

Research Article

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Outside Phenomenology?

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Abstract: This essay marks the start of a bold reorientation of a philosophical vision of the author: where the texts of the Christian theological tradition once served as point of reference, it is now the experience of trauma that guides the phenomenological investigation – specifically, the trauma of illness, separation, the death of a child, natural disaster, and the pandemic. These experiences, which befall me without rhyme or reason, open up a new field that has hitherto remained unthought by – and indeed unthinkable to – the phenomenological tradition: extra-phenomenality. As extra-phenomenal, a trauma is neither infra-phenomenal (preparing phenomenality) nor supra-phenomenal (overflowing phenomenality), but rather denotes the destruction of all possible categories of synthesis or horizons of phenomenalization: it is properly speaking outside of lived-experience both in that it cannot be lived through by the traumatized subject in conscious experience as well as making all subsequent lived-experiences impossible. Yet, existence nevertheless persists in this crisis: it is thus not a question of attempting to escape it, or pursuing the restauration of a previous state; but rather of a different way of being there. In this way, trauma reminds us of the very essence of our humanity as a continued transformation.

Keywords: phenomenology, experience, trauma, transformation

“The ultimate task of phenomenology as a philosophy of consciousness is to understand its relationship to non-phenomenology. That which within us resists phenomenology – natural being, the “barbarous principle” of which Schelling spoke – cannot remain outside phenomenology but should have its place within it. The philosopher must bear his shadow, which is not simply the factual absence of future light.”¹ This word of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in “The Philosopher and his Shadow” (1958), holds a question to us – particularly as it concerns the idea that we have, or that we could have, of phenomenology. Phenomenology is not the “only” thing around. There is even, and perhaps, a “non-phenomenology.” And if this latter, that is, “non-phenomenology,” were to come to be, it should no less “have its place in it,” that is, “in” phenomenology.

The statement is indeed surprising, especially coming from the French phenomenologist who appears, at least in his later writings, to have gone “to the limits of phenomenality.” His preface to Doctor Hesnard’s work, *Freud* (1960), shortly before his death in 1961, was an invitation to radicalize phenomenology, so that the future of phenomenology would not, or no longer, remain only within the sphere of the manifest or even of meaning: “This phenomenology that *descends into its own underground* is, more than ever, in convergence with Freudian research It is by virtue of what it implies or reveals *at its limit* – by its latent content or its *unconscious* – that phenomenology is in consonance with psychoanalysis.”²

1 Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 178.

2 Merleau-Ponty, *Parcours deux 1951–1961*, 276–84.

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Whether we call it the “barbarian principle (*principe barbare*)” (Merleau-Ponty) or the “There is (*il y a*)” (Levinas),³ we must admit it. A pushback or resistance to phenomenology, and thus to all that it retains in terms of an unquestioned discourse of sense-making, must today itself be subjected to questioning – thus, the “signified” aimed at by intentionality (Husserl), as much as “self-manifesting” as the horizon of all phenomenality (Heidegger). If “the starting point is pure experience, which is, so to speak, still mute, and which now must be brought to the *pure expression of its own meaning*,” according to Husserl’s famous leitmotiv in *Cartesian Meditations* (1929),⁴ nothing necessitates indeed that we continue to, nor that we can even afford to remain only within this orientation of the meaning and of sense-making, or, in the least, of the signified, as if this were the only quest to be pursued. This “pure experience,” that is, “still mute,” must today accept never to speak audibly, if only in certain “extreme situations” that strike us and reveal what we most deeply *have always* been – that is, traumatized beings, or at the least, beings that can be subjected to trauma.

In the face of trauma – “illness, separation, death of a child, natural disaster, or pandemic” (we shall return to this) – there is no longer an *infra*-phenomenality or a *supra*-phenomenality. Neither *infra*-phenomenality, because nothing *prepares* it (whether we refer to the “passive syntheses” in Husserl, the “withdrawal” in Heidegger, or “the world of life” in Merleau-Ponty); nor *supra*-phenomenality, because it is not enough to say that it *exceeds and overwhelms* me to the same extent that it breaks me. The excess of an event that I remain still in a position to receive, in reality only serves to confirm an underlying subject, one that is certainly deprived of its heroism, but which in effect is only a token and remains in possession of a certain egoity (whether it is the “face” in Levinas, the “gift” in Marion, “auto-affection” in Henry, the “word” in Chrétien, or the “liturgy” in Lacoste).

There is, then, what we shall call here the Extra phenomenon. The event is indeed sometimes such that it destroys both the phenomenizing subject and the phenomenized horizon, so that the very idea of signifying (hermeneutics), as well as that of manifesting (phenomenology), is likewise annihilated. In an *illness*, of which I know neither why nor how it “befalls me,” on me and not upon another, afflicts my flesh and renders me as if objectified. During a *separation*, in which we discover ourselves disunited or relationally disconnected but without understanding neither why nor how “it could have happened to us,” and this along with all the concomitant effects on our family and circle of friends, who remain powerless to truly help us. In the *death of a child*, or rather of *my* child, which “hits me in the gut,” so that my flesh is forever afflicted even after a so-called “mourning process” aimed at consoling me. In the event of a *natural disaster*, where my house, as well as my world of life, seems definitively destroyed at that very moment where there is no longer an “environment/habitat,” nor a “surrounding environment/habitat,” to comfort me. During a *pandemic*, where the streets and the cities are as if “deserted,” and where the other (*l’autre*) in front of me remains in reality always the stranger who could, without his own knowledge, threaten and compromise me – “I” am no longer me (myself), in the least, I can no longer relate either an “I” or a “me” to any horizon of phenomenality, the latter that has itself come to collapse. Perhaps I would become what I have never been. The very idea of identity, of my identity, has disappeared, as well as the so-called “invariable” of any essentiality whatsoever.

In the face of trauma, therefore, the “un-world” (*l’im-monde*)⁵ has taken the place of the world, the “raw fact” over the occurrence of the event; the “There is” (*il y a*) over the given; and “solitude” over alterity. Required, then, is a *phenomenology of Chaos*, by way of the Extra phenomenon (*Hors phénomène*), understood not as that which escapes phenomenality as you would have it with negative theology but rather as that which annihilates, by a definitive (or near definitive) destruction, and would belong neither to the *void* nor to the *open* that it supposedly signified (“In the beginning came chaos, then came earth and sky” [Hesiod as taken up by Heidegger]). Rather, it would pertain to the full (*le plein*) and to the crushed

3 Falque, “Principe Barbare et *Il y a*: Lecture Croisée.”

4 Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 38–9.

5 Translator’s Note: ‘*L’im-monde*,’ translates “un-world” but is also a wordplay on the meaning of “*immonde*,” suggesting the “vile” or “hideous.”

(*concassé*), by which I can no longer bear and uphold myself (“all these elementary substances have been *crushed* as in a mortar and *dissolved* into atoms of dust, so as to be able to be *shaken, stirred and mixed in this chaos* as in a *crucible*” [Anaxagoras as commented on by Nietzsche]).⁶ When trauma strikes, or when the very idea of “signifying” as well as that of “manifesting” no longer reaches upon anything that could resonate with it or justify it any more, we are then before the predominance of the “Outside” (*Dehors*). Thus, neither the *infra*-phenomenal to prepare the way for phenomenality, nor the *supra*-phenomenal that always exceeds the phenomenized subject. Rather, the Extra phenomenon, by way of the *extra*-phenomenal, becomes definitively unbound from the “shackles,” or the “categories” in which the phenomenon had primitively been conceived. The “myth of interiority” no longer holds, at the very moment that we come to live “outside of ourselves” and “outside of the world” but instead in a life that we could rightly refer to as totally “broken.” As Gilles Deleuze sets it forth as a programmatic task in his *Foucault* (1986): “thinking does not depend on some *nice sort of interiority* that would join the visible to the enunciable; rather it occurs under the *intrusion of an exteriority* that digs up and mines the interval, and forces, dismembers, the interior.”⁷

To question the “idea of phenomenology” and thus to ask what the syntagm “Outside phenomenology” could mean for the “Extra phenomenon,” is therefore, again, not to ask the question of borders, nor is it to even erect walls of opposition. Phenomenology has already suffered enough – particularly in the French context of a “theological turn,” as useful as it is invasive – from an orthodoxy to be defended against a heterodoxy to be rejected. The questioning “Outside phenomenology?” (with question mark) will first of all refer here to the “Extra phenomenon” – because we are primarily concerned with speaking of “things themselves,” and such is, at least in our eyes, what defines the common ground of all phenomenality. Either moving in the direction of hyper-technicality or continuing to defend its own private territory, phenomenology and a number of phenomenologists with it (but not all of them) have forgotten the primary vigor and the penetrating rigor by which its first founders established themselves: “Hands-off for those who do not feel genuinely at home here” (“*Es besagt nur Hande weg für den, der sich dabei nicht auf echtem Boden fühlt*”).⁸ This “opinion piece” set forth by the young Heidegger in his working notes for the course, *The Foundations of Medieval Mysticism* (1918–1919), could well serve here as a leitmotif for a renewed phenomenology – or at the very least, one that will not hesitate, or no longer hesitate, to question its own foundations, even if this means letting the pillars on which it had been built to crumble. In the face of trauma, the very transcendental of the ego collapses, as well as the whole field it pretends to open up – this, to the extent of making us to wonder how phenomenality could have maintained such decency and gentleness for all these years, or even decades, having forgotten everything about the “Neutral” (Blanchot) or the “There is” (Levinas), which the post-war period had nevertheless exhibited.

1 A cheerful phenomenology

We can only be surprised at the evidence that abounds, owing to our failure to have truly questioned it. There is a certain irenicism in contemporary phenomenology, or a kind of “cheerful phenomenology,” which allows for the event to take primacy in everything, and that what first takes on meaning is that which we can, and must, marvel at. “Wonder is the only beginning of philosophy. It is owing to their wonder (*thaumazein*) that men both now and at first began to philosophise.”⁹ The word of Socrates in response to Theaetetus is more than ever timely and pertinent in the mouth and pens of French-speaking phenomenologists. Whether it is the face (Levinas), the gift (Marion), the word (Chrétien), the flesh (Henry), or liturgy

⁶ Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, §32, §33.

⁷ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 93.

⁸ Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 232.

⁹ Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d.

(Lacoste), all are syntagms of the event, momentous occurrences, which we should learn to accommodate. The diagnosis stated at the opening of *L'épreuve de la limite* (F.-D. Sebbah) is correct, and we can only corroborate it here: "There is a kind of "family resemblance" or a kind of "resemblance" in contemporary French phenomenology, and this is characterized by a kind of "phenomenology of excess" or the "escalating race to the originary" (*surenchère de l'originaire*), so that the eventing of event (*l'événementialité*) is set up as an absolute criterion of all phenomenality.¹⁰

Let there be no confusion, however. This detour, or rather, this return to the philosophical *thaumazein*, ultimately more Greek than modern, was not birthed suddenly among the generation of French phenomenologists who preceded us, through a kind of *ex nihilo* creation. It issues, of course, from the "idea of phenomenology" – or rather, the definition and the quest for phenomenality as Husserl and Heidegger defined it. From the definition of the phenomenon as "givenness in itself" (*Selbst Gegebenheit*) in Husserl's *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1907),¹¹ to its recapitulation and modification as "that which shows itself by itself, the manifest" (*phainesthai*) in the famous paragraph seven of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), the outcome is good: "Phenomenology therefore means: *apophainesthai ta phainomena*: to cause to see from itself that which shows itself as it shows itself from itself."¹²

One could certainly retort that even if the development of phenomenology appears to be more eruptive and "fragmented," according to the accurate diagnosis of Dominique Janicaud, it has not thereby merely remained at this excess of phenomenality, for it has at least acknowledged its limits and imposed a reflection on the "limit." Indeed, as Immanuel Kant showed so well in his *Letter to Mendelssohn* dated April 8, 1766, the "limit" (*Grenze*) and the "boundary" (*Schranke*) must not be confused: "It is important to establish (in questions of metaphysics), whether there are not indeed limits (*Grenzen*) that are set not by the boundaries (*Schranken*) of our reason, no! but by those of the experience that contains the data necessary to reason."¹³ And perhaps a whole section of French phenomenology has, voluntarily or not, turned its back on the prohibition fixed by the Transcendental Dialectic in the first edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) – transforming then the "limits" into "bounds," and thus the impassable of the horizon into the pure arbitrariness of the frontier: "Instead of a sensible world, we conceive I know not what intelligible world ...; instead of the limit (*Grenze*) of the extension, we conceive the boundaries (*Schranken*) of the universe, thus we get time and space out of the way."¹⁴

Certainly, and because every judgment must be nuanced, all French phenomenology has not "gone beyond the limits" (*dépassé les limites*) in every sense of the expression, at least in the French sense (in the double sense of sticking to a previously determined program, but also of going beyond it, or even "disregarding" everything that could be opposed to it). A detailed diagnosis, which will not be the concern here, would easily show that there are phenomenologists of excess (Levinas, Marion, Henry, Chrétien, Lacoste) and others who stick to the pure horizon of our act of existing (Deleuze, Derrida, Richir, Dastur, Escoubas, Barbaras). The gap is not only in the lineage of the Heideggerian vein of phenomenology – since one can stand in this Heideggerian heritage in order either to transgress it by way of phenomenality, or to remain circumscribed in finitude – but in the sources invoked today. Clearly, a generation that has become more Merleau-Pontian than Heideggerian will stick more to the ordinary and everyday life and will fear – even if by a reactionary but creative and inventive gesture – to go the way of the famous light dove in free flight, which "cutting through the air the resistance of which it feels, could get the idea that it could do even better in airless space (Kant)."¹⁵

¹⁰ Sebbah, *L'épreuve de la Limite*, 7 and 3.

¹¹ Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, 42. "One must get especially clear on the fact that the absolute phenomenon, the reduced *cogitatio*, does not count as an absolute givenness because it is a particular, but rather because it displays itself in pure seeing after the phenomenological reduction as something that is *absolutely self-given*." Ibid., 56.

¹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §7.

¹³ Kant, "Lettre à Mendelssohn (8 Avril 1766)," 603.

¹⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 433/B 461. On this point, see the commentary of Pierobon, *Kant et la Fondation Architectonique de la Métaphysique*, 59–70.

¹⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A5/B8.

But that is not all. Or rather, it is necessary to proceed “otherwise,” if we really want to define the “idea” that we should have of phenomenology today. The “theological turn of French phenomenology,” as we have said, has for a certain part of contemporary phenomenology overshadowed the debates on the import and outcomes of phenomenality. Everything happens, or has happened, as if the prohibition of “going beyond the limits,” or the false operation of a “transformation of limits into bounds,” had only served theology itself – or at least the question of God and Revelation as it came to be developed and was deployed within the framework of phenomenology as such. The real turning point, however, in our eyes is not, or rather is no longer simply, the *theological turn* of French phenomenology, but rather the *irenic turn* of French phenomenology, so that a phenomenality which would totally and at the same time break, or almost break, both the phenomenizing subject and the phenomenized horizon is not or is rarely envisaged. Thus, Dominique Janicaud rightly asks, and asks us, the question in his famous *Theological Turn*. But here it is not about theology this time around but about the future and the idea of phenomenology itself: “Would not a phenomenology whose dice have not been fixed have more attention for the atrocious, despairing, unqualifiable, or even only undecidable – where our condition is also woven? Does not E. M. Cioran reveal himself, then, to be at least as phenomenological as our authors, in many of his ruthless descriptions of our human condition?”¹⁶

2 The case of Maldiney

Certainly, and on this point it is worth noting, the immense contribution of Henri Maldiney’s work on contemporary phenomenologists, according to a more or less recognized debt, has not left phenomenology in its blissful optimism. Emmanuel Levinas had, moreover, and in a way, preceded him on this path of thought, before his *Totality and Infinity* (1961) would devote everything to otherness: namely, the “horror of being” even more than the “anguish of death,” the “There is” (*Il y a*) as a real “place of resistance” rather than a “gift” in the astonishing translation of *Es gibt*. This is evidenced by the second preface of the work titled *Existence and Existents* (1981), written while in captivity (1944–1945), and to which the Jewish thinker would repeatedly return: “The notion of *There is*, developed in this 30-year-old book,” as the phenomenologist cautions, “seems to us to be the *pièce de résistance* An impersonal *there is*, like the statement “it is raining” or “it is night.” The term is fundamentally distinct from the Heideggerian “*es gibt*”. It has never been *either the translation or the meaning* of the German expression and its connotations of abundance and generosity.”¹⁷

Henri Maldiney indeed, and to follow here the accurate diagnosis of Jocelyn Benoist, serves or has served in a way as a more or less avowed “blotter” for contemporary French phenomenology – at least the one that sets up the “grammar of the event” as “a characteristic feature of all the French phenomenology of the end of the 20th century.” They often were, and “ahead of time,” “phenomenologies of the event, of sensibility and of passivity,” that would have been developed. In short, Henri Maldiney appears today “as a precursor and a major reference point” for what constitutes the contemporary Idea of phenomenology.¹⁸ But by virtue of much reference to him, whether directly cited or not, Maldiney has now become for phenomenology in the French language – (following the example of Jean Beaufret who introduced Heidegger at a time when he could not be contested) – the author who is never truly interrogated and engaged with. The achievement of his “breakthrough” is certainly immense, and it needs to be underscored. The eventing of the event (*l'événementialité*) must take precedence over the “projected being” (*l'être projeté*), or the capacity to receive the “event” over the “project ahead of time” (*projet devançant*). The “real” must be understood as

¹⁶ Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn'*, 69.

¹⁷ Levinas, *Existence and Existents*.

¹⁸ Benoist, *Maldiney, Une Singulière Présence*, 11–4 (our emphasis).

“that which one did not expect and which, as soon as it appears, has always already been there.”¹⁹ And the “transpassibility” (*transpassibilité*) here designated is the capacity to be affected.²⁰

We wonder, therefore, about what is to be made of the idea of “phenomenology” today – setting it up against the “*Extra phenomenon*” as a new and another phenomenological way set in motion here. Is it enough to follow, as it were, the one who certainly revised from top to bottom the order of phenomenality (in the double sense of its receptivity and of the limiting experiences by which it is to be considered) and to stick always to a horizon of the order of the excess, or even to a “secularized form” of the theologization of phenomenology? For whoever is able to see it and think it, the “purely philosophical” language always upheld by Henri Maldiney does not belong any less to the order of the theological and of the religious. Thus, a kind of “*theologization of phenomenology*” is indeed produced not only by those who explicitly refer to theology or to the question of God (Levinas, Marion, Chrétien, Henry, Lacoste), but also by some phenomenologists of the event, Henri Maldiney, most notably (but perhaps also Merleau-Ponty), who secularize the syntagms without, however, referring to the divine content to which they ordinarily point to. For, under the pen of Henry Maldiney, the explicit and chief question is indeed of the “miracle of the encounter or of the event” in phenomenology, or of the “miracle of wonder” in aesthetics (in fact, with Merleau-Ponty, one of the incarnation of “theological structure”) – the extraordinary taking precedence over the ordinariness of existing, or the “word becoming flesh” as man’s mode of existence as such.²¹

If the extraordinary no longer obtains on the side of transcendence, but rather belongs to the pure immanence of the subject in the mode and posture of total receptivity, then, astonishment or the *thaumazein* does not constitute any less, nor always, the unsurpassable mode of a phenomenology which would make welcoming and the opening the unsurpassable paradigm of any phenomenality. All appearance is made *for* man and addressed to man. From the “theological,” the turn here in reality has become the “teleological.” To say it with Renaud Barbaras, who correctly underscores it right at the opening of *Dynamique de la Manifestation*: “We thus end up [in a number of phenomenologies and not to say all of them] in the *teleological and highly hypothetical schema* owing to which some nature would bring about the emergence of man from within itself in order for it to appear – it would produce man in order to appear.”²²

We would wager, however, that Henri Maldiney surely “looked away from” but did not entirely “turn his back” on the event. His main achievement is to have conceived the characteristics of the eventing of the event from the position of “non-eventing.” To put it differently, the default of the event, or rather in the capacity to receive the event, describes what eventing or transpassibility really is. For once, Maldiney would not, or no longer, take refuge in a kind of *Dasein* that towers “above the fray” looking down – or in a kind of “hovering transcendence,” to put it like Maurice Merleau-Ponty – upon the rest of the “other” disciplines with which phenomenology must enter into engagement. Instead of sticking only to the existential following which the ontological alone would take precedence over the ontic – [a rejection which indeed was beneficial to a certain generation of phenomenologists who, probably with good reason, saw with a bad eye the loss of philosophy to sociology, psychoanalysis or linguistics in the wake of May 68] – the reinvestment of phenomenological psychiatry in the wake of a Binswanger, or even of Karl Jaspers, obliges us to revise the categories of “appearance” and of phenomenology itself. The recurrent use of the case of Suzanne Urban, repeatedly brought up in *Penser l’homme et la folie*, therefore sets up psychosis, and in particular schizophrenia, as the closing of what should be an opening: “The most remarkable thing about psychosis is the *closure* to the event. One day, an event took place which was never taken up and received, and which, not exceeded, *obstructs* all the horizon of a person.”²³

¹⁹ Maldiney, *Penser L’homme et la Folie*, 230.

²⁰ Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, §58.

²¹ By way of examples, for there are many such instances in Maldiney, *Art et Existence*, 61. Or, Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et Non-sens*, 310; Bobant, *L’Art et le Monde*, 81–111.

²² Barbaras, *Dynamique de la Manifestation*, 24.

²³ Maldiney, *Penser L’homme et la Folie*, 230 (our emphasis).

Contrary to all phenomenological irenicism, it is from “extreme situations,” to use Karl Jaspers’ formula,²⁴ that phenomenology and the idea of phenomenology itself must be rethought and renewed. Hence, the very numerous works in France, and in this respect quite justified (Eliane Escoubas, Natalie Depraz, Philippe Cabestan, and many others) projects to reinvest phenomenological psychiatry certainly, but also to question the limits of phenomenology itself – which, perhaps, has not yet been carried out to the end, or in a more radical way. It is not enough, at least in our eyes, to describe what is at play in the “closing of the opening,” or to speak about the opening itself (transpassibility). Still, it is necessary to question the syntagm, and the presupposition of “openness” (*Erschlossenheit*), which, for its part, is never submitted to question, nor even debated as not (or no longer) being self-evident. The *a priori* of self-disclosure (*l’a priori de l’apérîté*) is never questioned in phenomenology, except to reinforce it by analyzing it in an inverted way (psychoses), and probably, it is here that the Extra phenomenon has been partly missed.

One could certainly argue that self-disclosure is no longer the opening “of” Dasein in its projecting but the opening “to” Dasein in its capacity to receive the event by way of transpassibility (Maldiney). And we can also demonstrate that true opening is no longer that of the opening “to” the world, but the opening “of” the world (Patočka), in an analysis that is certainly and rightly “polemological” but that does not fundamentally question the very idea of opening; on the contrary, it instead redirects it in order to reorient it afresh and differently.²⁵ In both cases, and as in all cases, the evidence of a sort of trace of the Dasein remains and can be read in the background, for it makes the human being to already be, from the outset, defined as *Erschlossenheit* or “Opening.” Such that all that contravenes it should fall either in a destitute humanity or one that has fallen out from normality (schizophrenia in Maldiney), or in a “poverty in world,” which, this time, would be of the order of animality rather than of humanity (the animal that is poor in world, according to Heidegger).

3 The opening under consideration

That there is an “openness,” or rather that the very modality of openness is self-evident, is precisely what the Extra phenomenon (*Hors phénomène*) challenges. In the face of “illness,” “separation,” the “death of a child,” “natural disaster,” or a “pandemic” – the many paradigms that are present like a leitmotiv throughout the work *Hors Phénomène* (Extra Phenomenon), or like a refrain, it is the very idea of the opening “of” Dasein to the world (Heidegger), of the opening “to” Dasein by the event (Maldiney), and of the opening “of” the world to Dasein (Patočka), which is contested here. It is not enough indeed to be astonished (and rightly so as does R. Barbaras) at the teleological character of the phenomenon such as it is thought in the ordinary framework of phenomenology, as if it (the phenomenon) always had to appear *for* man or to address itself *to* man – whether this is a question not only of theology, but also of aesthetics, or even of nature itself. Still, it is necessary to radicalize the thought and to ask ourselves, after all, whether there always is the “manifest(ing)” (*du manifester*), both with reference to the phenomenizing subject and the phenomenized horizon; and in what sense the “non-manifest” would not be a lack to phenomenality by way of privation or of a negative theology, but be an “hole,” or rather a “gaping void,” even “chaos” (a fullness rather than an emptiness, that which is one in a different way than merely open or closed), by which the existent is newly oriented.

Henri Maldiney certainly suggests in his *Crise et création* that the “expression of the doctor [in the case of Suzanne Urban] has, for her, replaced the old world which had collapsed. It was the key event of a new world. The world was reduced to this expression.”²⁶ But this new world in reality remains only the negation, or rather the “privation,” of the old world. Here, following a psychiatric analysis that is surely and rightly

²⁴ Jaspers, *Autobiographie Philosophique*, 193.

²⁵ Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, §40, §41, and §58.

²⁶ Maldiney, “Crise et Création,” 239.

concerned with bringing a cure, the pathological is still and always only the reverse of the normal, or sickness as only the loss of health. But, as we shall see further, the Extra phenomenon is not negation, and even less so privation (of a phenomenological opening, or of a physiological or psychic health). Trauma is other and makes us always other – to ourselves certainly, but also to the world and to those whom we say constitute our otherness. We will not recover it only through the “care” that will require us “to do the work” (as it is said in psychology or psychoanalysis). For us, in trauma, there is neither resilience nor work of mourning, but at most bearing and containing;²⁷ but we will let trauma freeze like a “hole” in our existence, never just merely open nor closed, but rather as “outside” the categories that we had previously constituted. Thinking “*under the pressure of illness*” and asking oneself “*if illness was not what inspired the philosopher,*” and following Nietzsche’s example in the Foreword to *The Gay Science*,²⁸ this is what will guide the quest for extra-phenomenality, but this not so much to regain good health, which in reality one never recovers, but to tread other lands of a “strangeness to oneself” that most often remains unsuspected.

Not satisfied to think psychoses as the “closure of an openness,” following Henri Maldiney’s example – melancholy as “closure” upon the past, mania as “obsession” with the present, and schizophrenia as “closure” of all future²⁹ – Ludwig Binswanger rather wants to see, and surprisingly, a certain form of creativity. Analyzing the same case of Suzanne Urban, his interpretation is rather different, even though we know how much the psychiatrist depends upon yet resists the thought of Martin Heidegger and admits to the great conflict between them. Further, nothing guarantees, at least in his own eyes, that the Openness or the self-disclosure of Dasein is self-evident – a point that Henri Maldiney for his part never contested, safe to orientate it differently (no longer an openness “of” Dasein as a projected being, but openness “to” Dasein as a capacity to receive the event or transpassibility). Hence, the different but correct comment of Binswanger, of the fear aroused in Suzanne Urban at the announcement of her husband’s illness. Understood *positively* as the “existential power to exist” (Binswanger), and not *negatively* defined as the always presupposed “closing of an opening” (Maldiney), trauma does not merely redirect, nor does it simply wait to redirect one to an always predetermined disclosure. Instead, it imposes the exigency to “otherwise” and in a “new way” exist according, certainly, to a mode of creativity that would no longer have anything to do with a “being-there” (something of which we know ahead of time what it always must consist of). “Moreover, here and as usual,” underlines Binswanger in his preface to the French translation of *The Case Suzanne Urban* (1957), “we do not take the term “being-in-the-world” in the (ontological) sense of Heidegger, that is to say, in the sense of an *immutable existential*, but in the empirical and phenomenological sense that authorizes us to discuss *modes, forms and well-defined modifications* of this existential Thus, we have, if not discovered, at least glimpsed the fundamental character of the *existential power* of the terrifying.”³⁰

Thus, the psychiatrist, to quote the poet Baudelaire as example – as one could also do with a Rimbaud, a Nietzsche, or an Antonin Artaud – along with the psychic, implies a “being-there-differently,” including from the point of view of what one ordinarily calls “good health.” Certainly, the point is not to be in an ordinary way “sick” in order to show proof of creativity, and even less to contest forms of therapy, where getting better restores one to the “living” that he had in most cases forgotten. But we shall at least have to recognize that there are certain forms of metamorphoses, certainly not always desirable, that create new perspectives on the world that point to a radical “otherwise” – so that in the light of trauma, we do not merely live as if we were dead, but we are totally “changed” to the point of no longer recognizing ourselves, and sometimes, no longer being recognized by others either.

There is therefore – to follow the very words of Ludwig Binswanger distancing himself here from Martin Heidegger, and also from Henri Maldiney, the latter who only reverses the meaning of disclosure without ever ceasing to preserve it – a new and other “existential power” discovered in the instance of the

27 Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, §55, §56, and § 57.

28 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §2.

29 Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, §52–54.

30 Binswanger, *Le cas Suzanne Urban* (Paris: Allia, 2019), 7 and 10.

sick or traumatized man – that is to say, the imperious necessity to invent oneself otherwise from and around the “hole” that constitutes the Extra phenomenon, rather than to restore an “opening” that would have been obstructed. “Madness” is not only a “closing” of the world, but the “creation” of another and new world – according to a perspective that is actually more Nietzschean than Heideggerian, but which, still today, has something to teach us. “Whatever description we give to the ‘terrifying,’” as continues Binswanger, with the relentless rigor of his thinking, “perfectly corresponds with the vision of this *existential power* and its ‘*metamorphoses*,’ such as the poets have described it, and as we have shown it with the example of Baudelaire’s poem titled, ‘*Destruction*’.”³¹

4 For what real?

We will, therefore, ask what “real” is to be aimed at in phenomenology – even if to reach the limits of phenomenality. The “real,” as we have said, and if such a word still has a meaning in the mode of reduction, is today commonly defined as “event” in phenomenology – that is to say, as “*that which one did not expect and which, as soon as it appears, has always already been there*,” to follow here the root of its definition in *Penser l’homme et la folie* (Maldiney).³² Within such a massive scheme of the eventing, it is not so much a question of not expecting or no longer expecting anything – which would effectively be to destroy the phenomenizing subject and the phenomenized horizon under the effect of trauma (*Hors phénomène*) – but rather to “expect” what one does not expect. In the contemporary idea of phenomenology, at least if we take it in its French version as it has been deployed over the last few years, the horizon of expectation is certainly always thwarted by eventing (the face, the gift, auto-affection, the word, or liturgy), but not destroyed to the point of annihilating all transcendentality.

Only one person in fact saw it – paradoxically the inventor of the transcendental himself who, discovering an exception to transcendentalism, quite unbeknownst to him, states what according to us must become the rule of extra-phenomenality: namely, Immanuel Kant’s own “Cinnabar,” in the “Transcendental Analytics” of the first edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). (The Cinnabar that, moreover, would vanish in the second edition (1787) in favor of the “Synthesis of the I-think.”) Thus, “If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one, if on the longest day the land were covered now with fruits, now with ice and snow, then *my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the colour red*.”³³

The hypothesis seems certainly absurd but is nevertheless very real. It could indeed happen, with regards to trauma, and thus within the framework of the Extra phenomenon, that the very possibility of synthesizing is itself annihilated. In the face of illness, separation, the death of a child, a natural disaster, or a pandemic, a “rupture of synthesis” occurs which, like a “rupture of fatigue,” no longer allows us to move forward, or even to take a step to continue. I don’t just have “severed legs” because I’m exhausted, but it is as if I “no longer had legs” in a kind of curse of existing. Survival is worse than life, as we have said, as soon as the horror of being outweighs the anguish of death. It is through such exceptional cases – but which in reality reveal what we have always been, that is to say, beings with “holes” (Lacan) or “cracks” (Deleuze) – that Kant leads us into the pure chaos of a world and of ourselves, where the synthesis of experience itself is no longer carried out. This, either in the total confusion of the “vermillion color” or of the Cinnabar that has become “sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy,” as in the incredible pre-Kafkaesque metamorphosis of man transformed “sometimes into an animal, sometimes into

³¹ Ibid. p. 10.

³² Maldiney, *Penser L’homme et la Folie*, 230.

³³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A101–1. Regarding debates around the “Cinnabar,” taken up with Jérôme de Gramont, see Falque, *Parcours d’embûches*, 115–23, particularly, 122–3.

another (man),” or again on this country region as if radiating a land that is “covered sometimes with fruit, sometimes with ice and snow.” Chaos here no longer designates an openness to what one could expect in a kind of *infra*-phenomenality, nor the remainder of what is always given by way of *supra*-phenomenality, but rather designates the full and the jumbled (*pêle-mêle*) of what invades me by way of *extra*-phenomenality.

What we have elsewhere called “The expansion of the psyche” (*pensée épandue*),³⁴ making it the complementing counterpart to the expansion of the body (*corps épandu*),³⁵ gestures toward this “plenitude of thought,” such that I am myself invaded by myself, to the point of recognizing that “one thinks me” (*on me pense*) (Rimbaud), that I have become a “something that thinks – *Es denkt*” (Nietzsche), or that there is in me “a something that in its substance increasingly destroys the weight of my thought” (Artaud). A kind of anonymity of the ego which thus requires of me to “de-think” (*dé-penser*) – in a thing unthinkable (*un impensable*), which not only remains to be thought because we are not yet thinking of it, but one that destroys the very capacities of thinking and requires an alternative renewal of itself. The “existential power of the schizophrenic,” as required by Binswanger, is certainly not to be envied. But it also creates other possibilities that are not exclusively derived either from the norm, or from a pre-given openness (phenomenology), or from the ideal of good health based on the criterion of sociality (psychiatry). There is an “internal logic of madness,” the matter is well known (Lacan), even if it cannot be upheld as a norm of every form of existentiality.

In reality, we never get out of the trauma by which we have “fallen” – hence the false appeals, as we have said, to a “resilience” so vulgarized that it becomes understood as the requisite of an existence that is always assumed able to bounce back and pull itself up. At most, we “go around the hole,” we go around it, but without ever really entering it, at the risk, on the contrary, of rushing into it. “Traumatism” and not only “traumatisme” (“trauma”), as Jacques Lacan expressed it during a seminar dated February 19, 1974, using a “wordplay” that certainly makes us smile, but nonetheless has the merit of underscoring the necessary consideration that must be made of the Extra, or of the extra-phenomenal, particularly in phenomenology itself. Far from either the already prepared phenomenon (*infra*-phenomenal), or a cheerful phenomenology (*supra*-phenomenal), the task of the “break of phenomenality” (illness, separation, death of a child, natural disaster, pandemic) requires us today to ontologically revise the very initial act and starting point in phenomenology, in what we here call *extra*-phenomenality: “But we all know, because we all invent something to fill the hole in the *Real*. Where there is no sexual relation, the result is a “*traumatisme*”. We invent! We invent what we can, of course.”³⁶

In light of the Extra phenomenon, and thus of an idea of phenomenology where it is not first of all a question of “showing oneself” nor of “signifying,” we could no longer define the real as “*that which one did not expect and which, as soon as it appears, has always already been there*” (Maldiney). Whoever says “real,” and even “reality,” understood within phenomenology as the “lived” and not as a mode of objectivity, will now rather see in it the *unassimilable*, the infrangible that is impossible to synthesize, and from whence we would have to reinvent ourselves anew. Once again, Jacques Lacan shows the way in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, this time in the seminar of 1964 – even if it would now be up to phenomenology to try to think along with this proposal, so as not to leave its formulas up to the private preserve of some initiates willing defend it at all cost: “Is it not remarkable that, at the origin of the analytic experience, the real presents itself in the form of that which in it is unassimilable – in the form of the trauma, determining its entire course and imposing upon it an apparently accidental origin?”³⁷

³⁴ Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, chap. 4.

³⁵ Falque, *Ethique du Corps Épandu*.

³⁶ Lacan, *Lacan, Les Non-dupes Errent*, 57.

³⁷ Lacan, *Les Quatre Concepts Fondamentaux de la Psychanalyse*, 65.

5 Trans-modifiability

“As much exception, so also, much modification,” such will become, following the proposal of the Cinnabar (which, though, is often misappropriated), the new leitmotiv of said phenomenology of the Extra phenomenon. There is certainly always a certain impudence in wanting to finish what others have started so well. It is tiresome to add reductions to reductions, or imperatives to other imperatives, believing, or making believe, that one is the last born. The fact remains that the logic of the phenomenological development, or at least of its radicalization, is pushed to the limit here. For if the interrogative syntagm “Outside phenomenology?” designates less the borders between disciplines than the effort to reach the “things themselves,” including in the limits of their “unattainable” and of their “unthinkable” dimensions (what we have called the “confines of phenomenality”), then, the “Extra phenomenon,” in the light of trauma, *de facto* imposes upon us the need to rethink.

If there is *epochê* or reduction, then, nothing or nothing more would resist it – including the ego or God, at that moment where everything is erased or gets “out of control” (outside all signification and outside the gift), with regard to the “hole of aspiration” produced by trauma within the framework of *extra*-phenomenality (disease, separation, death of a child, natural disaster, pandemic). A “something” certainly remains, but which is like a “me without me” in its pure neutrality; a “deep gap” ever remains there, resisting me, but in the guise this time of “chaos” which makes that the “full” (*plein*), far from being a vacuum or an openness that is always ready to welcome everything, even if to be transformed by it;³⁸ “radical phenomenology” is not a phenomenology of the affected or self-affected subject, but on the contrary of the ego that has lost everything, even its egoism and the very capacity to experience. *Pathei mathos* – learning by trial, according to Aeschylus, is not always possible, far from it. But to say that “experiencing” does not occur does not necessarily suggest that we are “closed” to a pre-given opening, but rather that we must now create “another way of existing” that we had not previously imagined.

“A-experience” (“*l’an-expérience*”) is not “in-experience” (“*l’inexpérience*”), and even less is it the “experience of inexperience,” which still remains an experience. A-experience, in trauma, for example, is to no longer have the capacity to make and say the experience. And a-experience, in psychic illness, amounts to the need to reconfigure other possibilities of living or of experiencing. Here, it is not simply to lose the capacity for eventing (*événementialiser*) through “privation,” but by “creation” to produce a new point of view on how to constitute – following the example of Gregor Samsa who was transformed into a cockroach in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*.

“The possible, the possible, otherwise I’ll suffocate!,” exclaimed Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death*, or rather Deleuze and Maldiney about Kierkegaard (a formula that was never really written by the pen of the Danish philosopher, even if we can deduce in order to think it)³⁹. It is not there simply to await new possibilities upon a pre-determined horizon, even if overwhelmed by the “miracle of the event” (Maldiney) – according to a scope of meaning that is both theological and teleological, as previously indicated. It is also “to make its possible,” in the strict sense of the term; that is, to create new possibilities starting from and around a broken existence whose wound is never closed. An “otherwise possible” is so not in the sense that another person comes to join me in this deep gap of my existentiality where I remain forever “alone.” But the “otherwise possible” in the sense that the other, aiming and reaching toward their own horizon, that of health, for example, makes me see that my way of existing is not the only one by which to subsist. A *phenomenology a minima* does not come to console me, but to tell me that where I am, it is precisely there, and first of all myself that I must inhabit – even if it is only so that another, one day, might come alongside me.

Following the imperative, “as much appearance, so, much being” (Heidegger), or the other leitmotiv, “as much reduction, so, much donation” (Marion), there is now the new antiphon from which phenomenology

³⁸ For this resistance to reduction – from the invincible persistence to the impossibility of de-neutralizing – see Falque, *Hors Phénomène*, chap 2.

³⁹ Kierkegaard, *La Maladie à la Mort*, 195–9.

will have to take its starting point: “as much exception, so, much modification.” Within the framework of the Extra phenomenon, the exception becomes the rule – the Cinnabar or the rupture of synthesis becomes the true event that breaks any possibility of eventing and event, or trauma which, within the framework of the *extra*-phenomenal, makes that one can remain neither at the *infra*-phenomenal (propaedeutic to phenomenality) nor at the *supra*-phenomenal (phenomenologies of the excess or of overflow).

But the exception – the not so rare case by which, being all “traumatizable” as we are, we also become “traumatized” when “it befalls us” (illness, separation, death of a child, natural disaster, pandemic) – makes us lose our identity, and also the very substance by which we believed ourselves to still exist. Worse than the “living-not-yet-dead” (anguish of death) is the “living dead” (horror of being), which we sometimes become in certain borderline situations. The corpse of an existence that no longer belongs to itself becomes more unbearable than death itself, which would reduce it to nothingness. Such is, in a unique way in the history of philosophy, the observation that Spinoza makes about the poet Gongora who seems to have totally lost his memory (probably Alzheimer’s). He is no longer the same, the author certainly notes in Book IV of the *Ethics* (On the Bondage of Man). But there is more. He has also lost his nature, as if he had destroyed his substance, not only to lose all substance, but to become another substance, totally “different” and therefore called to exist differently. The exception – the Cinnabar or trauma – is not only a place of loss, but also a call to a complete metamorphosis or modification: “For I dare not deny,” Spinoza writes boldly, alluding to Gongora’s psychic illness,

that – even though the circulation of the blood is maintained, as well as the other [signs] on account of which the Body is thought to be alive – the human Body can nevertheless be changed into another nature (*aliam naturam*) entirely different from its own (*a sua prorsus diversam mutari*). For no reason compels me to maintain that the Body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse. And, indeed, experience seems to urge a different conclusion. Sometimes a man undergoes *such changes* (*tales patitur mutationes*) that I should hardly have said he was the *same man* (*eumdem illum esse*).⁴⁰

“As much exception, so also, much modification.” This is the leitmotiv of a phenomenology which comes (finally) to take up extra-phenomenality, or the Extra, according to which we can no longer remain only within the frame of the *infra* or of *supra* phenomenality. It requires, therefore, not only to vary the categories of transcendentality – a radicalizing within finitude [Heidegger], disproportion within fallibility [Ricoeur], or inversion within the saturated phenomenon [Marion] – but to allow oneself be undone so as to constitute again, differently. Certainly, at the instance of the Extra phenomenon, the subject is totally made nothing (*néantisé*) and even placed “outside the I” (outside itself) and “out of play” (outside the I; *Hors je(u)*) in the double sense of the term: as an ego, he no longer recognizes himself according to a “shock,” or even a “crack,” which had been in him for a long time (*hors Je*); and as a participant and actor, he sometimes falls out of the space or the game of communal sociality (off-side; *hors-jeu*). He thus becomes other – “other *from* himself,” in fact, “other *to* ourselves” but not “other *than* oneself,” or “oneself as another,” including to ourselves. In annihilation (de-subjection under the shock of trauma), the subject becomes paradoxically encumbered by itself (hyper-subjection by way of the “living dead” who nevertheless is always there), to be completely modified (metamorphosis or transformation by which he is called to totally reinvent himself).

There is here no intentionality because Chaos, or the hypothesis of the “annihilation of the world,” is in reality unattainable, contrary to what Husserl would have had us believe with regards to “absolute consciousness as a residue of the annihilation of the world.”⁴¹ And there is no phenomenality there either, as if, according to Heidegger in his course on Nietzsche, the “occurring phenomenon” by the word Chaos had to tell us also “what was previously fixed.”⁴² To whomever has fallen into the un-world, the world no longer appears, and he can no longer make any world. Even his trauma is no longer there, or rather what remains

⁴⁰ Spinoza, “Ethics.”

⁴¹ Husserl, *Ideen*, §49.

⁴² Heidegger, *Nietzsche I*, 436–42.

of the subject exists *only* through it, so that his psyche is invaded by this “thought (that is) object,” from which he cannot detach himself (The expansion of the psyche). No end here, nor disappearance of the subject, in a phenomenology of *extra*-phenomenality; but on the contrary, there is hyper-subjection which imposes itself now as always in the mode of transformation. *Trans-modifiability* here takes precedence over *transpassibility*; and it is through being ever changed by way of creativity, rather than being affected by way of receptivity, that the subject (as otherwise) will produce “new syntheses” that until now had never been invented. Along with Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), we must say that “the self *does not have* modifications,” for, “it *is itself* a modification.”⁴³ In this sense, if “all the differences are borne by the individual, the differences are not for that individual.”⁴⁴

6 Crisis and extra-phenomenality

The crisis of philosophy, but perhaps also of phenomenology (less in its lack of thought but rather in its very “fragmented” character), is thus no longer a “crisis of meaning,” as if this latter had always to be expected or presupposed [*Krisis*, Husserl]. The crisis must certainly be taken in its etymological sense (*krinein*), bearing its “judgment” upon that which is happening to us, but also and especially in its medical origin, without knowing on which side we are going to fall: “*krisis*, in the Hippocratic tradition, means that decisive moment of a disease where one does not know yet whether the patient is going to tip over to the side of death or of recovery.”⁴⁵

A “pandemic and health crisis” proves it. It is not only philosophy that is at stake, even though everything has to be thought or rethought afresh. It is about existence, life or death, presence or absence – at a time when “death” with its sickle could take everything away, and when the trumpet of the Seventh Seal of the Apocalypse, or of Ingmar Bergman’s film, could well have sounded. Trauma could have taken everything away, and me with it, and me first: this illness from which I strangely escaped, this separation from which I never thought I would recover and continue to exist, this death of my child for which I would have liked so much to substitute myself to allow him to continue to live this life that was stolen from him, the destruction of my house and my world the day I thought I would never have a real place to live, the virus and the pandemic crisis where every day I wondered if I would be the next one to go through it, suspecting the slightest sign of illness and telling myself that my turn has come without knowing where or how I might have caught it. To philosophize is not only to think, but also to rise to that “vertiginous height” of existence, where everything could crumble, or in the least, topple over.

Hence, the strangest part of the “crisis,” precisely in the context of the Extra phenomenon – namely, that I continue to exist most of the time – even in trauma where everything, myself and the world, should have collapsed – and that in this “being-there,” no longer open (*Dasein*) but simply present or “there” (There is), something is said about a world, and about myself, which is changing. *To still stand when one should be dead*: such is the “crisis” of *extra*-phenomenality. Not the one that seeks or will find a lost meaning in the nostalgia of an age where phenomenology still had something “gentle and cozy” to it (from birth as receptivity to gift as pure given). Not even the one that is reduced to the absolute absurdity of a life that feeds only on “the inconvenience of being born” (Cioran). But the one that makes of the “outside,” or of the “out of category,” the deepest reason of the act of existing, or at least the necessity to develop now a *phenomenology a minima* by which “I” persist in standing there, even if not to be able to say me anymore, and by which the “other” will perhaps stand “at my side,” but without meeting me nor joining me in this trauma – at the bottom of this hole to which I myself would not know how to reach.

⁴³ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*.

⁴⁴ Ibid., chap. 5.

⁴⁵ Zaoui, *La Traversée des Catastrophes*, 284.

7 Conclusion: A “core of solitude”

Paradoxically, and precisely by reason of the trauma within which existing is revealed in me, even while pretending to ignore it, it is thus like an “original” or rather an “originary solitude,” of which each one of us is constituted, and which could perhaps, and strangely, bind us. Far from the “solitary” (Rousseau), or “solipsism” (Husserl, Descartes), or far from the “*esseulement*” (Heidegger), “solitude” stands as this original and originary sphere, from myself to myself, that trauma comes if not to awaken at least to indicate. The “mystics of the other,” even if most often they come from erroneous interpretations (in particular from Levinas), have today become the panacea of a phenomenology, indeed, of an ego that is in need of being saved. Whether in philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology, politics, or theology, the other is always there to save me, and not to recognize it, and even more not to welcome it, is to commit a crime of *lèse-majesté*. At the instance of the primacy of eventing over the brute fact, of openness over creativity, or of the world over the un-world, there now comes, as we announced, the absolute privilege of otherness over solitude. But this is to miss, at least in our eyes, the irrefragable “nucleus of solitude” which constitutes each one of us, impossible to overcome, and even less to share.

Within the framework of the Extra phenomenon, trauma does not cease to remind us of this fact. We are “alone” and “always alone” in the double collapse of the phenomenizing subject and of the phenomenized horizon: illness, separation, death of a child, natural disaster, pandemic. The solitude is here “originary” and not only “original,” in the sense that it constitutes the depth of my existentiality, which my unimpartable trauma comes to remind me. To say, then, “that it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18) does not simply make of solitude a “beginning” state that awaits completion (Levinas). In solitude, in my solitude, there stands my originary being which will never be transcended. This is not simply a “mystery” never totally elucidated (Edith Stein), nor a “secret” where my intimate good is hidden (Romano), but a core “kernel,” with its strongest and most infrangible bark, impossible to crush. “Solitude” is synonymous with “impenetrability,” both to myself and to others. And it is in recognizing this that my trauma will have, if not a name, at least a place where it “makes its hole,” without my ever being able to join it and descend into it without definitively being made nothing (*néantisé*).

I am to myself and for myself totally unknowable in this “hole” or this “kernel of solitude,” which trauma, by way of a “crack” always already there (Deleuze), has come to awaken. Not of a theophanic “unknowability,” where solitude would only be the “remainder” of an always already shared otherness, but of a thing unknowable, forever sealed off because it is inaccessible to language as well as to any possibly shared experience. But the other, too, as I can at least suppose, is always alone with this “originary solitude,” which he himself cannot reach either. He is unknowable to himself as I am to myself, in particular under the effect of the trauma where I am always astonished to see myself, or at least to live out myself (*me vivre*). “So alone” in this undertaking, where none other than myself seems to be able to help me, but no longer myself.

Let the other then come forth, and he will stand, at most, “by my side.” That which is true of death, according to Martin Heidegger’s apt formula, is also true of existence in general, and more particularly of trauma: “We do not *really experience* the death [the trauma] of others, at most we always and only ‘assist’ them.”⁴⁶ The shoulder of others is certainly not nothing, but it is far from being everything. I am not and never will be “with the other” in his trauma but will simply be “there” – not to penetrate but to stand by his side. I am and always will be a “stranger to myself” in the Extra phenomenon. To be consoled is not to break such an impenetrability or “core of solitude,” but on the contrary to refer oneself to it, and even to feel bound to it.

The whole paradox, in fact, is here. The unshareable nature of our solitude is precisely what we have in common with others, and even more with the one we say we “love.” *I* do not reach to *my* core of solitude, which constitutes the strongest of my beingness; *you* do not reach your core of solitude, which defines your existentiality; *you* do not reach *my* core of solitude so that you will have to get out of the lure of wanting to

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §47.

share everything, and *I* do not reach *your* core of solitude so that I will have to have lived enough, and perhaps also philosophized, to finally recognize in you an egoism which, forever, will escape me.

There is here neither the tragic nor tragedy, quite the contrary. To substitute a “drama of the phenomena” to the irenicism of the phenomenology previously denounced certainly has its sense, but rather in such a way that “drama” here is understood as a new scene upon which to play, rather than to sound the end of a comedy that would have already lasted too long. For, in this “common inaccessibility” of our core of solitude – of myself to myself, of the other to himself, of the other to myself, and of myself to the other – stands the strongest, and the deepest, of our act of loving. In the shared inaccessible, there remains the link, and by this “*vinculum substantiale*,” we remain forever knotted. Love will not be, or will no longer be an “empty word” or a *flatus vocis*, if we recognize that the solidarity of others is held less in the sharing of that which would be held hidden, than in the existential abyss which allows each of us to exist, or at least to stand upright without collapsing or being damaged: “To love is nothing at first which means to dissolve, to give oneself and to unite with a second person,” one must conclude according to the remarkable formula of Rainer Maria Rilke addressed to Mr. Kappus on May 14, 1904 (*Letters to a young poet*). “Love consists in the fact that two solitudes protect each other, delimit each other, and greet each other.”⁴⁷

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⁴⁷ Rilke, “Lettres à un Jeune Poète,” 337.

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