

Pharmakon and the Scene of Writing¹

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Abstract

This article deals with the view of language as a kind of pharmakon in the sense that was introduced into linguistics and philosophy by Plato. This kind of understanding of language reveals not only its positive and creative character, but also its destructive traits. The article presents the changes in the understanding of what traditionally was found to be a language. Starting with Platonian vision of language, through its Derridean explanation, to contemporary specialists dealing with theory of translation process – we follow the evolution of the phenomena that shaped our contemporary thinking about the human being.

Keywords: pharmakon, language, meaning, translation

Streszczenie

Farmakon i scena pisania

Artykuł dotyczy problematyki języka jako farmakonu w sensie nadanym mu przez Platona i wprowadzonym przez niego do filozofii i dalej językoznawstwa. Ten rodzaj rozumienia języka odkrywa nie tylko jego pozytywny i twórczy charakter, ale również jego destrukcyjne cechy. Artykuł prezentuje zmiany w rozumieniu tego, co tradycyjnie było uważane za język. Śledzimy jego zmiany poczynając od Platona, poprzez derridiańskie wyjaśnienie języka, aż do jego ujęcia przez klasyków zajmujących się procesami tłumaczenia. W ten sposób w artykule śledzimy ewolucję zjawiska, które ukształtowało nasze współczesne myślenie o podmiocie.

Słowa kluczowe: farmakon, język, znaczenie, tłumaczenie

¹ The title is an altered version of the title of chapter in the book *Writing and Difference* by Jacques Derrida.

The beginning of writing takes place at the moment of oblivion, when you forget where you are, what you do, what you think or who you are. It is thus the distance to truth that makes writing's beginning. The story of the pharmakon is precisely this kind of story – a story about forgetting.

The first forgetting happened when the god Teuth presented the invention of writing to King Thamus. He said that he had found a remedy that would make it possible for people to remember more, be wiser and forget less. The remedy (*pharmakon* in Greek) that could achieve these goals was the discipline of writing. Plato, who describes this story in the dialog "Phedrus", is suspicious of this invention because, as he says, "there is no such thing as a harmless remedy. The pharmakon can never be only beneficial" (Derrida [1972] 2010: 102), for what at first seems to be a remedy may later prove to be a poison. Its poisonous character is clearly visible, when we look closer at its original meaning, because "in ancient Athens, "*Pharmakos*" referred to a sacrifice ritual, a kind of societal catharsis, used to expiate and shut out the evil, out of the body and out of the city. "Pharmakos" was the name given to a human scapegoat (a slave, a cripple or a criminal) who was chosen to become an "outsider", being expelled from the community at times of disaster (famine, invasion or plague) or at times of calendrical crisis" (<https://flutuante.wordpress.com/2009/08/01/pharmakon-the-cure-or-the-poison/>). Writing, then, in the latter translation of the Greek word, is nothing more than a poison which stops people from remembering, because they have signs and words that will be substituted for the originally remembered thoughts. This poison will make people lazy, they will no longer have the incentive to remember, because writing will do this for them. Plato writes: "under pretext of supplementing memory, writing makes one even more forgetful, far from increasing knowledge it diminishes it (...) it does not reinforce mneme, but only hypomnesis" (<https://flutuante.wordpress.com/2009/08/01/pharmakon-the-cure-or-the-poison/>). 'Mneme' means remembering and knowledge, whereas 'hypomnesis' is only opinion. In other words, it means that using writing will not increase human knowledge and abilities to remember, but, quite the contrary, it will increase the power of opinion, it will make people remember less and be on the mercy of their forgetting. In another quotation concerning the Pharmakon, Plato writes: "writing is essentially bad, external to memory, productive not of science but of belief, not of truth but of appearances. The pharmakon produces a play of appearances" (Derrida 2010: 105). The last sentence introduces us into the sphere of Platonian philosophy, the essence of which is the division of reality into two spheres, one sphere of appearances and phenomena, and the other the sphere of ideas, which alone participates in the truth and is the only true part of reality. This division originates in the famous Platonian metaphor about the cave and people who are imprisoned in this cave. People are chained to the walls and cannot see the sun and light outside.

What they see are only shadows of the true things, shadows that are reflected on the walls of the cave, shadows that create the fake reality. What they cannot see are the true ideas, things in themselves, the only true world. In our metaphor of Pharmakon Plato assumes that writing introduces us only into the sphere of appearances, the fake reality, the reality of belief and not of truth. Thus, here we have the idea that writing as the Pharmakon does not provide a tool which introduces us into reality; on the contrary, it deludes us, deceives us and makes us idle and lazy.

This repression of writing by Plato contributed to the appearance of another issue; writing treated on the one hand as a remedy, and on the other as a poison led to the division into the real idea and the fake belief. However, since Plato, both parts of this division have become the parts of “logos”, the ultimate One, that embraces the two binary oppositions and makes them the elements of the greater “Whole”. This approach to these constitutive binary oppositions has resulted in thinking that adopts a division between the subject and the object of knowledge. This kind of thinking, which assumes that there exist a subject and object of knowledge, is referred to as logocentric thinking, and is realized always when scientists or philosophers base their thinking on these two contraries. And we have to admit that it is not uncommon, because the whole tradition of continental philosophy since Plato adopted this vision of subject who tries to get to know something about the object of his inquiry. Since that time, the notion of logos with its assumption about the two contradicted sites that take part in acquiring knowledge, namely: subject and object, has become the only possible way of acquiring this knowledge, which is called episteme, and is treated as the only one and incontestable source of truth. This kind of knowledge that originates in the division into the true and the false or unreal has dominated philosophy throughout the ages: it was extended in the Cartesian division into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, (what means into things that think and things that are made of matter and may be shaped differently), the Kantian division into noumena and phenomena (which means into things-in-themselves, things that exist in true reality, and things that are only phenomena, appearances) or the Husserlian fission into *eidōs* and the appearances. All these divisions indicate the same origin, which is the central division into Platonic ideas and their resemblances. Logos became here the synonym of the repression of one part of these dualities and the elevation of the other part. Thus, knowledge of the episteme was found to be the real knowledge, while writing was left alone on the scene, having been diagnosed as that which is unreal, irresponsible or weak. A change in this situation only appeared with the philosophy of deconstruction, whose main goal was to deconstruct or disseminate the notion of logos.

To deconstruct the notion of logos Jacques Derrida first made use of the theory of symptoms introduced by Sigmund Freud. Symptoms designate “the form of the return of the repressed” (Derrida [1967] 2009: 247) and “the repression of that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence” (Derrida[1967] 2009: 247). Writing then becomes something that “threatens presence”, because it destroys what is assumed to be the only valid form of knowledge, it destroys episteme based on true ideas, it contradicts the whole idea of logos which assumes the equal value of poisonous and curative power of Pharmakon. Writing threatens presence because it wants to present itself as something beneficial only, it takes only one side of equation and, in this way, it overthrows the myth of equating powers of logos. It is a kind of introductory deconstruction of this term. However, on the other hand, it was presence with itself that was always identified with logos in traditional philosophy. Logos was treated as the only truth that stands above all those things that are only appearances and signs were treated here as the third level of representation, following the true ideas and their resemblances. Thus, logos as the ultimate One, as the Presence in itself, dethrones signs which construct the third level representational discourse treated as the very weak imitation of true reality. Moreover, logos is assumed to be the symbol and the incarnation of this presence, toward which we are also directed when we access knowledge. Jacques Derrida, author of “Writing and Difference”, the work which indicates the starting point of the postmodern current in philosophy named deconstruction, states that there is something clear and coherent beneath this representational discourse of logos, something that may not be visible at first, but which, nevertheless, may endanger this representation. It becomes visible when we find that this representational discourse is the effect of “a subject”. Subject’s self-identification possesses the synthetizing power that makes this discourse stable and coherent, but at the same time the danger lies in the possibility of breaking what seems to be unchangeable. And what is stable and unchangeable if not the presence of the subject with itself? This presence may be destroyed when the subject can no longer master its internal absences. Here the theory by Freud may be helpful and in this situation we may ask what kind of symptoms will appear when the loss of power of the subject over itself takes place. The symptoms of this loss may be visible in writing. Freud, as presented in the writings by Derrida, states that it is here that we become witnesses to the emergence of something called the scene of writing, on which, or within which, we can investigate the traces of the dissolution of the power of logos incarnated in the subjectivity of a subject. On, or within, the scene of writing we can follow all internal conflicts, we can resolve them with its help, and when writing is treated as a tool to signify all breakdowns, it may also become a mechanism for identifying potential, future meanings. By taking these conflicts into the sphere of writing, by

constituting this scene, we can attain their resolution and achieve clear and fluent narration. In the works of Derrida it appears that the only way to analyze the symptoms of something that could have been repressed is to write. What has been repressed must become present on the scene of writing and then cured by making oneself stand face to face with what one really thinks, feels or experiences.

What, then, is this presence, this confidence that must be broken, that must be taken into account if the subject wants to cure its internal conflicts? This presence is the certainty of logos, and its breaks or disruptions become the inauguration of the stream of narration: writing. The reason for this disruption is that writing dissipates what is gathered in one point of certainty, in the *eidos* of knowledge, in the conviction of possessing truth and superiority. A question occurring in the midst of this presence inaugurates a conversation – a conversation between the subject and itself alone. This questioning is the function of writing; it produces a dissolution of that, what is stable, namely logos. Constant questioning introduced into subsequent unities of meaning is called deconstruction.

To deconstruct the notion of logos, in addition to Freud's theory of symptoms, the idea of creative *différance*, a term invented by Derrida, is necessary. *Différance* means the differentiation of signification into what is signified (the signified) and that which signifies (the signifier). The signifier signifies and inaugurates or produces new meanings. The signified is the trace that is left after the workings of the signifier. Both these elements of the sign receive their meaning on the basis of the Saussurean division into *signifiant* and *signifié*. The workings of signification distinguish particular elements in the writing, one of which can be found as signifying, the other, as the result of this signification, remains as the stable basis for understanding. Without this internal division into signifier and signified the process of writing could not be realized, and the conflict could not be resolved because, being internal, the significations are visible only as symptoms on the surface of linguistic production. As de Saussure points out: "without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language" (de Saussure [1910] 1959: 112). Language, thus, has the power to determine particular meanings, to delimit something what previously was only the chaotic mass of undifferentiated expressions, experiences and feelings. What was undifferentiated then becomes distinct, delimited and named. It is language with its signifying power that helps to organize this mass of unexpressed thought. Signifier enters where undifferentiation ruled and inaugurates new delimitations, new distinctions, thus, new complete meanings appear. These meanings, later are consolidated, they are sedimented and become what is called signified: the stable, coherent meaning. Thus, on the

one hand, what makes the process of meaning making is called signifier, on the other hand, what leaves the reader with particular, complete meanings is called signified. Written language is, as a result, predestined to distinguish and localize meaning, all the more so because of the signifying power of signified and signifier.

Différance works on the basis of this assumption about the workings of signifier and signified. It deconstructs the “pure and simple” presence of logos. This is most visible in the voice’s relation towards itself. Whenever we grasp something that could be considered to have stable and coherent meaning, a break or disruption appears. This break or disruption is produced by the power of differentiation, which creates a gap within the coherent whole of logos. Logos expands within itself and a space of absence and loss is introduced into it. This space of absence must then be managed by the process of writing in order to prevent any conflict. Writing is the mechanism that governs the appearance of this break, it counteracts the complete submission to the overwhelming powers of subjective, internal, as well as social discourse. In this way writing is able to cure the loss or absence and give back whatever was uniquely particular in this discourse. Hence, writing appears as a machine that governs individual desire and helps it to break through to the surface discourse, to be written and saved against the powers of official language.

Différance is hence a kind of “auto-affection, original repetition, and duplication” (Derrida[1967] 2009: 247), because it repeats something that seems to be at its origin. In the works of Derrida there is nothing like a single origin of a thing, for in the midst of *eidos* (which means the essence of things) there is always some kind of duplication, repetition – it is this original repetition that makes two from one, and that makes one split into two. It is this repetition, this duplication – that is the origin of things. It is there in this one, in this logos that duplication starts and it is writing that makes the original scission open and visible to the experiencer. It is in the writing that we can follow this disruption and duplication. And the other way round, it is this duplication, this multiplication that makes writing’s flow. It is here that the circulation of meaning always emerges, that the journey, with its detours and wandering, starts. There is no point, meaning or object, only the original wandering without a goal, trying and going round in circles, erring, in other words, constructing a story.

We can summarize, that on the one hand, Pharmakon, as a poison, appears here as the mechanism that dissipates, disseminates and deconstructs the original eidetical point, the potential source of meanings, through introducing the original scission into it, through extending the original distance from which the revealing story can start. Pharmakon has the poisoning power of infecting this stable moment to the point where it is no longer stable and clear. This

poisoning power introduces an extensive story into the middle of *eidōs*. Thus, writing ceases to have its phenomenological character and starts to be of a hermeneutical order. It starts to be a conversation into which new meanings can be melted, a conversation which introduces a horizon full of different potentialities of meanings into the middle of *eidōs*. However, when we analyze the pharmakon, or its role in the process of writing or differentiating in the form of *différance*, we cannot use the ideas of hermeneutics, particularly the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, because this author uses Platonian and Hegelian dialectics, which is equivalent to logocentric thinking, and logos is the main obstacle in writing treated as a way of governing the internal subject's absences and lacks. However, the story rather than the point of original vision, *eidōs*, is something that introduces a hermeneutical element into the deconstructionist point of view.

On the other hand, the pharmakon is also a cure, a remedy for the original mistake, for the original lack or absence, so writing as a cure joins the disseminated parts of the signified with the help of deconstructive signifier, thanks to *différance*. However, this connection between the elements of writing is not what Derrida wanted to achieve. On the contrary, he tried to indicate that we will never achieve a coherent, cohesive structure of writing, which, with its completeness, will protect us against the maladies of lack. Such a complete, cohesive structure of writing would be another version of presence and would be the source of all the disadvantages of this presence, like the hidden inability to localize its dangers, or the fiasco in naming its potential breakdowns. Derrida observes that it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who claimed that "straining toward the reconstruction of presence" eliminates the curable power of writing. However, it is exactly the point, because Rousseau put higher the value of presence than the value of writing. He openly "condemns writing as destruction of presence and as disease of speech" (Derrida [1967]1997: 142). Following Derrida we can say that Rousseau "valorizes and disqualifies writing at the same time" (Derrida [1967]1997: 142), because he wants to restore the value of writing through making it a full presence. It is in disagreement with the overall assumption of Freud's theory, where the value of writing lies exactly in its ability to record and make visible what otherwise stays hidden in the complete closeness and total self-identity and self-proximity of presence. Derrida in his famous passage from *Of Grammatology* states that Rousseau wanted to restore the power of writing as presence and this restoration should come through winning over "a certain absence and by a sort of calculated effacement, [it should be the restoration of] presence disappointed of itself in speech" (Derrida [1967]1997: 142). First, winning over absence deprives writing its multiplying power of creation, as absences are the source of its internal force, while, secondly, speech disappoints presence because it loses its meanings while it disappears. Here it needs to be explained that speech, as the second category

connected with logos and writing, cancels and withdraws its meaning at the same moment it gives it for reconsideration. Derrida formulates it in such a way: “[t]o write is indeed the only way of keeping or recapturing speech since speech denies itself as it gives itself” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 142). Nevertheless, as Raghuramaraju observes “there is a subtle but significant difference between the written as a presence and its relation to possibilities and the spoken as a presence and its relation to possibilities”. (Raghuramaraju, <http://www.esocialsciences.org/ebook/derrida/Raghuramaraju-Derrida@50.pdf>). Similarly to speech, also writing withdraws its meanings, however, its relation to possibilities is better than this of speech. When writing withdraws its meanings something remains: a visible trace, a trace given to memory, along which meaning can proceed and recapitulate its discoveries. This visible trace is the written sign, the written material, thanks to which we can follow to find what was lost in immaterial speech. Thus, even if sign, according to Plato, is the third level of imitation, even if it does not reveal the truth in front of our eyes as ideas do, we can still treat it as the way to present all our maladies and lacks. We can say even more: that writing as the construction made of signs is the only verifiable way to understand what happens inside the subject. It deconstructs the totalizing synthesizing powers of the subject, it inserts the original repetition into it making the proliferation of meanings possible and, thanks to it, elevating the symptoms of subjective disturbances to the surface discourse easy to be read and analyzed as a revealing of a problem. The meaning grasped during the operation of reading disappears in the same way as in speaking, but the difference is that writing creates a scene of writing that may serve as a map to which you can always come back and look for your answers on it. It creates a map of the wanderings along the lines of signification and the emotional and experiential signifying events.

Above all, what appears on this scene of writing that cannot be realized in speaking is the keeping and supporting of the absences. When we *talk* about absence, it disappears in the way all other spoken sentences disappear. In writing we can retain this absence even if it is only an absence – an empty space that follows the line of signification in a narration time or a space empty of the possibility of being expressed. Moreover, this absence is the main mechanism that keeps writing going. This mechanism is grounded in the notion of emptiness and death, which, in the works of Maurice Blanchot ([1969] 2008: 33–49) is inherent to writing. Death, similarly to absence or rupture, is the self-propelling mechanism that puts writing in motion. Its promise of future total absence demands actual realization of that, what, otherwise, could be completely forgotten. This actual realization is writing and the possibility of achieving its material trace. It means that death is a constant element of writing, that it never stops working, and, in this way, it inaugurates the movement of desire and passion which propel the work forward. Derrida

writes that “death by writing also inaugurates life” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 143). By “inaugurating” he means both powers of writing: the power of writing as a poison that inaugurates division and deconstruction, and the power of writing as a remedy that involves the mechanisms that rebuild the distorted narration of the Self. However, it amounts here not only to the workings of a *différance*, which is the proliferation mechanism disseminating meaning, but also to the difference between the two meanings of the word “writing”: poison and remedy. “That difference makes the opposition of presence and absence possible. Without the possibility of difference, the desire of presence as such would not find its breathing-space” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 143). This “breathing-space” is “recognized as the obliterated origin of absence and presence, major form[s] of the disappearing and the appearing of the entity” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 143). Thus, the main condition of writing is here the connective power of pharmakon-writing, in which, by the workings of *différance*, we have to deal with both: presence and absence. Both these phenomena revealed in the process of writing are not, however, “the function of the subject who is speaking” (Derrida [1972] 2002: 229), but rather the powers of subversion which elevate what is internal to this subject to the level of discourse and make it accessible for understanding. So, they are not the destructing powers, but powers of deconstruction, which by multiplication of meanings and discrimination of separate elements, may contribute to better understanding of what is inside that subject. Thus, paradoxically, what could be understood as destruction, is positive deconstruction with all its tools used to make unity separate, named and visible. This is exactly the power of working *différance*, which never amounts to the history of the subject. Quite the contrary, it should be analyzed as represented on the scene of writing with the help of the processes of signification which are used to make its traces conscious and meaningful.

The problem of consciousness and subconsciousness is crucial to the problem of writing as creation. The elements active in writing come from the subconscious; however, they must be transferred from this subconscious space onto the surface of consciousness in order to be noticed and recorded. This procedure of transference of something from one totality of meanings into another takes place also in another area of language and it is also connected with writing as creation, because we never know how much creation will be necessary to approximate what is not accessible for us in a different way. To understand this passage from one region of meaning to the alternative one we also have to deal with the scene of writing, but of a distinct kind. This distinct kind of scene of writing, where language may be captured in its working, is translation. It seems that to follow its ways of production of meaning we can come closer to the essential understanding of how subject may benefit from the working of language as Pharmakon.

Apparently, the advantages of the interrelation of positive and negative forces of writing may be useful in translation, however, it may also be that the process of translation will highlight the ways of working of writing.

This transitory character of language is visible in translation. It is always the classical texts concerning the problem of meaning that use the idea of transference of meaning into another language. Such an idea solves the problem of stable and coherent meaning in its beginning: since we can transfer the meaning there is no doubt that it exists. However, these texts usually ignore the ideas introduced into linguistics by Derrida. They state that translation and the ability to realize it are the proof for the existence of a certain *eidos* – a completed unit ready for translation. These sources state that “translation consists of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language” (Larson 1998: 3). Unfortunately, meaning is never ready to be expressed. It is not a stable entity that can be grasped in a language. It is created in the process of translation and does not stay the same in the source language and the receptor language. Each of these languages describe their own story. The process of transferring meaning means actually more than only “transferring”, we should call it rather the process of creating. It is more the process of expropriation of one meaning from the other, the process of recapitulating meanings’ internal lacks and conflicts. We cannot ever have the right to talk about complete, stable meanings, because they are revealed in the process of becoming meaning, of curing its deficiencies, where this becoming is based mostly on the play and substitution of signified and signifier. Talking about complete and stable meanings makes an impression that meanings exist in the havens of ideas like Platonian logos. Some authors think that they do not. We are used to have meanings in our languages because we are tied to the idea of possessing meaning: it is easier to think that we are in possession of something that our ability to express uses as its counterpart and by the same token can be completed and fulfilled. Georg Steiner in the article “The Hermeneutic Motion” states that when translating we always “venture a leap: we grant *ab initio* that there is ‘something there’ to be understood” (Venuti 2004: 186), so we start translating with “an act of trust” rather than with a stable, finished meaning ready to be expressed. However, this trust – states Steiner – “can never be final. It is betrayed, trivially, by nonsense, by the discovery that ‘there is nothing there’ to elicit and translate” (Venuti 2004: 186), and this comment is much closer to the statements by Derrida that “there is nothing outside the text”. Also José Ortega y Gasset states that the act of translation may be necessarily a utopian project: human beings “never succeed in knowing anything”, some things, like translation, “are impossible in their very essence” (Venuti 2004: 49). However, it is not our fault that translation is impossible, that it is only an utopian project, because it is not we who express meanings, but

meanings who express themselves through us. They are stories within which we are engaged, contexts that play important role in our lives, emotions that serve us to make us stronger. Meaning here is only another story encapsulated in the idea of a subject – something found to be stable identity just in the same way as meaning is supposed to be. True is the statement that “thought may be grasped only as shaped and actualized in language” (Derrida [1972]2002: 230); however, language is not composed of stable, final meanings, it is created while speaking, it is the process of transition, but not of transition of meanings, but rather transition of shivers, lacks, hesitations, weaknesses. Language is the only medium of thoughts, but not in a sense of a “container” of thoughts, but in a sense of their creation. It is in each case a separate, individual story – and this story is called “a subject”. Thus, on the one hand, it is language that is the surface on which subjective narration is realized. On the other hand, this transitory, processual quality of language is the result of trembling of this, what initially seemed to be simple and stable, but later appeared as nondetermined, blurred and fuzzy. It is this trembling that is the substitute of expressed in the process of expressing: thus, it is never “a one”, but, always already and originally, the play of the signified and signifier.

Language is always hanging over the abyss of absence. It has nothing in common with the confidence of *eidos*: expressed and finished. To mean something, language has to come from what is not expressed to the desire of being expressed, so from absence to emotion. So writing is never “a translation”, “a conveying of meaning” as authors of “Meaning Based Translation” would have it. Maybe it would be closer to state after Bell that “to relate one sentence to another and to recognize that word-meaning can only be arrived at through the study of meaning of the word in the linguistic co-text of the sentence and that sentence-meaning depends, just as crucially, on the setting of the sentence in its communicative context.” (Bell 1993: 103) Also the statements by Walter Benjamin about the translation which should try to become “representation of hidden significance through an embryonic attempt at making it visible” (Venuti 2004: 17) are closer to the Derridian formulation. Benjamin assumes that to make translation possible a translator should find an essential substance of a literary work which “contains in addition to information (...) the unfathomable, the mysterious, the ‘poetic’, something that a translator can reproduce only if he is also a poet” (Venuti 2004: 15). So, it is not only the information that must be transferred from one text to another, but rather its main thought, the idea that stands behind the need to write this text. What the author feels responsible for in a text is its main accomplishment, its main intention, and this is, at the same time, what should be captured in translation. As a result we can achieve something like “a pure language” “which is realized only by the totality of (...) intentions supplementing each other” (Venuti

2004: 18), so not the meaning, but the intention as the potentiality, or desire for possessing meaning, are the basic element in the production of the story about individual self.

Nevertheless, these explanations are still far from the Derridean idea that meaning is dissolved and that “reality of language in general remains an unconscious reality, a hardly perceptible and transitory consciousness of the operations we perform when we want to speak” (Derrida [1972] 2002: 229). Writing here, as the basis for the acknowledging of the subject, is faint and its meaning can disappear whenever we try to expose it. So, it is not only the subconscious but also conscious discourse that is fleeting and feeble.

As a result of this transitory character of writing, if we want to write or to translate, we have to transfer our attention from what is given toward what is potentially hidden, and to try to make up with it on the surface of the consciousness. However, before we start to deliver meanings onto the sphere of conscious discourse, we are faced with the originally invisible lack (originally invisible because of priority of given meanings), lack, or empty space, situated in the place where meaning should be found. While looking for it, meaning is still hidden, therefore we find ourselves on the edge of certain abyss. This leaning over the abyss is used in the working of the supplement, a category chosen by Derrida, which “signifies nothing, simply replaces a lack” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 208). When the supplement starts working in this empty place, it is multiplied, “it adds only to replace (...), it insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 145). It fills the empty place with the help of this trembling of an absence, this supplementive working of multiplication, when the unconscious starts to be transformed into the conscious. The transition, this trembling of the potential, is caused by hesitation, eagerness and passion, which are the results of the concern given to what was intended to be found: “We are moved, ‘excited’ by the represented and not by the representer, by the expressed and not by the expression, by the inside which is exposed and not by the outside of the exposition” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 208). Because language is fleeting and transitory, it is difficult to achieve this transformation of the inside into that what is exposed. But help in achieving this is always given in the form of these expressions that change their position from the recorded expressing to the particularity of the expressed.

In speech, the subject leans over the abyss when he wants to transfer something from the space of the unconscious to the conscious. When writing, the subject must deal with a different situation. Writing can help in the inauguration of the process of meaning, it supplements, it fills empty places: “When speech fails to protect presence, writing becomes necessary” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 144). As a result, in this situation writing stands guard over presence and determination. When the subject has spoken a word, it disappears as soon as it appears; it is

destroyed while speaking. In writing the written word is added to the spoken word, so the absence and disappearance is replaced with the presence of the written word, the presence of signified. Signified is always already a visible trace of presence in the process of meaning making. This replacement of the abyss with the presence is first inaugurated by the supplement which fills a void, “if it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 145). The interplay of presence and absence is visible here: “[a]s substitute, [supplement] is not simply added to the possibility of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 145). So, in the workings of the supplement the absence is replaced by the presence, but not by a simple replacement, but by the shivering of the absence, whose effect is the filling it up with signified. When speech fails, writing “must be added to the word urgently (...) it is adjoined, as an image or representation” (Derrida 1997: 144). Writing can “accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 145).

As we noticed before, speech is always present with itself in the moment of speaking. However, it is difficult for this speech to protect this self-proximity, this presence, because it disappears the moment it is expressed. That is why we can call this moment failure and inability. Nevertheless, existing elements or units of spoken meanings are the incentive and invitation to the production of new meanings. This constant production of new meanings is the result of the working of the supplement. The supplement works wherever failure exists; it fills this lack with replacements, it multiplies these replacements, it is added to this absence of meaning. It takes-the-place as a substitute, it “insinuates itself” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 144) where previously nothing existed. In this way it stops the shivering of the unconscious over the absence and appears in the form of a sign or proxy that “is the supplement of the thing itself” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 145). Writing supplements the failure of presence in speaking and represents that which was originally identified with thought. The supplement withdraws the meaning from the absence, because, by its original proliferation, it fills this absence, it is “a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 144). It is the result of a transference from the anxiety of the subconscious abyss to the conscious level of representation, to the presence built on signifying nothing.

Finally, the last sphere where we can experience the curable power of writing, sphere that also may be treated as the certain scene of writing, is a space indicated by Michel Foucault. Writing is here acted out in different forms of technologies directed to the management of the powers of the subject. In this case, Foucault follows the teaching of Stoics. According to

Foucault, this scene of writing is the place where different technologies of the Self may be launched. The aim of these technologies is to introduce an order into the functioning of the subject. They primarily consist of different writing techniques, which order the creation processes of the subject, the process of its own understanding and all the processes of naming and leaving signifying traces. Foucault's article about technologies answers the question about the type of management that is possible within a certain, given discourse (see: Foucault 2000a: 225). The kind of actions that may be realized by the subject upon itself depends on the type of analyzed discourse. These "individual exercises of the subject upon himself" are called by Foucault "the technologies of the Self" (Foucault 2000a: 225).

Bearing these technologies in mind, the first important thing to remember is "the care of the self" (Foucault 2000a: 226) that the subject must undertake in order to organize its subjective narration. In Foucault's writings "taking care of oneself becomes linked to constant writing activity" (Foucault 2000a: 232). This activity should resemble the relation between writing and vigilance. The subject must be careful and vigilant while recording its constant experience with the surrounding world. Writing should concern information accessed in the process of introspection. Foucault gives examples of writing genres indicated by the Stoics: "taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them and keeping notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed" (Foucault 2000a: 232). The transformation of the written material was the main part of this exercise. The Stoics provide an analogy with the activity of a bee that comes back to the hive to transform or digest the honey it has gathered. The activity of writing is exactly this kind of exercise, when the subject can analyze what it has gathered from its experience and can draw conclusions from this analysis. Plato used a comparison to looking at oneself in a mirror, where the soul can analyze its relation to itself. In this way Plato "justifies dialogue as a method of discovering truth in the soul" (Foucault 2000a: 235).

The author that is regarded as the most important figure in writing about the creation of the Self is Seneca: "For Seneca, the problem is not that of discovering truth that has been forgotten" (Foucault 2000a: 237). The Stoics focus their teaching on the notion of anakhoresis, which means the place where you can recover the truth about yourself. Originally, it meant "the retreat of an army, the hiding of an escaped slave from his master" (Foucault 2000a: 238), but in the meaning reappropriated by the Stoics it is "a spiritual retreat into oneself. It is a general attitude and also a precise act every day: you retire into the self to discover (...) rules of action, the main laws of behavior" (Foucault 2000a: 238).

Nevertheless, the most important feature of writing for Plato as well as for the Stoics (and Foucault) was that all results of these introspective exercises should be transformed into action. Hence, it is not enough to experience or read about something, you should also transform it into a rule and implement it in your life. The Stoics called this process subjectivation, which is achieved mostly by writing; it means “converting the statement one hears into rules of conduct” (Foucault 2000a: 238). The final stage of the activities described under the name of technologies of the self is the stage of askesis, which is defined as “not renunciation but the progressive consideration of the self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality, but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth” (Foucault 2000a: 238). In this way the results of the aesthetic processes of writing are transformed into an ethical project of subjectivation, where truth is transformed “into a permanent principle of action” (Foucault 2000a: 239).

Another form of using linear narration as a kind of aesthetic and ultimately ethical exercise was writing *hupomnemata*. They were found to be “the narrative[s] of the self [as] an account of one’s relation to oneself” (Foucault 2000a: 217). Self-examination was popular in the form of diaries, where one could “review one’s day” (Foucault 2000a: 219), inspect one’s conduct during the whole day, or “place oneself under the other’s gaze” (Foucault 2000a: 219). All these activities were planned to disclose and bring to the surface of consciousness the actions or thoughts realized during a day.

Foucault is also the author of the famous article on language titled: “Language to Infinity”, which is clearly influenced by Blanchot ([1969] 2008). In fact, the opening sentence of the article comes from that very author. It says that we have to write “so as not to die” (Foucault 2000b: 89). Writing here is the original duplication in the midst of the one and the same: death. Death is considered here as stable and always constant; however, its multiplying power appears when inserted into the middle of thought. The original duplication in thought and signs causes wandering and constant detour, the repeating of errors in the form of a story. When these are inserted into this one, original point, the origin becomes false and produces its original multiplicity – the supplement. In this way we approach again the territory of supplementation and multiplication explained extensively by Derrida. Again, we can observe how it is not “one” that is the origin of the signification, but the “two” that is responsible for initial repetition and thus, production of the story. The absence of the “one” is replaced by its own replication and hence constitutes the plural “two” – the plurality and presence as a result. However, we can ask what this break caused by is, why the supplement of writing starts to work, why the writing is finally inserted into the middle of the self-proximity of the voice (speech) and thought to itself?

Other questions arise: Why was the first writing inaugurated, why was it possible that the first “two” appeared and slipped between the original one, and, in this way, started the story of the subject by the inauguration of the first interruption, the first delimiting, the first determination? Foucault (2000b: 89) found that the first prerequisite for writing and, in this way, delimiting what was previously undetermined, was death as the “power to arrest the flight of an arrow in a recess of time” (Foucault 2000b: 89). This “arresting of an arrow” is just catching something that without this stop, without this “arrest”, would never be able to be in a certain, particular form. It is death that individuates things, that compels the subject to give them names, to isolate them from their background, to specify them. At the same time it is the power of death that “hollows out in the present and in existence the void toward which and from which we speak” (Foucault 2000b: 89). Again we can experience the lack of meaning on the border of the abyss, when old words and meanings are inadequate, but we still do not possess the new, adequate ones. In Foucault writings it is the power of death that inaugurates the working of the absence; its trembling, its supplementation by changing signifier and signified.

The original death to all the phenomena referred to in writing causes the rush of the multiplication of meaning: “Before the imminence of death language rushes forth” (Foucault 2000b: 90). Or in the words of Gilles Deleuze when he states that starting from the abyss, from the immobility and stillness, our hesitation reaches such a tension that “the free action drops from it like an over-ripe fruit” (Bergson 1913: 171, 176 cited in: Smith 2011: 135). This primordial action that results from this tension is the action of writing that is not only a way of recording thoughts or realizing self-examination, but also the scene on which all other actions are acted out, processes inscribed, subjective stories written. Foucault would write here that to reach the narration of the subject is not the main reason for writing. Derrida would state that it is the *différance* that has to be actualized in each process of writing. Deleuze would say that instead of the subject, the singularity must be created on the basis of “self-vibrating regions of intensities” (Deleuze, Guattari [1987] 2014: 23). The writing that is acted out on the scene of writing is, nevertheless, the one that posits presence against absence, origin against infinity, movement against stillness. It is “*techne* as the relation between life and death, between present and representation” (Derrida [1967] 2009: 287). It is the source of this hesitation that trembles on the border of that which is expressed and that which invites us to speak.

Thus, summarizing, we have the power of death as the absence and the power of voice as the presence as contradictory to each other. On the one hand, the power of death introduces the working element into the constant sameness of the phenomenological origin. The power of voice is just this sameness, this self-proximity to itself, its identification with itself forever. Death as

the multiplication in the void that rushes toward itself and starts the production, produces without possessing a source, and without an end. Death is found here as the insurmountable mechanism that produces infinity in the original moment of its own beginning. That is why there is no beginning, there is only the story, the circle, the detour. Here we have an absence filled with the infinite working of *différance* which is the result of the exchange between expressed signified and expressing and multiplying signifier. Death is understood here as the moment of moving time, as the inauguration of the determination, so we have to constantly repeat the movement of supplementing, of substitution, in order to be able to give an idea of its working. On the other hand: the power of voice, the power of the constant sameness without determination, without particularization and identity, the constant presence of speech, the constant, integral “enough”, is what best represents the difference between death and voice, making conscious how death pursues its own inability. Death has to break this stillness, this identification, because it trembles over the border of that which has not yet been expressed, on the border of the absence that has to be expressed, but does not yet have a reason for doing so. This death is represented by the structures of the unconscious that hover on the border of consciousness, by the language of consciousness that wavers on the border of the spoken. Speech is treated here as the failure to grasp the present, as something evasive and incomplete, it is wavering on the border of that which is grasped and which creates the world of the written and accumulated.

Finally, we can state that writing can be presented as a poison or remedy, as a tool that enables us to remember or, quite the contrary, as something that causes forgetting. Writing may be treated as the cure for the past or as a machine that helps to resolve what appears in the consciousness in the present. This second quality of writing is due to its narrative power that makes possible the ordering of meanings into a clear and coherent linear narration. It grasps the meanings that fleetingly appear within the unconscious, though also, as mentioned above, it may be feeble and fleeting in the conscious sphere of language. That is why it is necessary to represent these fleeting meanings in the form of writing, which is the space or scene where all complex processes of representation may be recorded. This scene orders not only meanings and that which is expressed, but also the processes of expression, naming and signifying.

Thus, finally we can conclude that it is this power of *Pharmakon* as a cure or remedy, as well as, a poison and death that creates the scene of writing. On this scene we may observe workings of the three areas mentioned in this article, which are responsible for the delivering and ordering the meaning of individual's failures onto the surface of conscious discourse. These three areas are respectively: Freudian area where the symptoms of loss may be visible in writing,

Derridian area of inauguration of production and multiplication of meaning that finally creates the visible written trace of signification which helps in localizing and naming faults and lacks in individual, and finally Foucault's area of curing individual's lacks by the use of conscious, concrete methods of writing, that originally come from the philosophy of Stoics. To be able to follow this trace of individual internal life written with the help of signs on the surface of the scene of writing, first we had to be explained what the curative and poisonous workings of the Pharmakon were, what does it mean that this Pharmakon deconstructed the unifying and synthesizing power of Platonian logos, and why the Platonian everlasting presence had to be replaced with absence by the supplementing force of the *différance* in order to prepare a space for the multiplication of meanings. What turned useful was also the indication of the transitory character of language and the explanation of the procedure of transference of something from one totality of meanings into another one that is called translation. All these elements constitute a certain entry for the understanding of the processes that take place on the scene of writing. I hope that, in the situation when presented texts belong to the kind of very demanding ones, such an outline by the exposition of the most valid and crucial problems will help to get an idea of how writing may be used and how to create a map to guide one's path between the dangers of everyday experience.

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