

Chris Lloyd
School of Law, Birkbeck College, University of
London.

ASFPG Workshop November 5th - 7th, 2010: Abstract.

'A strange and paradoxical revolution': Derrida's law as
autoimmune.

Within the work of Jacques Derrida, many 'nonsynonymous substitutes' come to serve as re-presentations of the 'happening of deconstruction' (*ce qui arrive*), one of which being the concept of the *pharmakon*, that word which both simultaneously means the remedy *and* the poison. This concept in Derrida's later work then comes to be known as autoimmunity, the paradoxical biological disease where the immune system serves as *both* a method of preservation, and also a method of destruction. The work presented here focuses on these two concepts, and the roles they play within Derrida's account of law.

The research presented here then speaks to Derrida's assertion that autoimmunity comes to affect various social phenomena, including democracy, religion and community. It is then argued that autoimmunity affects law too. This thesis is argued according to the fact that the law exists as written, whereby the method of inscription designated to the law, is also the method of its erasure, thus rendering the law's existence autoimmune. As such, law is presented as always being in a process of iteration (*repetition and alteration*), for it cannot exist as a fully immunised entity, closed off from the coming of the other. This thesis is argued through an extensive analysis of Derrida's thought on law, ranging from his work in the 1960s, through to his final pieces before his death, wherein this 'parasitizing' affect is shown throughout.

Then, beyond this engagement with law, the research broadens its field of interest to look at two further areas of study: firstly, the significance of autoimmunity within contemporary research of biopolitics, focusing on thinkers such as Roberto Esposito, Martin Hägglund and Jean-Luc Nancy, and secondly; within contemporary immunological studies, where radical immunological studies such as those conducted by Alfred I. Tauber and Irun R. Cohen, are examined to again convey the 'happening of deconstruction.'