Trans. Victor Conti. Vol. 1. London: Calder, 1968 . 58-62. 4 vols. 1968-74.
- Baudelaire, Charles. "Les Paradis artificiels". Oeuvres complètes. Ed. Claude Pichois. Vol. 2. Paris: Gallimard, 1975 .
- Benjamin, Walter. "Hashish in Marseilles". Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Ed. and intro. Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken, 1978 . 137-45.
- Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*. New York: Grove, 1962 .
- De Thomas Quincey. *Diaries of an English Opium-Eater, and Susperia de profundis*. Boston: Ticknor, 1855 .
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976 .
- _____. *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1988 .
- _____. "Plato's Pharmacy". Dissemination. Trans. and intro. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981 . 61-171.
- _____. "Signature Event Context". Margins of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982 . 307-30.

Gruhier, Fabien. "*Votre Ordinateur à la vérole.*" *Nouveau Observateur* 18-24 Nov. 1988 .
Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. C. J. Rowe. Warminster, UK: Aris, 1988.
Zola, Émile. *L'Assomoir*. Paris: Fasquelle, 1977 .