

The Nature of Nature: Healthy Humans with Hobbes and Rousseau

Low Carb Breckenridge 2018

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[@bokkiedog](#)



Disclosure statement

- ① I have no COIs to declare.



The scientist is not a person who gives the right answers, he is one who asks the right questions.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, Le cru et le cuit



The Quest for the “Natural”

The subtext of many health and well-being conferences is a grappling with “nature” and what is “natural”

BAKER STREET W1
CITY OF WESTMINSTER

NATURAL KITCHEN

ALL DAY
FOOD TO GO DELI
RESTAURANT
CAFE
PIZZA & JUICE BAR

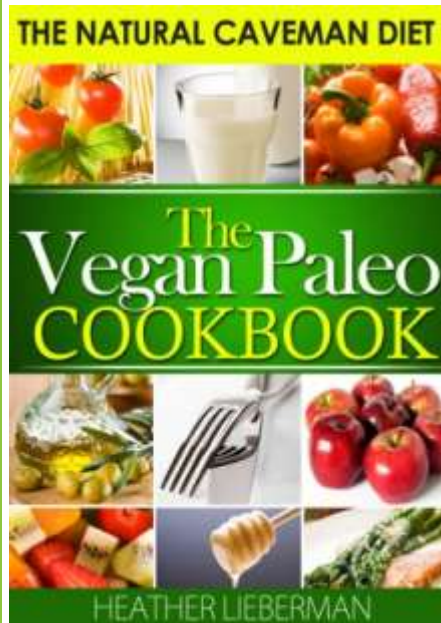
NATURAL KITCHEN





The Search for the Natural Way of Eating

- ① Vegan, paleo, keto, macrobiotic: all make claims about nature.
- ① Each accuses the other of Appeal to Nature, while appealing to nature





An example: low carb

- ④ Our “natural” diet contained fewer carbs.
- ④ The unnatural number of carbs we eat today gives us unnatural diseases.
- ④ Cutting carbs returns us to our natural configuration, and lets us be healthier.



Appeal to Nature

- ④ “Grass-fed beef is more natural”
- ④ “Sugar alcohols are just not natural”
- ④ “The problem with processed foods is they’re not natural”
- ④ “You don’t find high-reward foods in nature”

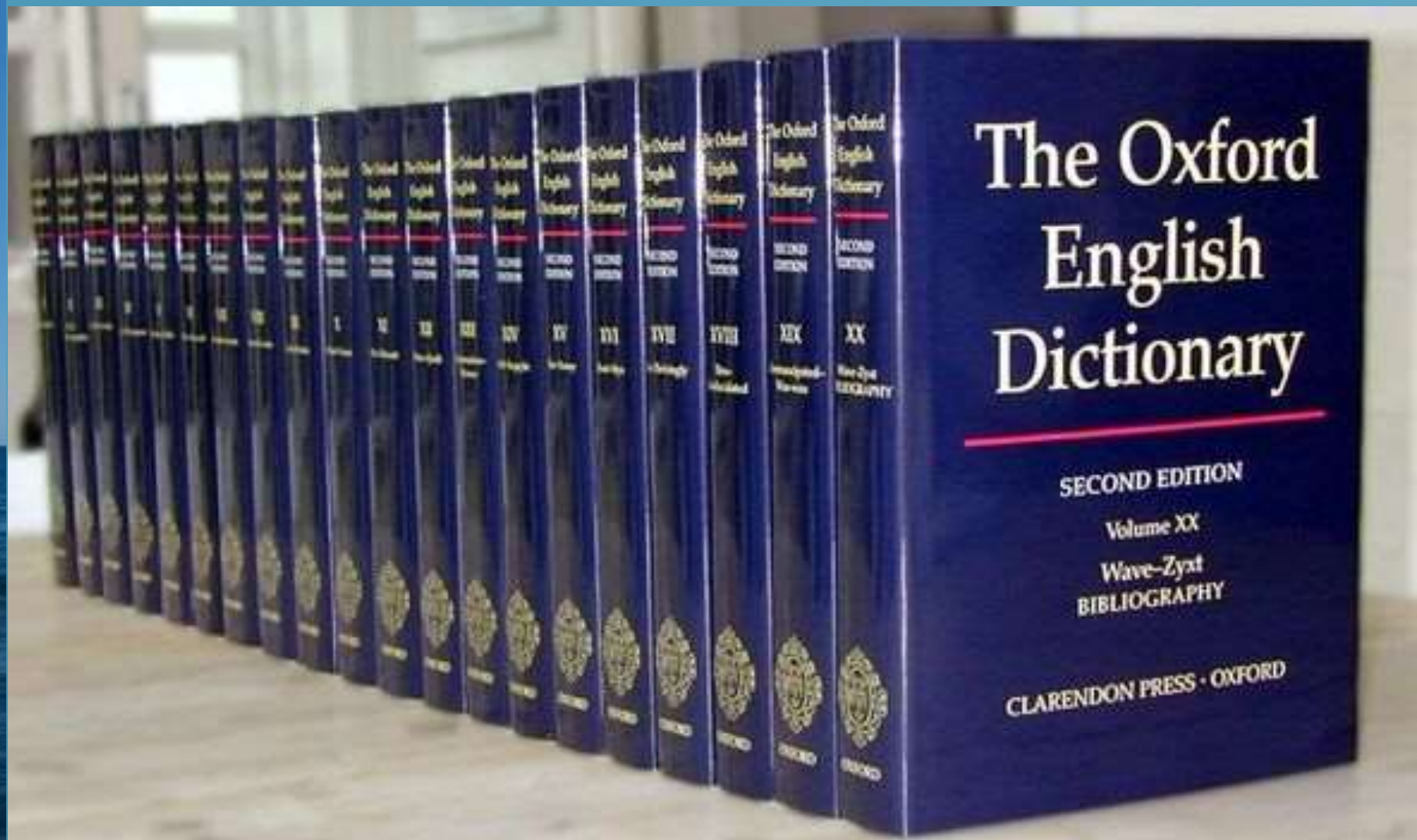






The Appeal to Nature

To what do we appeal?



The Oxford English Dictionary

SECOND EDITION

Volume XX

Wave-Zyzt
BIBLIOGRAPHY

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD



*The physical force regarded as
causing and regulating the
phenomena of the world.*



The innate or essential qualities or character of a person or animal.



The phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.



An Ablative Problem

Are we by, with, from, in or
despite.. nature?



A Scope Problem

Nature is everything.

Nature is nothing.



A Character Problem

Nature as caring mother.

Nature as nihilistic other.



Philosophical History of “Natural”

Ancient and modern philosophers have grappled with the notion of nature, and what, if anything, it implies.



Physis vs Nomos

- ⊕ Greek for “nature”: physis (or phusis).
- ⊕ Derived from “growth”. Eg: Epiphysis.
- ⊕ Physics, physician, metaphysics.
- ⊕ Insulin, cancer: primordially “natural”.
- ⊕ Nomos: law, custom.

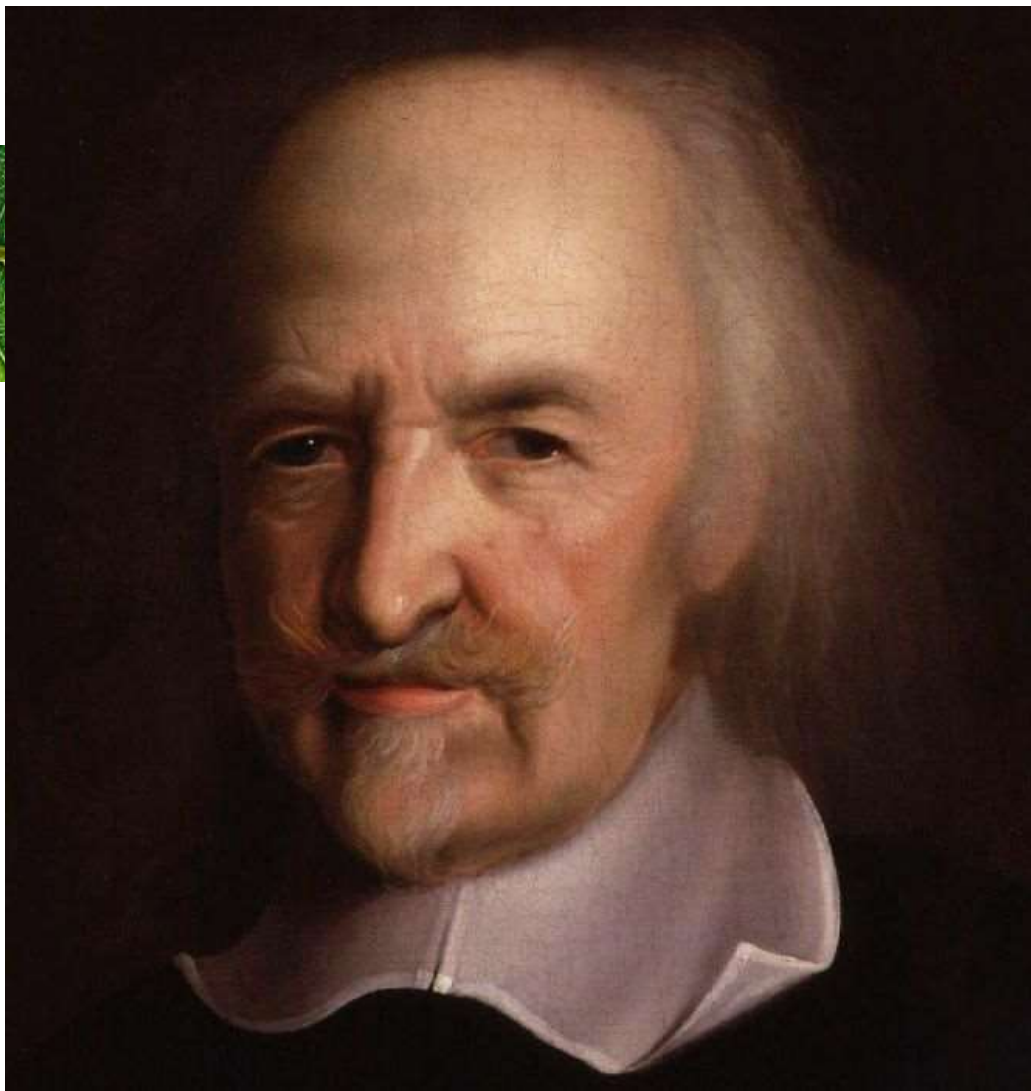


Physis vs Nomos

Is Nomos a subset of Physis?
If not, how is it separate?



Thomas Hobbes



Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679

Hobbes saw turmoil in the English Civil War.

Distrusted the “state of nature”.

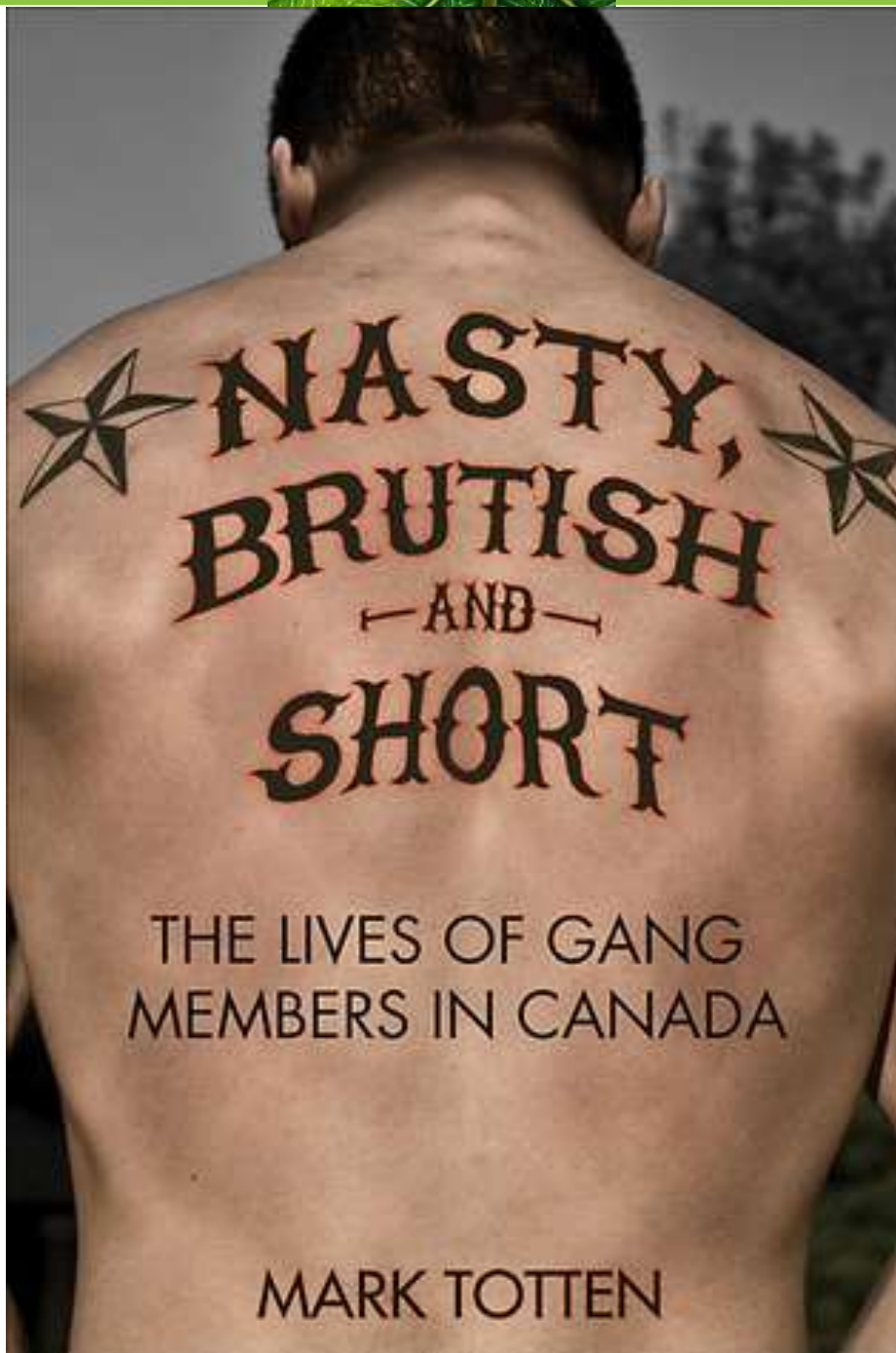
Introduced “social contract” in *The Leviathan* (1651)

Even despotic rule better than “natural” chaos.



*Life in a state of nature is:
“Solitary, poor, nasty, brutish,
and short”*

Hobbes, Leviathan



THE LIVES OF GANG
MEMBERS IN CANADA

MARK TOTTEN



State of Nature: Pessimistic

For Hobbes, “nature” is something from which we flee.

Nature, and *our* nature, demands control.



Nature (the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World) is by the Art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal...



*For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN
called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE ...
which is but an Artificiall Man; though of
greater stature and strength than the
Naturall, for whose protection it
was intended.*





The Leviathan: a necessary compromise

- ④ State monopoly on violence: “The leviathan”.
- ④ Even a harsh man-made State is better than the state of nature.
- ④ We capitulate to profound ordering of concentrated power because it’s a “better bet” than the *necessary* tragedy of the state of nature.



Modern healthcare is Hobbesean



- ① We cannot be healthy without intervention.
- ① The “leviathan” of the pharmaceutical industry is necessary to prevent “nasty, brutish and short” lives, even though it be corrupt and problematic.
- ① Our physis is inherently flawed, and requires exquisite nomis to regulate.





Modern dietary advice is Hobbesean



- ⦿ Nutritional guidelines inherently Hobbesean.
- ⦿ USDA is a leviathan. And the AHA, FDA, and the agribusiness conglomerates who own them.
- ⦿ A leviathan is “better than nothing”.
- ⦿ CICO is Hobbesean: we must control ourselves or befall natural tragedy.
- ⦿ Fear foods found in the “state of nature”: saturated fat, raw milk, animal products etc.
- ⦿ The role of the Dietitian is essentially Hobbesean.





*"Senators don't have the luxury
the research scientist does
of waiting until every last shred
of evidence is in"*

*Senator McGovern
on Dietary Recommendations*



Some of “us” are Hobbesean

- ⊕ Arguments against Paleo: “short lifespan, brutal lives”.
- ⊕ Infectious diseases are “natural”.
- ⊕ Keto is “unsustainable” because of nature - or our natures.





Dr Ron Rosedale:

*Nature does not care about us
living a long healthy life, or any
life, for that matter.*

Nature wants "Life" to live.



It's like, you don't care if there's a little cell on your hand that dies, as long as the whole remains. Nature doesn't care if you or I dies, or if all mankind dies. Nature wants life to live.

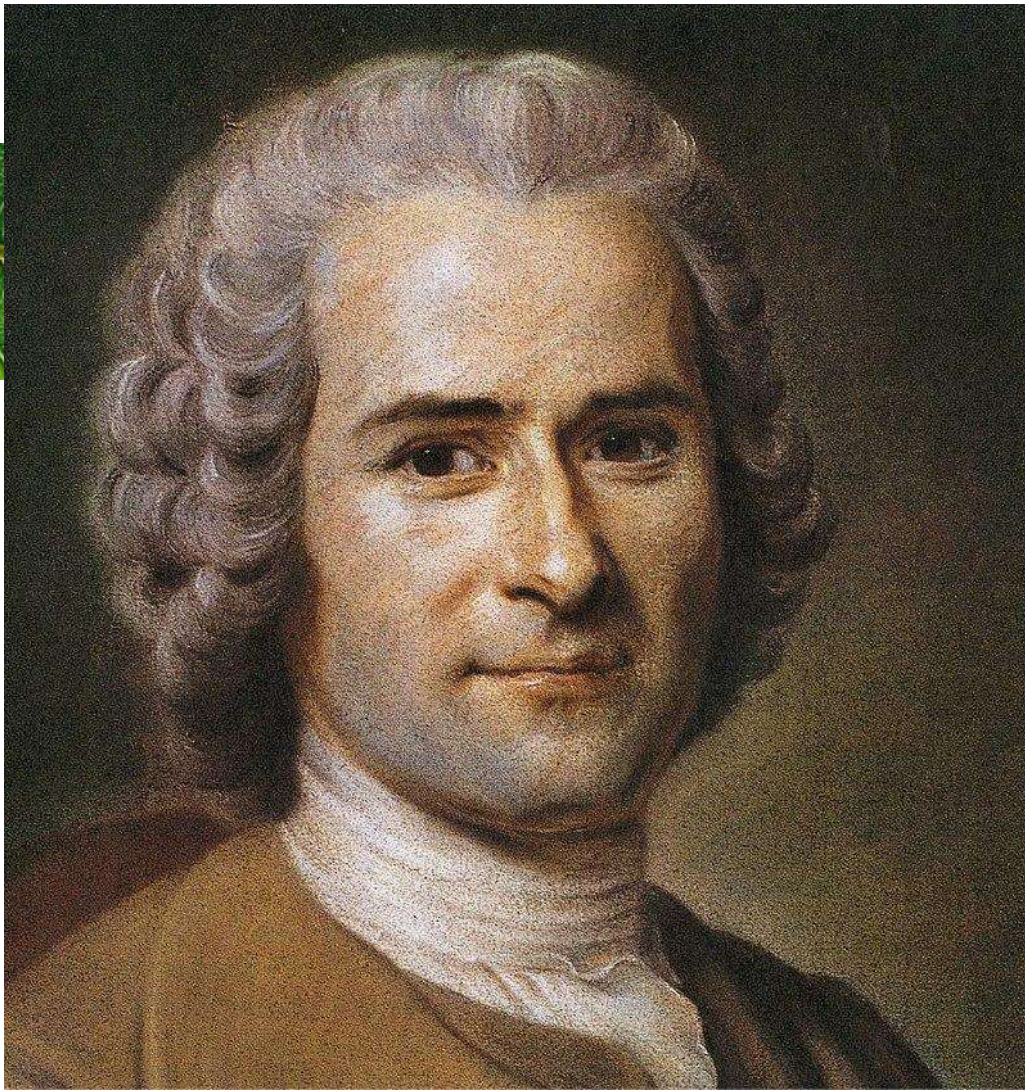


The diet that ancient man grew up with was to maximize reproductive sense. Not necessarily the life of each individual.

http://drrosedale.com/Insulin_Leptin_and_the_Control_of_Aging



Jean-Jacques Rousseau



Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1712-1778

Optimistic about nature and humanity.

Distrusted civilisation:
believed we became corrupt
as we became “civilised”.

Thought traditional education
was an indoctrination against
our natural well-being.

“The Social Contract”
influenced the French
revolution.



*Man is born free,
and everywhere he is in chains*

Rousseau, The Social Contract



State of Nature: Optimistic

For Rousseau, “nature” is something to which we yearn to return.

In nature, we are “noble savages”.



The first man, who, after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, "This is mine," and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.



How many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how many misfortunes and horrors, would that man have saved the human species, who pulling up the stakes or filling up the ditches should have cried to his fellows:



Be sure not to listen to this imposter; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all, and the earth itself to nobody!

Rousseau, Discourse on Inequality



Paleo and friends are Rousseau

- ④ The image of the “simple” but “wise” noble savage.
- ④ Pre-agricultural idyls.
- ④ Western A Price Foundation utopianism.
- ④ Returning to “a state of nature” returns us to our species’ “lost innocence”





*Civilization is a hopeless race
to discover remedies
for the evils it produces*

Attributed to Rousseau



Nature problematised



Nature as mother but “other”

- ④ For both Hobbes and Rousseau, Nature is something from which we can “separate”.
- ④ Culture somehow derives from nature, but somehow is not “of” nature.
- ④ How does nature create that which is not natural?
- ④ An odd problem!



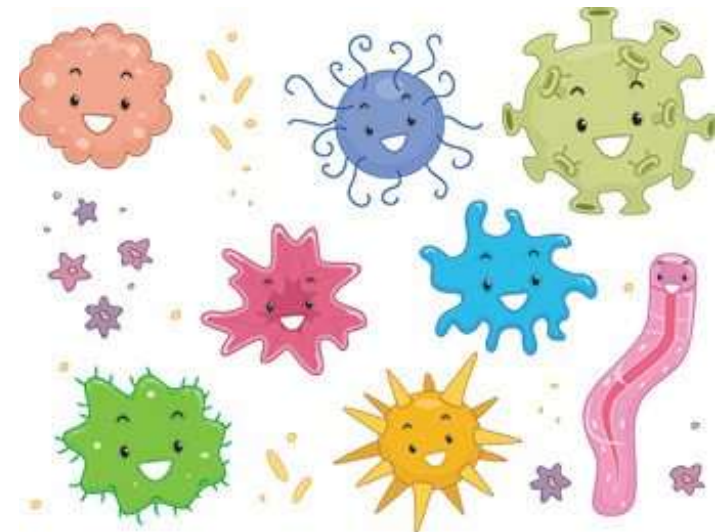
Nature as mother but “other”

- ④ For Hobbes, nature was not so beastly and unthinking not to endow us with its “solution”.
- ④ For Rousseau, nature was not so perfect and replete as to ensure we were incorruptible.



An example: the “natural” gut biome

- ① What is the “natural” gut biome?
- ① Why does it demand such careful tending?
A Rousseau problem, or a Hobbes one?
- ① And what of healthy germ-free mice?





**Beware just-so
stories!**



*The indifference of children towards meat is one proof that the taste for meat is **unnatural**; their preference is for vegetable foods, such as milk, pastry, fruit, etc.*



*Beware of changing this **natural** taste and making children flesh-eaters, if not for their health's sake, for the sake of their character;*



for how can one explain away the fact that great meat-eaters are usually fiercer and more cruel than other men; this has been recognised at all times and in all places.

Rousseau, Emile



What *does* nature mean?

Different philosophies have tackled the “meaning” of meaning.



Structuralism

20th century philosophers and linguists discussed new ways of determining meaning



Semiotics

- ① Ferdinand de Saussure: 1857-1913
- ① Meaning is made of signs, signifiers and the signified
- ① Meaning is determined by the inter-relations between symbols and ideas

Saussure

Sign

The object / thing



Signifier

The physical existence
(sound, word, image)

Red / Leaf / Round / Apple

Signified

The mental concept

Fruit / Apple / Freshness / Healthy
/ Temptation / Teacher's pet /
Computer



Structuralism

- ④ Claude Levi-Strauss, a father of structuralism, was an anthropologist, who studied “primitive” societies.
- ④ The structuralist definition of nature would look at the full mesh of signs, signifiers and signifieds.
- ④ They’d then examine the inter-relations, network and differentiations to determine meaning: via binaries and difference.



Natural man did not precede society, nor is he outside it.

Tristes Tropiques, Levi-Strauss, 1961



Meaning in: Pre-, intra- and Post-Structuralism

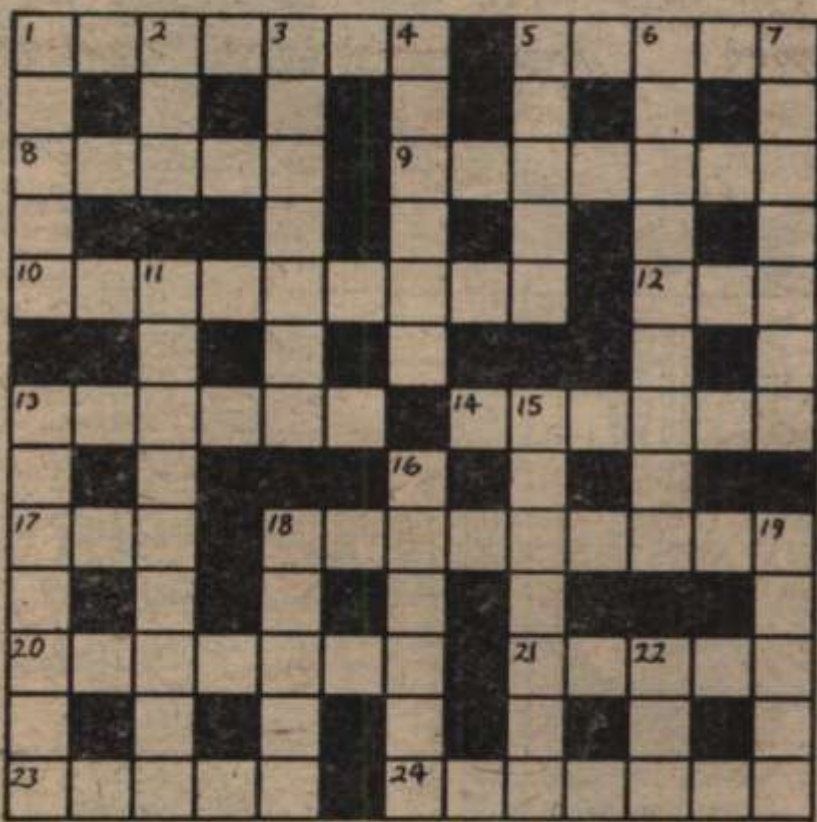
TAURUS (April 21 to May 21)
 Grab your chance to try something new and challenging. A lot of people want your attention, but try not to get fussed. Lucky birthdays, April 25 and May 19.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 to Sep. 23)
 Stop worrying! Just do your best and you'll find that in the end you'll be okay. Make an effort to help at home. You'll feel good and be appreciated.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 20)
 Don't be shy of getting involved in yourself down, or other people. Extra patience and tact may be needed for at home with the family.



PUZZLE IT OUT!

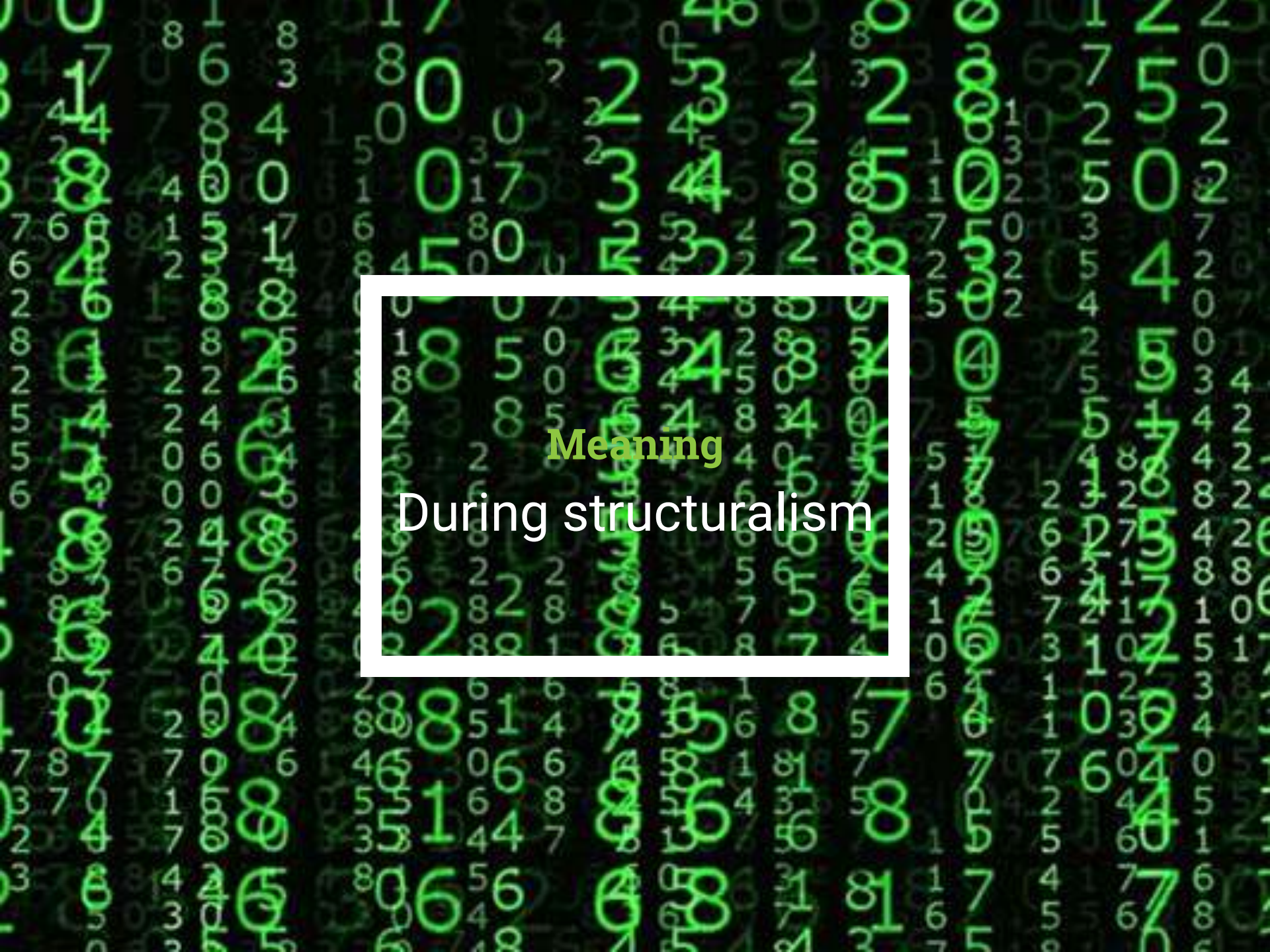


- ACROSS:**
- 1. Assist (4, 3)
 - 5. A boat is this just before it sinks
 - 8. Opposite of "out"
 - 9. A new word for "happy"
 - 10. If you leave without a word, you leave this (2,7)
 - 12. One plus one
 - 13. Captain Hook was this in "Peter Pan"
 - 14. "God tempers the wind to - - - - - lamb"
 - 17. Royal Society of Arts in short
 - 18. An opinion-usually is

- 21. Often ironed into a skirt
 - 23. Worn by women but not by men
 - 24. A maker of saddles
- DOWN:**
- 1. Jane's friend in "Sea-Sister"
 - 2. An August sign of the zodiac
 - 3. Instructions are if you want to alter them
 - 4. To talk to God (2, 4)
 - 5. One a day should keep away the doctor!
 - 6. Another name for washings
 - 7. Whales are sometimes killed with one
 - 11. A very snooty-man's name
 - 13. Looked at closely
 - 15. - - - - - down, to get off the pavement
 - 16. Sudden tremors
 - 18. Ways out
 - 19. Put off
 - 22. Eaten, but sometimes electric!

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1. Help out, 5. Awash, 8. Loose, 9. Popular, 10. No message, 12. Two, 13. Pirate, 14. A shorn, 17. RSA, 18. Expressed, 20. Studies, 21. Pleat, 23. Dress, 24. Saddler.
 DOWN: 1. Helen, 2. Leo, 3. Overset, 4. To pray, 5. Apple, 6. Abolutions, 7. Harpoon, 11. Marmaduke, 13. Perused, 15. Stepped, 16. Spasms, 18. Exits, 19. Deter, 22. Eel.



Meaning

During structuralism



Meaning

Post structuralism



Jacques Derrida



Jacques Derrida 1930-2004

The father of
“deconstruction”.

Complex works like “On
Grammatology”: emperor’s
new clothes?

His maddening opacity holds
clues to his ideas.



*irritating, punning
irrationalist,
with self-defeating arguments*

De Ville, J. (2010). Revisiting Plato's Pharmacy.



Plato's pharmacy

- ④ A chapter in “On Grammatology”
- ④ Derrida discusses a tale narrated by Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus
- ④ A tale of an Egyptian god, Theuth, introducing the tool of writing to an Egyptian demigod, Thamus.





Plato's pharmacy

- ① Writing is presented as a useful technology, because it acts with respect to memory as a ..

Pharmakon



Pharmakon

Definition:

- 1) A medicine, a cure, a salve, an antidote, a remedy



Pharmakon

Definition:

2) A poison, a toxin,
a scapegoat



Pharmakon

A word which means
its own opposite!



Plato's pharmacy

- ① Writing is presented as a useful technology, because it acts with respect to memory as a pharmakon.





Plato's pharmacy

- ① Writing is presented as a *harmful* technology, because it acts with respect to memory as a pharmakon!





Pharmakon

- ⊕ Scholars argued for years how to translate “pharmakon” in Plato.
- ⊕ Interpretation becomes an act of “semiotic violence”.
- ⊕ Even structuralist “binary oppositions” are not sufficient to satisfy meaning.
- ⊕ The moment you think you’ve exhausted justification for one meaning, another presents itself.



Sly, slippery, and masked, an intriguer and a card, like Hermes, he is neither king nor jack, but rather a sort of joker, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play.



*Sly, slippery, and masked, an
intriguer and a card, like Hermes,
he is neither king nor jack, but
rather a sort of joker, a floating
signifier, a wild card, one who puts
play into play.*



Pharmakon: language as quantum system

- ⊕ Implications of “the pharmakon”:
- ⊕ Language acts as a “wave potential”
- ⊕ Collapsing it into an eigenstate needs to be seen as arbitrary or contrived.
- ⊕ Meaning is never final or “satiated”
- ⊕ Pharmakon oscillates between potential meaning states: our brains’ must deal with the indeterminacy!
- ⊕ People can manipulate us by causing us to forget this inherent indeterminacy.



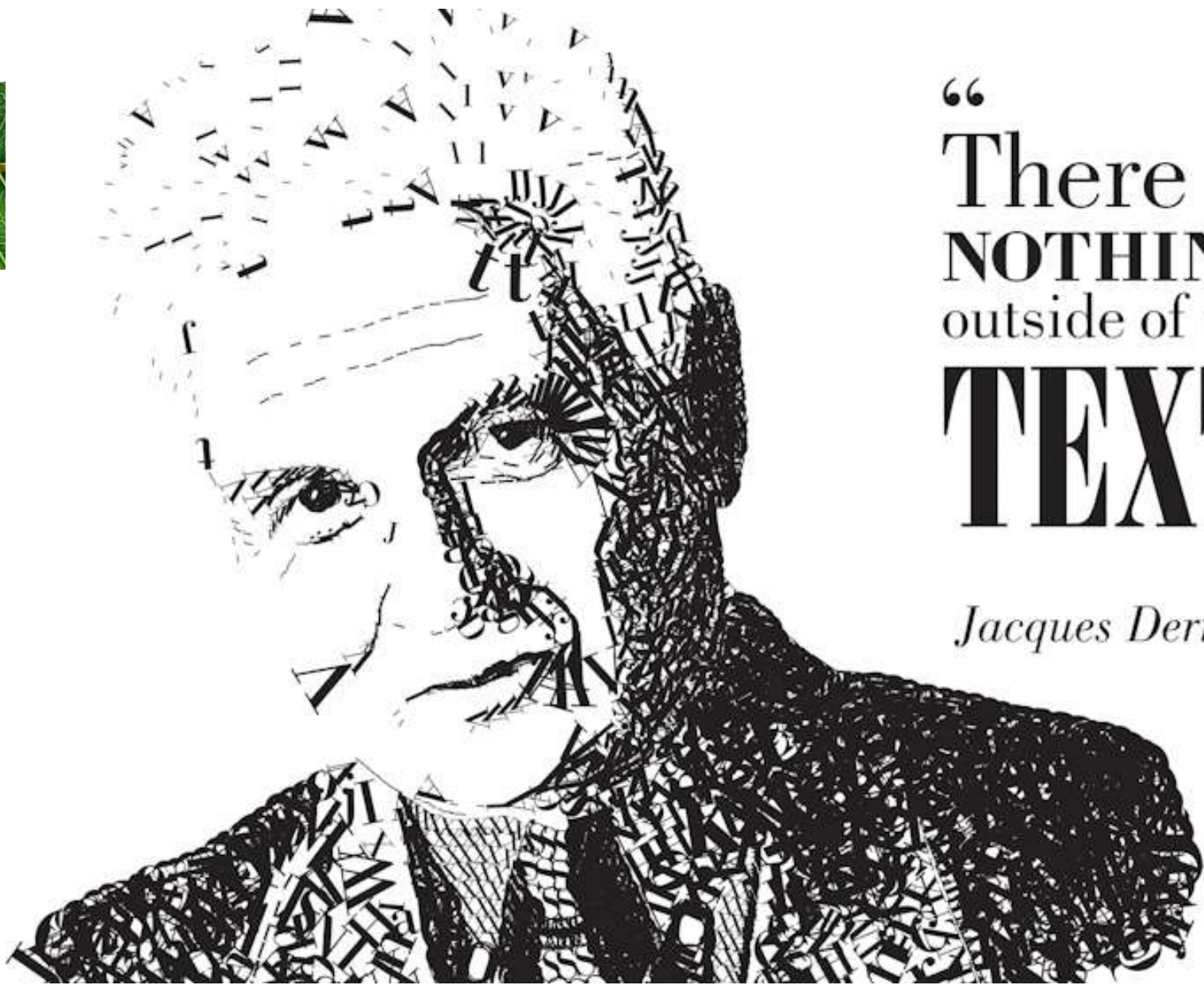
Différance

- ① The binary “differences” structuralists identify in concepts are not sufficient for meaning.
- ① The unstable network of connected traces, and the privilege of one side of a binary to another.
- ① A “circle jerk” of language, but no centre.
- ① Meaning is constantly deferred: Derrida coins the word “différance”, which differs from the French word “difference”, albeit only in writing. It implies difference and deferment.
- ① Deconstruction always aims to “decentre”.



Derrida's pharmacy

- ④ A cure of our love of violent simplicity.
- ④ Recognise implicit hierarchies in the crude binaries that define meaning:
 - nature/civilisation,
 - speech/writing,
 - light/dark,
 - processed/raw
- ④ Make us more comfortable with the permanently oscillating nature of wisdom.
- ④ If we think we've reached a "centre" of meaning, deconstruction reminds us there is no centre



“
There is
NOTHING
outside of the
TEXT
”

Jacques Derrida



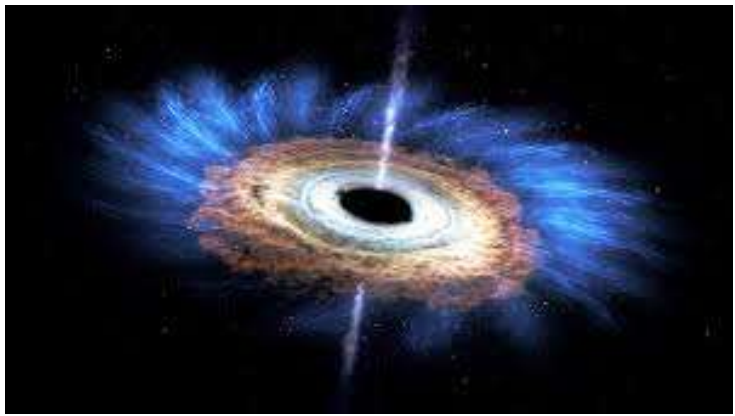
“Nature” is a pharmakon

Everything but nothing.

Homogeneity but differentiation.

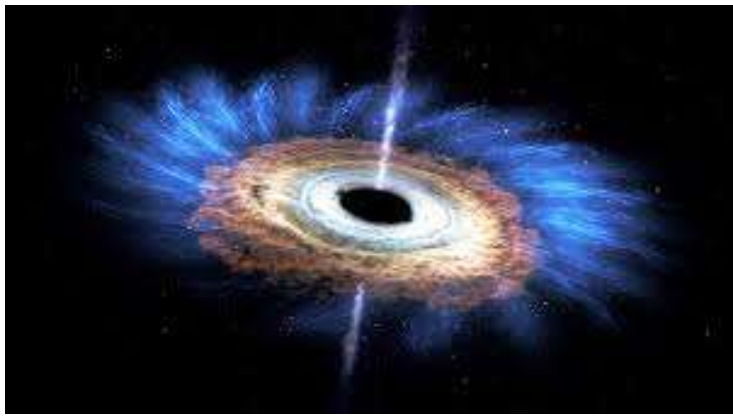
Preceding but engulfing.

Ordered but chaotic.



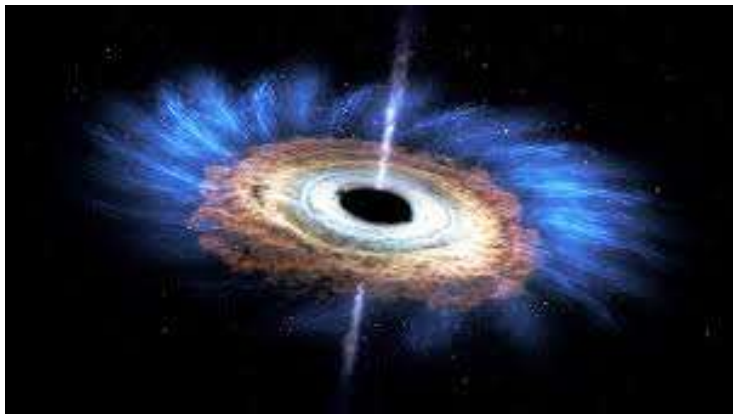
“

Nature is affected - from without - by an overturning which modifies it in its interior, denatures it and obliges it to be separated from itself.



Nature denaturing itself, being separated from itself, naturally welcoming its outside into its inside, is catastrophe, a natural event that overthrows nature;

Derrida, On Grammmatology



or monstrosity, a natural deviation within nature

Derrida, On Grammmatology



Where does this lead us?



Aporia

Impasse, puzzlement



Aporia leads to physis

- ④ Comfortable certainties are entropic states.
- ④ Aporia is the mother of creativity.





Aporia leads to physis

- ⑩ Aporia and the appreciation of indeterminacy of the pharmakon allows people in our community to deconstruct the privileged binaries in the staid “meanings” of fat, cholesterol, calories, red meat, gluttony and sloth.
- ⑩ The feeling that we have subverted something profound is accurate; and “reading against the grain” is hard, so many resist.



Aporia leads to physis

- Ⓜ This is why conventional dietitians, Harvard epidemiologists and so forth are free, and everywhere in chains.





**What does someone
who has ditched the chains
look like?**



Dave Feldman

@DaveKeto

Follow



Replying to @DaveKeto @KetoCarnivore and 10 others

... and I can definitely assure you the literature is quite presumptive on many fronts with regard to lipoproteins in particular and the body's control of them.

4:52 PM - 24 Feb 2018

5 Likes





Dave Feldman

@DaveKeto

Follow



Replying to @DaveKeto @KetoCarnivore and 10 others

... and I can definitely assure you the literature is quite presumptive on many fronts with regard to lipoproteins in particular and the body's control of them.

4:52 PM - 24 Feb 2018

5 Likes



1



5



Physis reborn

Spot the pharmakons in Rousseau's impassioned conclusions..



Life is not breath, but action, the use of our senses, our mind, our faculties, every part of ourselves which makes us conscious of our being. Life consists less in length of days than in the keen sense of living.

Rousseau, Emile



*A man may be buried at a hundred
and may never have lived at all.
He would have fared better had he
died young.*

Rousseau, Emile



Our wisdom is slavish prejudice, our customs consist in control, constraint, compulsion. Civilised man is born and dies a slave. The infant is bound up in swaddling clothes, the corpse is nailed down in his coffin.

Rousseau, Emile



HARVARD
UNIVERSITY



*All his life long, man is imprisoned
by our institutions*



Rousseau, Emile



abbvie



SANOFI



MERCK





Healthy humans



Healthy humans

- ⊙ We are of nature *and* nomos
- ⊙ Physis = nature = growth
- ⊙ Growth implies adaptation, movement and play.
- ⊙ Derrida was always playing.
- ⊙ Dave Feldman is always playing.
- ⊙ Georgia Ede is always playing.
- ⊙ Ivor Cummins is always playing.
- ⊙ Amber O'Hearn is always playing.
- ⊙ Siobhan Huggins is always playing.
- ⊙ The 2keto dudes are always playing.
- ⊙ They are healthy humans.



Healthy humans

- ④ Healthy humans revel in the confusion, the “différance”. They play with it!
- ④ They see ambiguity and ambivalence as a feature, not just a bug.
- ④ They always remember that the pharmakon never means only poison or only antidote.
- ④ They are always at play, in thought, in language, in life. Physis means it’s your move. Take it gladly, whatever the dice reveal.



**Leave this talk
still confused?**

Good!



**Leave this *conference*
still confused?**

Better!



*I would rather be
a man of paradoxes
than a man of prejudices*

Rousseau, Emile

“The”, as Derrida would put it, “End”

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