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The Discarnate Madman

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Abstract

Phenomenology must begin to acknowledge the organic, animal nature of the body instead of focusing only on the pure subjectivity of the flesh. Mediating between Descartes's *extended body* (a mere object that is entirely distinct from the self) and Husserl's *lived body* (the flesh that is the self), the *spread body* is the organic body that I have, that is not simply myself and yet is mine. This essay reveals the steep cost of phenomenology's neglect of the body, which produces a discarnation, or dissolution of the flesh itself. The "flesh without body" vanishes into transparency, exemplified by Descartes' "madmen" who lose all connection to their organic bodies, to the point of supposing that their bodies are glass. Because organicity is in fact proper to us, denying or rejecting its import can lead only to madness.

Keywords

lived body – flesh – *spread body* – Descartes

Madness touches the limit. And it is at the limit of one's own madness that one reaches one's limits. With this formula as the leitmotif and thesis of the present essay, I will strive to show that unreason in madness is less a matter of a counter-discourse than an attempt to invent another discourse, even to make the 'body' speak when reason falls silent.¹ The debate, already old but no less topical, between Michel Foucault (*History of Madness* [1st French edition 1961, 2nd French edition 1972]) and Jacques Derrida (*Cogito and the History of*

¹ This essay is translated by Sarah Horton. See Translator's Note at the end of the article.

Madness [1963], reprinted in *Writing and Difference*) has not ceased to be a topic of discussion. Certainly one can either claim the position that consists in accusing the ‘conspiracy’ that excluded madness from the field of philosophy in the middle of the seventeenth century (Foucault’s thesis) or explain that madness always remains as the ‘counterpoint’ to the cogito, in the *Meditations* in the figure of the evil genius, and so within philosophy (Derrida’s thesis), but then one will not, in my view, see what is really at stake in Being-mad – less the insane than the incarnate, less the unreasonable than the angelic. Though the ‘great confinement’ certainly designates, according to Michel Foucault, the strange contemporaneity between the locking up of the mad during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV on the one hand (the creation in 1656 of the General Hospital in Paris, Bicêtre for men and the Salpêtrière for women) and the publication of Descartes’s *Meditations* (in 1641), nothing guarantees that such a ‘takeover’ interrogates the limits only of rationality and not also of corporeality.²

Indeed, the matter would, on the whole, be self-evident, given such a ‘claustration’ of the mad [*fous*] in what we will call, to put it rightly, an ‘insane asylum’ [*asile de fous*], had not the preceding century, the sixteenth, unbridled madness, as it were, because of the consequences of the black plague in the fourteenth century and the wars of religion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Concerning this, let it suffice to consult the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, in particular ‘The Extraction of the Stone of Madness’ (painted in 1494), exhibited in the Prado Museum, or to read Sebastian Brant’s famous *Ship of Fools* (1494), for us to bow to the evidence: the mad were everywhere from the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth, finally rid of the definition of madness as sin (and therefore as falling under the category of divine punishment) in the Middle Ages and not yet caught in that

² Cf. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (1972) (Paris: Tel Gallimard, 1976), ch. II, ‘Le grand renfermement’, pp. 56-91 (cit. p. 56); English trans. by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, (New York: Routledge, 2006), ch. 2, ‘The Great Confinement’, pp. 44-77 (cit. p. 44): ‘The Renaissance had just liberated the voice of madness, but had mastered its violence. The classical age, in a strange takeover, was then to reduce it to silence’ (emphasis added). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

of insanity as a medical abnormality at the beginning of the classical age (and therefore of their internment in hospices). The Renaissance period, from Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1509) to Montaigne's *Essays* (1580), is indeed wholly distinctive in that it can bear madness or, better, stages it and causes to be seen in it not the medical deviation from a pre-established rule but, on the whole, a potential and other possibility of existence to consider. The 'Schluraffen ship', the celebrated vessel of the *Ship of Fools*, going from village to village according to Sebastian Brant (1494) and so well illustrated by Dürer, suffices to testify to this:

Think not we madmen are all alone
 For brothers large and small we own
 In every country everywhere,
 Our ranks are swelled beyond compare.
 We travel far to every land
 From Narbon to Schluraffen land,
 From there we go to Montflascon
 And reach the land of Narragon.
 Each port, shore we investigate
 And travel on with dreadful fate,
 As yet, however, we've not scanned
 The port where we would like to land.
 Our traveling will never end
 For no one knows to where he'd wend.
 We find no rest by day or night,
 For none of us sees wisdom's light [...].³

³ Sebastian Brant, *La nef des fous* (1494), trans. from the German by M. Horst (Strasbourg: Ed. La Nuée Bleue, 1979), 'Le bateau de Cocagne', p. 433; English trans. by Edwin H. Zeydel, *Ship of Fools* (Dover: Dover

We must therefore recognize this and yield to Pascal's famous thought, which on this point is closer to the Renaissance than to the classical age, to Montaigne's unreason than to so-called Cartesian rationality: 'Men are so necessarily mad that it would be another form of madness not to be mad.'⁴

The question is therefore raised, not solely to avoid repeating what others have already shown (Foucault/Derrida debate) but also to say *today* in what this 'other form of madness',⁵ so often explicated, consists: *who* speaks thus of madness and *how* can madness teach us as well as make us see a limit that is potentially not to be exceeded? Whether madness is a matter of genius (Nietzsche, Van Gogh), or whether it makes one touch depths to which none have yet gone (Artaud), it is invariably a matter of a gulf to be glimpsed and yet into which one must not completely fall. Everyone knows this. A 'tempest in a skull' rages even, and perhaps especially, in the people we think are the most 'well-ordered'. Freud, a *pater familias* and even an attentive grandfather, was nonetheless the one by whom the doors of unreason finally opened, never again to be closed. And yet he did not succumb to it, finding the discourse that would decree its laws without, nevertheless, completely espousing it. The philosopher therefore will not, in my view, scorn his rationality. On the contrary, he will attempt to say, and to let express itself, his own madness that cannot but rise to the surface, giving to words the character of the concept in order perhaps to not succumb.

Publications, 2011), 'The Schluraffen Ship', p. 349-350. [Translation modified to read 'the mad', in keeping with Falque's subject and the French translation he employs, rather than 'fools'. Schluraffen, or Cocagne in French (and, usually, Cockaigne in English) is a mythic land of luxury and pleasure. – Trans.]

⁴ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 1963), p. 548 (Lafuma 412 and Brunschvicg 414); English trans. by Roger Ariew, *Pensées* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), p. 6. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

⁵ Foucault, *Folie et déraison, L'histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961), 1961 preface reprinted in *Histoire de la folie* (abridged edition) (Paris: ed. 10/18, 1964), p. 8-9; *History of Madness*, p. xxvii: 'We must write the history of that *other form of madness* – that other form by which men, in the gesture of sovereign reason that locks up their neighbor, communicated and recognize each other in the merciless language of non-madness [...]. To describe, from the origin of its curve, that '*other form*' which, on either side of its movement, allows Reason and Madness to fall away, things henceforth external to each other, deaf to any exchange, and as though dead to each other' (emphasis added). [Translation modified. Among other changes, I render *autre tour* as 'other form', following *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (the translation of the 1964 abridged edition of *Histoire de la folie*), trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. ix. – Trans.]

Who then speaks of madness? Perhaps it is thus still and always ‘as a philosopher’, or at the very least as a ‘sane person’, that one should approach it. But is it then necessary, in order to do so, to discredit madness – as soon as Reason distances itself just as much from the Insane? In other words, *how* exactly can madness educate us, lead us elsewhere and otherwise, and make us reach hitherto unsuspected ‘layers’? Its most ‘significant’ message has perhaps been forgotten by the protagonists of the quarrel – that is, not ‘unreason’ but the sense of the ‘incarnate’, not the ‘non-sense of logos’ but the emergence of ‘pathos’. Whereas formerly it was a question of interrogating the *limits of rationality* (Foucault, Derrida), we must now reread the same debate *in light of corporeality* (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Henry, and even my own perspective).⁶

The Gulf of the *Meditations*

The passage from the first *Meditation* is well known, but it is fitting to recall it, not in order to address only the uninitiated but in order to situate the ‘framework of madness’ within which these ‘meditations’, even this experience, seem to be set up. Descartes in his hyperbolic doubt attempts to do away with, even annihilate, everything, such that nothing remains, or should remain, of what is presupposed: ‘*undermining the foundations* will cause *whatever has been built upon them to crumble* of its own accord,’ admits the philosopher who is already almost caught in the trap of his own destructiveness.⁷ Those who say, and who think, that Cartesianism is first a matter of rationality have not seen that it is first based on existentiality. In the *Meditations*, it is a question of ‘destruction’ and not solely of ‘suspension’ or ‘bracketing’, such that the Cartesian *dubitatio* has no need to envy the Husserlian *epoché*. The risk of annihilation is, on the whole, much greater in Descartes than in Husserl, to the point of

⁶ Concerning this point, I refer to my work, Emmanuel Falque, *Les noces de l’agneau, Essai philosophique sur le corps et l’eucharistie* (Paris, Cerf, 2011 [reprinted in *Triduum philosophique* (Paris, Cerf, 2015)]), ch. V, ‘Retour à l’organique’, pp. 177-225; English trans. by George Hughes, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist* (New York: Fordham, 2016), ch. 5, ‘Return to the Organic’, pp. 100-132.

⁷ René Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques* (1641) (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion [bilingual edition], 1979), 1st meditation, p. 67 (AT VII, 17 / AT IX, 13); English trans. by Donald A. Cress, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 1st meditation, p. 60 (emphasis added).

always floundering in the water, at the beginning of the second *Meditation*, no longer touching the earth nor reaching heaven, and sinking slowly but surely in murky water that is ready, if not to swallow me, then at least to cause me to perish: ‘Yesterday’s meditation has thrown me into such doubts,’ confides Descartes in a meditation that must here be understood in the spiritual sense (in the manner of the Meditations in Saint Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*), and so on the second day of his asceticism, ‘that I can no longer ignore them, yet *I fail to see how they are to be resolved*. It is as if I had suddenly fallen into a *deep whirlpool*; I am so tossed about that I can *neither touch bottom with my foot*, nor *swim up to the top*.’⁸

It is therefore in light of such a quagmire, if not already present (first meditation) then at least to come (second meditation), that the ‘madman’ (*insanus*) must be considered – not only as an intentional loss of one’s bearings but also as the ordeal of sometimes foundering, and even of calling into question everything that belongs to the sane person’s *cogitatio*. The reason to doubt, or rather to call for madness, either to reject it or to make it thought’s domain, is indeed as clear as can be from the first *Meditation* onward, and we must reread it to consider it clearly:

But on what grounds could I deny that *these hands and this body are mine*? Unless perhaps I were to *liken myself to these insane ones (insanis)*, whose brains are so obscured and troubled by an unrelenting vapour of black bile that they steadfastly insist they are kings when they are utter paupers, or that they are arrayed in purple and gold when they are wholly naked, or that they are jugs, or have a glass body. But *they are mad (amentes)*, and I would appear no less *demented (demens)*, were I to take their behaviour as an example for myself.⁹

⁸ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 2nd meditation, p. 77 (AT VII, 23-34 / AT IX, 18); *Meditations*, p. 63 (emphasis added).

⁹ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 18-19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60, emphasis added. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

One indeed will find two interpretations of this famous passage on madness, before I seek, potentially and if it is possible, to add a third one: either on the one hand that which sees in this hypothesis of madness an ‘impossibility to think’ and an ‘impossibility of thinking’, such that the madman would come to threaten the act of the *cogitatio* itself (Michel Foucault’s hypothesis),¹⁰ or on the other that which, on the contrary, thinks doubt itself, and therefore philosophy, as an act that integrates madness, in particular in the hypothesis of the evil genius, and that therefore serves as a resistance to thought itself (Jacques Derrida’s hypothesis).¹¹ In other words, madness is at stake in the *Meditations* as it is in our very lives. Either one rejects madness as the monstrous side of an existence that one dares not think, and one prefers to lock up the mad and one’s own madness in an external rim of a well-mastered consciousness (the great confinement [Foucault]), or one integrates madness into oneself and makes it a mechanism for better existing, or at the very least for better understanding that everyone, including the philosopher, invents hypotheses at the limit of ‘insanity’ (the evil genius who does nothing but deceive me) in order to give myself a greater certainty, or at the very least a stronger hypothesis, that I exist (Derrida). In the first case (Foucault), madness is excluded from my existence and I must turn it away, just as I must also take offense at it; in the other

¹⁰ Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (1972), pp. 67-70 [‘Le grand renfermement’]; *History of Madness*, pp. 44-46 [‘The Great Confinement’] (emphasis added): ‘But Descartes does not evade the *danger of madness* in the same way that he sidesteps the possibility of dream or error. [...] Madness is an altogether different affair [...] because *I who think, I cannot be insane*. [...] It is an *impossibility of being mad* essential not to the object of thought but to the *thinking subject*. [...] Yet Descartes has now acquired that certainty: *madness can no longer concern him*. It would be *demented* to suppose that one *is demented* [...]’ [Translation modified. – Trans.]

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, ‘Cogito et histoire de la folie’ (*Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 1964), reprinted in *L’écriture et la différence* (1967) (Paris: Seuil, coll. ‘Essais’, 1979), pp. 51-97; English trans. by Alan Bass, ‘Cogito and the History of Madness’, in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 31-63: ‘It appears, on this second reading, that, for Descartes, *madness is thought of only as a single case* – and not the most serious one – *among other cases* of sensory error. [...] It is the *other of the cogito*. [...] The hypothesis of the *evil genius* will make present, conjure up, the possibility of a total madness, a total derangement that I could not master because it is inflicted upon me – hypothetically – and I am no longer responsible for it. [...] [I]t can no longer literally be said that the *Cogito escapes madness* because it keeps itself beyond the grasp of madness, or because, as Foucault says, ‘*I who think, I cannot be mad*’, but rather because at its own moment, under its own authority, the Cogito is valid *even if I am mad, even if my thought is mad through and through*’ (cit. pp. 80, 81, 85 respectively; English trans., pp. 51, 52-53, 55 respectively, emphasis added). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

case, the second one (Derrida), madness is a mode of Being of my life, like an evil genius who almost always accompanies me while giving me reasons to doubt and calling me to the point of recognizing that I cannot control everything. In these two counterposed perspectives, Foucault and Derrida are on the whole in agreement on a principal point, namely, that one needs insanity and madness in order to not remain deluded by false rationality (which is not, moreover, that of Descartes), whether one lays claim to it because it was rejected (Foucault), or whether one espouses it as a mechanism for one's own thought (Derrida).

The Hypothesis of a Third Way

As for the previously posed question ‘*Who speaks of madness?*’ one will then grant that here it first concerns the philosopher. Not that psychiatry or psychoanalysis cannot approach it – that goes without saying, and they have, moreover, proven this perfectly in practice – but because, as Michel Foucault indicates in his first preface to *History of Madness* (1961), later removed due to his disagreement with Jacques Derrida (1972),

on the one hand is the man of reason who delegates madness to the doctor, thereby authorizing no relation other than through the abstract universality of illness; and on the other is the man of madness, who only communicates with the other by the intermediary of a reason that is no less abstract, which is order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, the demand for conformity.¹²

In other words, contrary to what one could have believed, at least until Jacques Lacan studied the ‘logic of delusion’, the great confinement of the mad, whether in a hospice called Bicêtre (for men) or the Salpêtrière (for women) or in exclusion from the sphere of philosophy (*Meditations*), proceeds from a psychiatrization or medicalization of madness, of which the

¹² Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (abridged edition), 1961 Preface, p. 9; *History of Madness*, 1961 Preface, p. xxviii.

‘vapour of black bile’ evoked by Descartes certainly dates back to Hippocrates but indicates above all that the madman is sick or pathological, and that he could not concern me inasmuch as I am a ‘human’ in good health. Thus as Michel Foucault rightly indicates, the medical internment of the insane or of lunatics in the classical era not only separated the mad on the one hand (the sick) and humans on the other (those who are said to be sane), but it also demanded even of the mad (the sick) that they live and experience themselves in the mode of normality (sane humans) – so as to return to a configuration or ‘mould’ nothing of which could be expressed except the play of normality: as Foucault bitterly affirms, not without nostalgia for the unbridled period of the Renaissance, ‘the constitution of madness as a mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, bears witness to a ruptured dialogue [...]. The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue by reason *about* madness, could only be built on such a silence.’¹³ Whether one regrets the casting of madness outside thought (Foucault), or whether one makes it rationality’s motor, in the figure of the evil genius (Derrida), one thereby opposes humanity to insanity, all of ‘classical philosophy’ having been built on this single phrase of Descartes’s that concludes, and closes off, this passage on madness in the first *Meditation*: ‘Notwithstanding, I have to take into consideration *that I am human* [*sim homo*]’, which implies not mad (*amentes*) or insane (*insanis*) and therefore reasonable because ‘[g]ood sense [or reason] is the best distributed thing in the world’, precisely excepting the mad.¹⁴

At the moment of rereading Descartes’s first *Meditation* (1641) and therefore of accusing the French thinker either of ‘excluding madness’ (Foucault) or of ‘reintegrating’ it in the figure of the evil genius (Derrida), one point did not, however, receive all the attention that

¹³ Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (abridged edition), 1961 Preface, p. 9; *History of Madness*, 1961 Preface, p. xxviii (emphasis in original). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

¹⁴ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations* p. 60 [translation modified – Trans.]; and (AT VI, 1); and *Discours de la méthode*, in *Œuvres philosophiques*, vol. 1, ed. F. Alquier, (Paris: Garnier, 1963), p. 568; English trans. by Donald A. Cress, *Discourse on Method*, in *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), p. 1.

it merited, at the very least considering the protagonists who led the joust. There certainly are these ‘madmen’ (*amantes*) and these ‘insane ones’ (*insanis*) who could well send me back to my possible state of ‘lunacy’ or ‘dementedness’ (*demens*) ‘were I to take their behaviour as an example for myself’: being obscured and troubled by the ‘vapour of black bile’, believing oneself a ‘king’ when one is an ‘utter pauper’, seeing oneself ‘arrayed in purple and gold’ while one is ‘wholly naked’, or imagining that one is a ‘jug’ or has a ‘glass body’. Then there are also and above all those ‘madmen’ or rather that ‘sane’ person who would become ‘mad’ if he came to ‘deny that these hands (*manus*) and this body (*hoc corpus*) are mine [*meum esse*]’ – unless I ‘liken myself to these insane ones’ (*nisi me forte comparem nexio quibus insanis*).¹⁵ Probably there are not ‘two madnesses’ or even ‘two different modes of madness’ but two divergent ways of approaching insanity depending on whether one considers it *ad extra* from the point of view of the ‘madman’ seen through the sane person’s eyes (vapour of bile, glass jug, etc.) or *ad intra* from the point of view of the ‘sane person’ gone mad. As long as the philosopher rejects the madman, he sets himself up as a model of normality. But if the madman accuses the philosopher, or rather becomes a philosopher or becomes ‘well-behaved’,¹⁶ he risks harming me myself if I come to the point of ‘likening’ (*comparem*) myself to him, or even of ‘taking their behaviour as an example for myself’ (*ab iis exemplum ad me transferrem*). Real madness is not adopting a ‘madman’s’ behaviour in the sane person’s eyes, be it a question of riches, dress, or appearance (I will return to this), but of believing oneself to be ‘sane’ while sometimes knowing and experiencing oneself [*s’éprouvant*] as ‘mad’ (denying that ‘this body’ and ‘these hands’ ‘are mine’). The problem of corporeality, even the impossible incarnation of the self for the self, takes precedence over the problem of unreason in that it affects me as ‘one who is put to the test’ [*éprouvé*] rather

¹⁵ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, pp. 68-69 (AT VII, 18-19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. –Trans.]

¹⁶ [The French word *sage* can mean ‘well-behaved’, ‘wise’, or ‘reasonable’. It is also the word one would use to tell children ‘Be good!’ All these meanings should be kept in mind here. – Trans.]

than designating an arbitrary boundary that is not to be crossed. It would be ‘mad not to be mad’. This already-indicated phrase of Pascal’s (L. 412 / B. 414) could well lead us to interrogate *ourselves* about that in which our ‘corporeality’ consists and about our possibility of truly appropriating it for ourselves.

Madness thus does not have ‘one’ contrary but ‘two’, if we read Descartes well: certainly ‘unreason’ (*lectio facilior*), but also ‘disembodiment’ or the ‘disintegration of the body [*corps*]’ (*lectio difficilior*). The first reading, downstream of and starting from madness (‘vapour of black bile’) is, as I have shown, the one that occupies the entire field of the debate between Foucault and Derrida (reason and unreason); the second (the sane person imagining himself to be ‘mad’ [*insanis*] if he denied that ‘these hands and this body are mine’), upstream and anchored in corporeality, introduces another way that I would like at least to suggest, if not to map out, and can itself lead us to hitherto unsuspected horizons (the question of schizophrenia in Henri Maldiney, for example). Not believing that the debate is outmoded, we must therefore convene it anew, but via an angle according to which the sane person will fear the ‘discarnate’ more greatly than the ‘unreasonable’ – revealing, however, a possible and oft-employed modality of our corporeality.

The Madman’s ‘Body’

Let us set out, therefore, starting from the sane person rather than from the madman, since it is first a question of I myself, who in my reason will be convinced of insanity, or rather in my carnal subjectivity led towards a certain sentiment of corporeal dismemberment. I have indeed ‘to take into consideration that I am human, and in consequence,’ adds the first *Meditation*, ‘that I am accustomed to sleeping at night, and to experiencing in my dreams *the very same things* [*eadem omnia*], or now and then even *less plausible ones* [*vel etiam minus verisimilia*], as *these insane ones* do when they are awake.’¹⁷ One will here find anew, and once again, two

¹⁷ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

different manners of reading this closing, either by drawing it to the side of disqualifying madness as non-human or inhuman or by invoking its requalification or reintegration because in the end ‘we are all mad’. Foucault on the one hand stops at the formula according to which ‘I have to take into consideration that I am human’ and therefore accuses Descartes of excluding madness from the field of humanity, that is, of rationality, and Derrida on the other recognizes that I see each day, or rather each night in a dream, these ‘same things’ (*ista*) that the insane see when they are interned. But *what* do they see then, these mad ones, that I *could*, at least in the conditional, also see myself, teaching me about *what* madness signifies, and without excluding it too immediately from the field of my supposedly so well-ordered existence: a coronation as ‘kings’ (*reges*) while one is an ‘utter pauper’, garb of ‘purple and gold’ (*vel purpura indutos*) when one is ‘wholly naked’, ‘jugs’ (*cucurbitas*) or ‘glass bodies’ (*ex vitro conflatos*), yet believing oneself to indeed be there ‘in the flesh’.¹⁸

It is here that the perspective can change and that a new interpretation comes to light for today, for whoever is willing to consider it. Indeed, whoever reads with precision, on the same page of the first *Meditation*, Descartes’s consecutive double passage, first ‘on madness or the insane’, then ‘on the impossible distinction between dreaming and waking’, cannot not notice that there it is first a question of the body, the hands, clothing, nudity, even of a jug or of transparency, and not of doubt or rationality. Everything therefore changes, or is inverted. Whereas the cogito will have no other goal than making conceptuality emerge (second meditation), it discovers itself as enamoured of and entangled in a corporeality of which it is not certain that it can rid itself so cheaply (first meditation). The doubling concerning affectivity discovered by Michel Henry in the second meditation (*videre videor* – ‘it seems to me that I see’¹⁹) in reality already plays out in the first meditation, but concerning corporeality

¹⁸ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

¹⁹ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 2nd meditation, p. 87 (AT VII, 29 / AT IX, 23); *Meditations*, p. 66. [Translation modified. – Trans.] With Michel Henry’s commentary, *Généalogie de la psychanalyse* (Paris: PUF,

this time ('But on what grounds could I deny that these hands and this body are *mine – meum esse?*'²⁰). And yet the 'body', or rather my flesh as 'body' (*Körper*) appears for me as irreducible as soon as I am mad or classified as mad, such that the appropriation of myself for myself in my *incarnation* or my *Verleiblichung* becomes as unthinkable as it is hardly imaginable. The 'primal sensing' or the '*I sense that I think, therefore I am*' (M. Henry) is precisely that to which the madman seems to no longer have access, barring himself from the route of the flesh (*Leib*) to (re)turn towards the body (*Körper*).²¹

In the same way, if the *meum corpus* consecrates 'the Husserlian moment' of the *Leib* in that it encounters in me a 'certain passive faculty of sensing' (*passiva quaedam facultas sentiendi*) in the sixth *Meditation*²² and if the 'flesh is finally indubitable' from the first *Meditation* onward (J.-L. Marion),²³ then, inversely, what about the 'body' (*Körper*), or rather 'my body', which precisely no longer appears to me as 'mine' – having become for me nearly 'objective' and yet 'incompressible' in the 'non-sensed' experience that I have in madness, even schizophrenia: 'But on what grounds could I deny that these hands and this body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself... *nisi me forte comparem.*'²⁴ In other words, what about the 'madman's body' (*Körper*) and not only the 'sane person's flesh' (*Leib*), according to an anachronism that is nevertheless to be mastered here? Does the doubt that

1985), ch. I, '*Videre videor*', pp. 17-52; English trans. by Douglas Brick, *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), ch. 1, '*Videre Videor*', pp. 11-40.

²⁰ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 18 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60 (emphasis added). [Translation modified – Trans.]

²¹ Cf. Henry, '*Videre videor*', in *Généalogie de la psychanalyse*, pp. 28-29; '*Videre Videor*', in *Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 20-21: 'So Descartes unearths the original essence of appearance, expressed in *videor* and interpreted as the ultimate foundation, in '*sensing*.' [...] Descartes continuously affirms that we *sense* our thought, *sense* that we see, *sense* that we hear, *sense* that we warm ourselves. And this *primal sensing*, since it is what it is, is pure self-identical appearance, identical to the being that defines that very sensing. *I sense that I think, therefore I am*' (emphasis added). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

²² Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 6th meditation, p. 177 (AT VII, 79 / AT IX, 63); *Meditations*, p. 96. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

²³ Cf. Jean-Luc Marion's accurate analysis (though entirely directed towards the 'flesh') in *Sur la pensée passive de Descartes* (Paris: PUF, 2013), § 9, pp. 71-78: '*Meum corpus*: Le moment husserlien' (on the 6th Meditation); and § 13, pp. 103-111: 'La chair finalement indubitable' (on the 1st Meditation); English trans. by Christina Gschwandtner, *On Descartes' Passive Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018, forthcoming), § 9, '*Meum corpus*: The Husserlian Moment', and § 13, 'The Finally Indubitable Flesh'.

²⁴ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 18 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

‘calls into question only the physical bodies of the world and never my flesh’²⁵ resist the ‘madness’ that sees precisely the gaping open of the lunatic who would certainly call ‘into question the physical bodies of the world’ but not his ‘body’ rather than his flesh aimed at as a ‘body’ – ‘this body’ (*hoc corpus*) and ‘these hands’ (*manus has ipas*) that never become ‘his’ or ‘mine’ (*meum esse*)? Can one conceive, in this ‘limit situation’ of the human who is ‘mad’ (*insanis*), ‘witless’ (*amentes*) and ‘demented’ (*demens*), that it is not, or is no longer, possible to ‘reduce the body’ (*Körper*) and not only ‘the flesh’ (*Leib*), that the real vertigo of madness, even of schizophrenia, consists not in ‘not being the body that one has’ (doubt) but in ‘not having the body that one is’ (madness)?²⁶

There is indeed a difference between saying that *it is I* who is ‘here’, ‘clothed’, ‘seated next to the fireplace’, or ‘lying wholly naked in bed’ (argument from doubt) and saying that ‘these hands’ and ‘this body’ are *mine* (argument from madness). In reality everything in Descartes is always a matter of the possible, even agonizing, separation of the self from the self, whence the greater certitude of thought, for ‘it alone cannot be separated from me’ (*haec sola a me divelli nequit*).²⁷ Even the suggestion of the ‘phantom limb’ and the ‘greater intimacy’ (*intimius*) of the pain felt even in an ‘absent limb’ at the heart of the sixth *Meditation* (reasons to doubt [*dubitandi causas*])²⁸ do not resist the other hypothesis, more serious still, of ‘hands’ or a ‘body’ that would not, or would no longer, be ‘mine’ in the first *Meditation* (madness [*insanis*], losing one’s mind [*amantes*], dementedness [*demens*]). While the former (the phantom limb) certainly puts forth the hypothesis of the *sensation of an absent limb* (sixth meditation: the flesh), the latter (the non-appropriation of one’s own body for

²⁵ Marion, *Sur la pensée passive de Descartes*, p. 111: ‘Doubt calls into question only physical bodies in the world and never my flesh, only *natura corporea* and never *meum corpus*’ (emphasis in original). [My translation, here and in the body of the text. – Trans.]

²⁶ Cf. my contribution: Emmanuel Falque, ‘Peut-on réduire le corps (autour des *Ideen II* de Husserl et des *Manuscripts sur l’intersubjectivité*)’, *La réduction*, ed. S. Bancalari, *Archivio di Filosofia*, 83:1-2 (2015) pp. 91-107.

²⁷ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 2nd meditation, p. 83 (AT VII, 27 / AT IX, 21); *Meditations*, p. 65.

²⁸ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 6th meditation, p. 173 (AT VII, 77 / AT IX, 61); *Meditations*, p. 95: ‘But I had sometimes heard it said by people whose leg or arm had been amputated that it seemed to them that they still occasionally sensed pain in the very limb they had lost.’

oneself) states, inversely, the mad hypothesis, rejected by Descartes, of the *non-sensation of a present limb* (first meditation: the body) – a hypothesis that is all the more dangerous and madness-provoking in that it does away with the soundness not only of reason but also of the entirety of the auto-affectation, in thought or in affect, that is supposed to support it. When the body no longer auto-affects itself, the subject certainly becomes, strictly speaking, ‘mad’ or ‘schizophrenic’. But it is such *limits of madness* that we must confront if we do not want on the one hand to lie to ourselves and on the other to always countersign ‘the swerve of the flesh’ or the ‘primacy of the flesh over the body’ that most often characterizes the entirety of contemporary phenomenology (Levinas excepted).²⁹

The ‘flesh without body’ in the sixth *Meditation*’s hypothesis of the phantom limb (subjectivation without organicity) forgets, as it were, in what the ‘body without flesh’ consists in the first *Meditation*’s argument from madness (organicity without subjectivation). The former (sensations of the absent or phantom limb) certainly provides an ‘additional reason to doubt’, and therefore to privilege auto-affectation over objectivation, whereas the latter (non-sensation of an existing limb that is, however, ‘hyper-present’ and reduced to the status of a ‘thing’) becomes for Descartes a definitive manner of ‘excluding’ it or ‘no longer approaching’ it. – ‘But they are *mad* [...]. Notwithstanding, I have to take into consideration that I am *human*.’³⁰ The gesture here is certainly decisive, yet for putting aside not only ‘unreason’ (Foucault) but also ‘disembodiment’ or ‘discarnation’ as a limit situation of that in which, however, our own corporeality consists (my hypothesis). The ‘madness’ or the schizophrenia of Descartes’s first *Meditation* is absolutely distinct from the ‘doubt’ or the ‘reasons to doubt’ of the first and sixth *Meditations*, as Michel Foucault saw perfectly (but regarding ‘unreason’ only): ‘Yet Descartes has now acquired that certainty: *madness can no*

²⁹ Cf. Falque, *Les noces de l'agneau*, Introduction, ‘L’embarquée de la chair’, pp. 23-27 (*Triduum philosophique*, pp. 377-380); *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, Introduction, ‘The Swerve of the Flesh’, 1-4.

³⁰ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

*longer concern him. It would be demented to suppose that one is demented. [...]. Thus madness has disappeared by the very exercise of Reason [...]. Henceforth madness is exiled [...].*³¹ Certainly the evil genius can always threaten us from the inside and make it so that rationality is constructed only on Reason's other, even at the very heart of the *Meditations* (J. Derrida). There remains that which is more serious, and more profound, than the 'methodological fiction' of one who supposedly always wants to deceive me, namely, the strangeness of this 'body', my own, that has become sometimes so uninhabitable, even uninhabited, that its opacity alone, even its strangeness, tells me most strongly of its reality: *Manus vero has ipsas, totumque hoc corpus meum esse, qua ratione posset negari?* – 'But on what grounds could I deny that *these* hands and *this* body are *mine*?'³²

Materiality of the 'Body'

The 'madman' in this sense and in Descartes is not the one who imagines that he is 'without a body', which is precisely what distinguishes him from the 'dreamer', but on the contrary is the one who no longer inhabits or no longer recognizes his body – precisely the very one that should be 'his' or 'mine' (*corpus meum*). There is indeed a 'body', or rather 'this body' (*hoc corpus*); there are indeed 'limbs', or rather 'these hands' (*manus ipsas*), but in the impossibility of recognizing them as 'his' or 'mine' (*meum esse*): as we must here emphasize with Emmanuel Levinas, who at last sheds an exceptional light on this experience of the 'Cartesian madman' if one relates it to the *There is* [*Il y a*] or to *materiality*,

From a space without horizons, things *break away* and *are cast toward us* like chunks that impose themselves by themselves, blocks, cubes, planes, triangles, without transitions between them. Naked elements, simple and absolute, swellings or abscesses

³¹ Foucault, *Folie et déraison, Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1972), pp. 69-70; *History of Madness*, p. 46 (emphasis added). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

³² Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 18 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

of being. In this falling of things down on us objects attest their power as *material objects*, even reach a paroxysm of *materiality*. [...] Here is a notion of *materiality* which no longer has anything in common with matter as opposed to thought and mind, which fed classical materialism. [...] For here materiality is *thickness, coarseness, massivity, wretchedness*. It is what has *consistency, weight, is absurd, is a brute but impassive presence* [...]. The discovering of the *materiality of being* is not a discovery of a new quality, but of its *formless proliferation*. Behind the luminosity of forms, by which beings already relate to our ‘inside’, matter is the very fact of the *there is...*³³

According to this accurate diagnosis that the ‘vapour of black bile’ would only confirm (but must we fear it, including for ourselves?) the ‘insane one’ (*insanis*) in Descartes appears so greatly separated from his own body, without recognizing himself in it, that he may certainly fall within a certain mode of ‘schizophrenia’, but without this schizophrenia being so easy to classify as ‘pathology’. That there is a ‘grain of madness’ in each of us, the slightest introspection suffices to show. But what the Cartesian reasoning seems to immediately reject is that the ‘grain’ can set itself up as a sheaf of wheat or take its full place in the figure of the discarnate madman. For the abyss of madness (in the loss of identity [‘they are mad’]) is no less demented, or less dangerous, than the gulf of the night (in the dream, said to be destructive, of reality [‘there are no definitive signs or sufficiently certain marks by which to distinguish being awake from being asleep’]), quite the contrary.³⁴

There is perhaps something worse than ‘not existing’, than succumbing to anguish, to oblivion, to sleep, or than the impossible distinction between dreaming and waking (worse, that is, than being an ‘existent without existing’ to take up anew the words of Emmanuel

³³ Emmanuel Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existant* (1945-46) (Paris: Vrin poche, 1990), pp. 91-92; English trans. by Alphonso Lingis, *Existence and Existents* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), pp. 56-57 (emphasis added). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

³⁴ Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 19 / AT IX, 14-15); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

Levinas): that is, as it were, and to create a neologism here, to ‘over-exist’, to ‘exist without existent’ (to take up again, with the phenomenologist, the analogy), to continue being without recognizing *oneself* in one’s beingness, to always live oneself as a ‘stranger to oneself’. My body, mine, becomes as it were, including for myself and because I do not, or no longer, inhabit it, a ‘discarded meat’, to speak like Gilles Deleuze commenting this time on the painter Francis Bacon and the novelist Moritz, this ‘mass of ambulating flesh that the spectator already *is* in the spectacle’.³⁵ As soon as I no longer recognize ‘this body’ or ‘these hands’ as ‘mine’ (*meum esse*), the *materiality of the body* resists all the *assimilations of the flesh*. Here is held the double message that Emmanuel Levinas and Gilles Deleuze, paradoxically and conjointly united, deliver in the lineage of this unthinkable, and yet so near and so terrifying, hypothesis of the ‘discarnate madman’ in Descartes. Whereas the impossible distinction between dreaming and waking allows the ‘doubter’ to no longer distinguish vigilance from insouciance and therefore to fall asleep in a, on the whole, well-earned annihilation, on the contrary the argument from the madman who does not know, but without dreaming this time, what of his ‘body’ is ‘his’ or ‘for him’ (*meum esse*) forbids the insane one from falling into this sleep that he also perhaps desired so greatly. The madman is not the one who no longer distinguishes reality on the one hand and the world in which he lives on the other (since he well knows, from putting it to the test, that he has a body, and he does not first experience himself in sleep) but the one who, knowing precisely too well in what that so-called reality consists, cannot and does not want to endure it any longer. Far from sleeping, the *insane one* (Descartes), like the *insomniac* (Levinas), shares that strange destiny of being unable to doze, of not managing to succumb to this nothingness of doubt that is, in the end,

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon, Logique de la sensation* (1981) (Paris: Seuil, 2002), p. 30; English trans. by Daniel W. Smith, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 18 (citing and commenting on a text by Karl Philipp Moritz, excerpted from *Anton Reiser* [cited by Deleuze, from Jean-Christophe Bailly, *La légende dispersée, anthologie du romantisme allemand* (Paris: ed. 10/18, 1976), p. 35-43]): ‘a calf, the head, the eyes, the snout, the nostrils... and sometimes he so lost himself in sustained contemplation of the beast [a calf] that he really believed he experienced the *type of existence* of such a being... in short, the question if he, among men, was a dog or another animal had already often occupied his thoughts since childhood’ (emphasis in original). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

more endurable than the pain of outliving one's existing, of no longer recognizing oneself in the ordeal traversed and yet of being neither able nor obliged to suppress or lose the vigilance by which one remains always awake: as we read at the heart of *Time and the Other*, according to an experience that is, as we can see, shared,

Insomnia is constituted by the consciousness that it will never finish, that is, that there is no longer *any way of withdrawing* from the vigilance to which one is held. [...] This existing is not an *in-itself* [*en-soi*], which is already in peace; it is precisely the *absence of all self*, a *without-self* [*sans-soi*]. [...] I do not exist as a spirit, or as a smile or a breath of air; I am not without responsibility. My *being* doubles with a *having*; I am *encumbered by myself*. And this is *material existence*.³⁶

If Descartes thus excludes madness or insanity from the *Meditations*, this is not because it is unreasonable or unreasoning (Foucault's hypothesis) or still in the service of reason in the figure of the evil genius (Derrida's hypothesis), but because, in accordance with a 'third way', it teaches me about a possible discarnate mode of my existence that I could not and would not want to endure in reality: as Henri Maldiney emphasizes in his famous article on 'transpassibility', here in dialogue with Martin Heidegger (*Penser l'homme et la folie* [*Thinking Man and Madness*]),

The difficulty that characterizes the existence of a schizophrenic manifests itself according to the two directions of Being-in-the-world and Being-with: in the direction of Being-with, *he cannot encounter anyone*; in that of Being engaged with things, beings are not ready to his hand. It is impossible for him to have access to *an other*

³⁶ Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (1946-47), (Paris: PUF / Quadrige, 1983), pp. 27-29 and 37 respectively; English trans. by Richard A. Cohen, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), pp. 48-49 and 56 respectively (emphasis added). [Translation modified. – Trans.]

that it would be possible for him to desire. As for *things*, they *face* him, as do *words* also. Instead of their relevance, as it offers itself as *ready-to-hand* (*Zuhanden*), lending itself to a certain fashion of being used in the world, they are *present-at-hand* (*Vorhanden*), as in the *show window for an exhibition of models* or in a *catalogue of the world*.³⁷

In other words, the Cartesian madman is ‘schizophrenic’, but who is not (?), because he knows and sees precisely that ‘there are [*il y a*]’ hands, or that ‘there is [*il y a*]’ a body, but without being able to think or say that those (the hands) or this (the body) are precisely ‘his’ or ‘mine’ – *meum esse*. Things, including his own body, are ‘blindingly obvious’ to him [*saute aux yeux*], as in the experience of *Nausea* in Sartre: ‘Objects should not *touch* because they are not alive. You use them, put them back in place, you live among them: they are useful, nothing more. But they touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid of being in contact with them as though they were living beasts.’³⁸

Descartes’s ‘discarnate madman’, at the beginning of the first *Meditation*, lives so much in fear of his ‘disembodiment’ that he encounters ‘no longer anyone’ or ‘no one’ but stumbles over himself and the world, as also over his own body and others. He is – like the schizophrenic, who must not, however, be seen as a simple mode of abnormality – as if ‘incapable of transpassibility’, to say it anew with Henry Maldiney, and therefore inapt for any modification of himself by others or by the world. In his weakness, or his gaping open, he implicitly brings out the opening of a fault line or of an originary chaos at which one cannot

³⁷ Henri Maldiney, ‘De la transpassibilité’, in *Penser l’homme et la folie* (1991) (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2007), p. 297 (emphasis added). [My translation. – Trans.]

³⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *La nausée* (1938) (Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 2013), p. 26 (Mardi 29 janvier); English trans. by Lloyd Alexander, *Nausea* (New York: New Directions, 1969), p. 10 (Tuesday, January 30) (emphasis in original), which we will complete with (pp. 36, 44 and 47 respectively [5 heures et demi]; English trans. pp. 18, 24, 26 respectively [5:30]): ‘Things are bad! Things are very bad: I have it, the filth, the Nausea. [...] For the time being I have *seen enough* of living things, of dogs, of men, of all flabby masses which move spontaneously. I turn left, I’m going to crawl into that hole down there, at the end of the row of gaslights. [...] Am I myself not a wave of icy air? With neither blood, nor lymph, nor flesh. Flowing down this long canal towards the pallor down there. To be nothing but coldness.’

not look, and which Descartes, at least for an instant, unblocked only to close it up again at once: as one reads in *Penser l'homme et la folie*, concerning which one will wonder whether it is a commentary on the *Meditations*, which, however, it never cites,

The destructuring of the image of the body, and the correlative destructuring of the inner history of life, end in a disordered set of fault lines that are the negative constituents of existence. [...] This gaping, *the* gaping, does not result from a gathering together of fault lines. It is at the origin of them all.³⁹

The 'Body' without Flesh

To the 'swerve of the flesh' ordinarily practiced by phenomenology, we therefore must here oppose the 'resistance of the body'. We will no longer content ourselves with seeing in the *corpus meum* the hypothetical *Leib* of a flesh without body, of a pure proper body [*corps propre*], or even of a simple redoubling of pathos (the common hypothesis of the phenomenological reading of Descartes), but we will on the contrary find there the mark of a material body (*Körper*), my own, that cannot be reduced by the *epoché* or even annihilated by doubt, unless it is excluded by madness. That this body, these hands that I see, this head that I move, these legs that bear me, can at times and in limit situations not be recognized as 'mine' (*meum esse*) – this is what constitutes the experience of madness, which formerly and for this reason was rejected by Descartes and is today to be found again (in the ordeal of the numb or anaesthetized body or limb, for example, even, of course, in insomnia, suffering, or the wound in a gaping flesh). By dint of saying phenomenologically that 'I *am* my body' (*Leib*), we have perhaps come to forget that 'I *have* a body' (*Körper*) and that one day my body will also have me – in the experience of suffering, sickness, and death. The 'spread body' between

³⁹ Maldiney, 'De la transpassibilité', in *Penser l'homme et la folie*, pp. 298-299. [My translation. – Trans.]

Descartes's extended body and Husserl's lived body [*The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* § 1: 'The Residue of the Body'] preserves the resistance of the extended body and the intentionality of the lived body. It is at the same time the 'body' in its absolutely irreducible materiality and the 'flesh' in its lived experience that is impossible, however, to synthesize. The anaesthetized, sleeping, or crucified body appears, and appears to itself, first as 'body' (*Körper*) in an organicity that is at times so invasive, and suffering so much, that it is in fact necessary to silence its pain, and later as 'flesh' (*Leib*) in the aim that, however, I or another never cease to attribute to it (the doctor's aim, for example, regarding respect for the human, and other, body on which he is in the midst of operating).⁴⁰

The question is therefore reversed, as I have said, or rather inverted. No longer 'Is there a flesh without body?' as in the question addressed to Michel Henry (*The Loving Struggle*),⁴¹ but 'Is there a body without flesh?' In other words, if the madman is *really* 'insane' (*insanis*), having 'lost his mind' (*amentes*), even 'demented' (*demens*), is it not precisely because he reaches us in a limit experience that neither classical philosophy's *cogitatio* nor phenomenology's *Leiblichkeit* are capable of reaching – namely, experiencing oneself and one's own body [*propre corps*] not as 'own' [*propre*] or as a 'subject body' but as an object in the world that it is precisely impossible to subjectivate? The types or models of 'madness', stated precisely in the *Meditations*, are the proof of this. Denying that these 'hands' and this 'body' are 'mine' (*meum esse*) amounts word for word, according to Descartes, to 'comparing' oneself (*nisi me forte comparem*) to beings or situations in which, to follow still my third way, the madman would experience himself as 'discarnate' rather than as 'unreasonable': 'nakedness', 'jug' or 'gourd', or even 'glass body' are not only 'images'

⁴⁰ Cf. Falque, *Les noces de l'agneau*, § 1, 'Le résidu du corps', pp. 41-45 (*Triduum philosophique*, pp. 395-398); *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, § 1, 'The Residue of the Body', pp. 12-15 (hypothesis of the 'spread body').

⁴¹ Cf. (my work) Falque, *Le combat amoureux, Disputes phénoménologiques et théologiques* (Paris: Hermann, coll. 'De visu', 2014), ch. V, 'Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?', pp. 197-238; English trans. by Bradley B. Onishi and Lukas McCracken, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Disputes* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018, forthcoming), ch. 5, "Is There a Flesh without Body?"

and ‘illustrations’ of madness but are a proper and, frankly, precise manner of aiming at the ‘corporeal’, as if nothing were more to be feared than the ‘transparency of the body’, or even its ‘dismemberment’.

If one denied that this body or these hands are ‘mine’, one would therefore be ‘mad’ (*insanis*), insists the first *Meditation*, like those insane ones who ‘steadfastly insist they are kings when they are utter paupers’ (*constanter asservent vel se esse reges, cum sunt pauperrimini*), that they ‘are arrayed in purple and gold when they are wholly naked’ (*vel purpura indutos, cum sunt nudi*), or who ‘imagine that they are jugs or have a glass body’ (*vel caput habere fictile, vel se totos cucurbitas*).⁴² We will first pass over the example of the riches of kings and the poverty of the mad, except to recall that ‘madness’ is pride in the Middle Ages and that it is therefore a sin to want to elevate oneself thus. Medieval *superbia* finds in Cartesian *insania* its most proper philosophical translation. But there is more, and better. For the madman appears also and first in Descartes as he who is ‘wholly naked’, while he believes himself to be clothed (with purple and gold), like he who believes himself ‘to be a jug’ or ‘to have a glass body’, while he should at the very least be a ‘machine made of earth’.⁴³

The reader before these two examples is silent, not to say stunned or ‘imbecilic’ in the most ordinary sense of ‘idiocy’ (*idios*: proper, particular). The same is true of the ‘jugs’ and the ‘glass body’ in Descartes’s *Meditations* as of the ‘camel supposed to pass through the eye of a needle’ in the *Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Mt 19:24). As long as one has not understood that the eye of the needle in no way resembles the ‘eye’ of the couturier’s instrument (one does not see why it would be necessary to make a camel pass through it!) but

⁴² Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, 1st meditation, p. 69 (AT VII, 19 / AT IX, 14); *Meditations*, p. 60. [Translation modified. – Trans.]

⁴³ Here I refer, of course, to the famous opening of the *Traité de l’homme* (posthumous, 1662), in *Œuvres philosophiques*, vol. 1, ed. F. Alquier (Paris: Garnier, 1963), p. 379 (AT XI, 120); English trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, *Treatise on Man*, in *Complete Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 99: ‘I suppose the body to be nothing but a statue or machine made of earth, which God forms with the explicit intention of making it as much as possible like us.’

designates the ‘Needle’s Gate’ in Jerusalem through which a camel, even a rich one, can pass, but only on the condition of being unloaded, one could not give a sense to this verbiage that is just as unworthy of the Gospel saint (Matthew) as of the philosopher’s wisdom (Descartes). The Latin text of the passage in the *Méditationes de prima philosophia* [*Meditations on First Philosophy*] (published in 1641, hence well before the Duke de Luyne’s translation in 1647 under the title *Méditations métaphysiques* [*Metaphysical Meditations*]) says not ‘jug’ or ‘glass body’ but rather ‘gourd’ (*vel se totos esse curcubitas*), ‘head made of clay’ (*caput habere fictile*), and ‘cast in glass’ (*ex vitro conflatos*).⁴⁴ More than of beingness, Descartes here speaks of modality. It matters little to say what the mad are (jugs or glass bodies, which makes but little sense), but what they have become: a gourd emptied of its matter and its juice, a head with no brain, its grey matter annihilated, a body cast in glass in accordance with a transparency that, on the whole, could no longer resist. It is indeed a question here of ‘melancholics’, of those who are struck by ‘*melas-kohle*’ or ‘black bile’, as they are defined on this same page of the first *Meditation* (‘whose brains are obscured and troubled by such an unrelenting vapour of black bile’ [*vapour ex atra bile*]), but also as they are strictly defined in the parallel passage of *The Search for Truth* in the mouth of Eudoxus (dialogue between Eudoxus and Polyander): ‘it is not enough for me to tell you that the senses deceive us on certain occasions [...]. I want to go further, and ask if you have never seen one of those *melancholics* who think themselves to be *jugs* or who *take some part of their body to be enormous*.’⁴⁵ One could not be clearer. Whether it is a question of a ‘naked body’ (rather than a clothed one), an ‘emptied-out gourd’ (to the point of losing its substantiality), a ‘head made of clay’ (or emptied of its brain), of a ‘body cast in glass’ (and therefore purely transparent),

⁴⁴ On this point see Jacques Darriulat’s scholarly, judicious, and well-documented article, ‘Descartes et la mélancolie’, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, 4 (1996), p. 465-486.

⁴⁵ Descartes, *La recherche de la vérité par la lumière naturelle* (posthumous, 1701), in *Œuvres philosophiques*, vol. II, ed. F. Alquier (Paris: Garnier, 1963), p. 1119 (AT X, 511); English trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, *The Search for Truth by Means of the Natural Light*, (1701, posthumous publication), in *Complete Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), 407. [Translation modified. – Trans.] (AT X, 511).

or even of a ‘jug’ (in a deformity of the body), *everything* in these times of madness indicates that nothing is more to be feared than the ‘discarnation of the body’ in the figure of the madman in Descartes as also in ourselves and for ourselves: ‘the man with a glass body is a discarnate man, and the glass here stands for a fantastic sublimation of the flesh.’⁴⁶

Conclusion

One sees, therefore, at least as regards this ‘third way’ that I want to introduce here, that what is essential in the debate on the ‘insane one’ in Descartes has less to do, in my view, with logos or the status of *rationality* (Foucault/Derrida debate) than with the *soma* or the sense of the *incarnate* (my own hypothesis). Every philosopher has his Descartes, and passing thereby is an obligatory route, even in order, ‘once in his life’, to stake out a position. There is the Descartes of the ‘refoundation of science’ and of ‘solipsism’ to be broken (Husserl), of the roots of the tree of philosophy still and always to be ‘fathomed’ (Heidegger), of the ‘tacit cogito’ and the ‘spoken cogito’ (Merleau-Ponty), of the ‘height of the infinite’ by which man is overwhelmed (Levinas), of the ‘wounded cogito’ with a view to a ‘fault line’ to be exposed (Ricœur), of the ‘*adonné*’⁴⁷ with the evil genius as a figure of alterity (Marion), of the ‘*videre videor*’ or of the ‘it seems to me that I see’ by which I experience myself as always ‘auto-affected’ (Henry). Still it was necessary also to trace the contours of this ‘discarnate madman’, less to rid oneself of a lively quarrel from past years (logocentered debate ‘on’ madness) than

⁴⁶ Darriulat, ‘Descartes et la mélancolie’, p. 472. With the absolute confirmation of my hypothesis here (but a more historical than metaphysical perspective), p. 468 (emphasis added): ‘Madness is first medieval *Superbia*; it is a delirium of pride: the ‘very poor’ imagine themselves kings; the ‘wholly naked’, arrayed in purple and gold. But madness is also, perhaps more profoundly, *a lack of knowledge, on the part of the soul, of the body to which it is united*. Earthen pot or glass pot, the melancholic is that lunatic who *does not know himself a body*. Earthen pot: jug, clay head, the madman’s body is an *opaque envelope that contains only emptiness, like a dried gourd, emptied of its substance and which rings hollow*.’ [My translation, here and in the body of the text. – Trans.]

⁴⁷ [The French word *adonné* means to be given over, devoted, or even addicted to something. It contains within itself the words *don* (gift) and *donné* (given), etymological connections that are impossible to render in English without sacrificing either meaning or brevity. As the original French *adonné* has already entered some English-language discussions of Marion, I have chosen to preserve it here. – Trans.]

to orient it in a new direction and to show its current fruitfulness (a carnal ordeal ‘of’ madness).

With the ‘Cartesian’ madman, the Husserlian (but also Merleau-Pontian, Ricœurian, or Henrian) ‘flesh’ or *Leib* as constituting the ‘whole’ of the human person is to a great extent inculcated, or at the very least interrogated. It does not suffice to be a ‘flesh without body’ (in the ordeal of the self); one also and at times experiences oneself as a ‘body without flesh’ (wound, anaesthesia, insomnia...). That which here is glimpsed phenomenologically in view of the ‘figure of the madman’ in Descartes was also glimpsed phenomenologically, in an exemplary manner, by Henri Maldiney in *Penser l’homme et la folie* – in light of which the ‘Cartesian madman’ takes on yet ‘another form’. Not ‘transpassible’, the ‘schizophrenic’, probably just like the ‘insane one’ in Descartes, finds himself

unable to inhabit his body, in the sense of a proper body (*Leib* in German) [...]. ‘The sick schizophrenic does not have access to the other because his body has no limits.’ It is un-limited: *entschränkt*. A body without limit lends itself to the non-discrimination of its own space and foreign space [...]. The limits of one’s own body are destroyed in schizophrenia because its unity is disjointed, dissociated in a multiplicity of disparate parts, of *membra disjecta*.⁴⁸

Let us not err, nevertheless. If the sick one is ‘incapable of transpassibility’, to still follow Henry Maldiney, that is to say, ‘impermeable to the unforeseeable event, ab-solved of any a priori’, it is not first because he keeps himself in and stays in a pathology, his *own*, but because he testifies to this ‘dimension of Being that he lacks’, *ours* or that which we wrongly

⁴⁸ Maldiney, ‘De la transpassibilité’, in *Penser l’homme et la folie*, p. 297-298. [My translation. – Trans.]

believe we always possess, for want of seeing the abyss and always locking up the ‘madman’s part’ that is kept within us.⁴⁹

That I cannot exist only as a ‘smile’ or a ‘breath of air’, that ‘my *being* doubles with a *having*’, and that I am at times, not to say often, ‘*encumbered by myself*’ – this is the Levinasian lesson to which I have already referred and which gives a sense and a form to this Cartesian figure of the ‘insane one’.⁵⁰ The old Parmenides had already cast the warning to the young Socrates, without philosophy or its history truly retaining the lesson. There is a thought of ‘hair, mud, and filth’ that no one can avoid, and the greatest folly could lead us to *discarnating one’s body*: ‘you are still too young, Socrates,’ laments Parmenides, ‘and philosophy has not yet gripped you as, in my opinion, it will in the future, once you begin to consider none of these objects [hair, mud, filth] beneath your notice.’⁵¹ To Erasmus’s *In Praise of Folly* we must therefore today reply with an ‘*In Praise of Mud*’, the only way to not be or become mad, to recognize that we are ‘humans’ before we are God (and not mad), that we have been formed from the ‘dust of the earth’ (Gn 2:7), and that Christ himself was formed ‘*carnally*’ (*leiblich*) or rather ‘*corporeally*’ (*körperlich*), ‘curdled in uncleannesses in the womb’, ‘brought forth through organs immodest’, and ‘took nourishment through organs of ridicule’ (Tertullian).⁵² It is thus in this ‘Unfinished Ode to Mud’, written in the midst of war by the poet and playwright Francis Ponge (1943) – far from the numerous spiritualist drifts to be denounced today:

⁴⁹ Maldiney, ‘De la transpassibilité’, in *Penser l’homme et la folie*, p. 298. [My translation. – Trans.]

⁵⁰ Levinas, *Le temps et l’autre*, (‘Solitude et matérialité’), p. 37; *Time and the Other*, (‘Solitude and Materiality’), p. 56, emphasis added.

⁵¹ Plato, *Parménide*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, ed. Léon Robin, trans. Joseph Moreau and Léon Robin (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1943), 130e, p. 199; English trans. by Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan, *Parmenides* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), p. 131. [Translation modified to follow the wording of the French more closely. – Trans.].

⁵² Tertullian, *La chair du Christ (De carne Christi)* (Paris: Cerf, Sources chrétiennes n°216, 1975), IV, 3, p. 223; English trans. by Ernest Evans, *On the Flesh of Christ (De carne Christi)*, in *Tertullian’s Treatise on the Incarnation: The Text Edited with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (1956) (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016), IV, 3, p. 15. With my commentary: Falque, ‘La consistance de la chair (Tertullien)’, in *Dieu, la chair et l’autre, D’Irénée à Duns Scot* (Paris: PUF, 2008), pp. 207-250; English trans. by William Christian Hackett, ‘The Solidity of the Flesh (Tertullian)’, in *God, the Flesh, and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), pp. 143-166.

Mud pleases the noble heart because it is constantly scorned. Our mind reviles it, our feet and wheels squelch it. It makes walking hard and us dirty: there's what we can't forgive it.

Filth! We say of people we despise, or self-serving, mud-slinging insults. Not caring about the blame we inflict on it, how we wrong it. Who needs such constant humiliation? Atrocious persistence.

Despised mud, I love you. I love you because people scorn you.

May my writing, literal mud, splash the faces of those who disparage you!⁵³

Translator's Note

Emmanuel Falque here returns to his study of the body, pursued in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, *The Loving Struggle*, and 'Toward an Ethics of the Spread Body' in particular.⁵⁴

His key insight is that phenomenology must acknowledge the organic, animal nature of the body instead of focusing only on the pure subjectivity of the flesh. The *spread body*, for Falque, is neither Descartes's extended body (a mere object that is entirely distinct from the self) nor Husserl's lived body (the flesh that is the self): it is the body spread out in sleep or on the operating table (to borrow two of his examples), the organic body that I *have*, that is not simply myself and yet is mine.

⁵³ Francis Ponge, 'Ode inachevée à la boue' (1943), in *Pièces* (Paris: NRF, Gallimard, 1962), pp. 60-64 (cit. pp. 60-61); English trans. by Beverly B. Brahic, 'Unfinished Ode to Mud', in *Unfinished Ode to Mud* (London, CB Editions, 2009), pp. 80-85 (cit. p. 81). This reference was indicated by the professor and friend Jérôme de Gramont, who will here recognize the homage to him.

⁵⁴ See Emmanuel Falque, *Les noces de l'agneau, Essai philosophique sur le corps et l'eucharistie* (Paris, Cerf, 2011 [reprinted in *Triduum philosophique* (Paris, Cerf, 2015)]); English trans. by George Hughes, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist* (New York: Fordham, 2016).

Emmanuel Falque, *Le combat amoureux, Disputes phénoménologiques et théologiques* (Paris: Hermann, coll. 'De visu', 2014), ch. V, 'Y a-t-il une chair sans corps?', pp. 197-238; English trans. by Bradley B. Onishi and Lukas McCracken, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Disputes* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018, forthcoming), ch. 5, "Is There a Flesh without Body?"

Emmanuel Falque, "Éthique du corps épandu," *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale* 228, no. 1 (2016): 53. 'Toward an Ethics of the Spread Body', trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, in *Somatic Desire: Recovering Corporeality in Contemporary Thought*, edited by Sarah Horton, Stephen Mendelsohn, Christine Rojcewicz, and Richard Kearney (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019), pp. 91-116.

This essay reveals the steep cost of phenomenology's neglect of the body: it turns out that one must acknowledge that one *has* a body precisely in order to avoid discarnation, or the dissolution of the flesh itself. The 'flesh without body' vanishes into transparency, as Falque shows us via Descartes's madmen who have lost all connection to their organic bodies, to the point of supposing that their bodies are glass. Because organicity is in fact proper to us, denying or rejecting it can lead only to madness.

It is because of this crucial distinction between body and flesh that I have translated *désincarné* as 'discarnate', and not as 'disembodied': the less common word 'discarnate' is etymologically related to the French *chair* (flesh, or *Leib* in German). Rendering *desincarné* as 'discarnate' thus emphasizes that the madman is de-fleshed; indeed, his body is de-fleshed. As Falque makes clear, the insane, as discussed in Descartes's *Meditations*, have lost not their bodies but rather the experience of their bodies as *theirs*, as lived bodies or fleshes. Consistent with this, I have also rendered *incarnation* and *incarné* as 'incarnation' and 'incarnate' respectively.

The word I have translated as 'disembodiment' is *désincorporation*; 'disincorporation' would be a literal rendering but would fail to indicate the presence of 'body' (*corps*) in the middle of the word. French, unlike English, does not generally permit a distinction between 'embodiment' and 'incarnation', but when the distinction between flesh and body is important, as it is here, the etymology of the term *désincorporation* (or of the positive form, *incorporation*, which does not, however, appear in this text) permits one to employ it in opposition to *désincarnation* (or to *incarnation*).

Finally, as this essay refers to the apparent opposition, in Descartes, between humans and the mad, it is worth noting that although *fou*, the word translated as 'madman', is a noun referring to one who is mad, it is also, and originally, the masculine singular adjective for 'mad'. The French word thus does not contain the term 'man', 'person', or any other word

implying humanity. In English one can write simply ‘the mad’ only in the plural, never the singular. I have, however, avoided using “human” or “person” when translating any terms referring to the insane, unless a word explicitly indicating humanity is also present in the French. Indeed, we cannot distance ourselves too much from these madmen, for if we continue to neglect the body in favor of the flesh, we risk becoming as they are. Let us learn, therefore, from the lessons Falque finds in madness.

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