‘Further Reading’ both reconstructs and deconstructs a photography exhibition created by Rami Maymon where objets d’art, images, and spreads from art history books are photographed in various poses and compositions, and integrated amongst other photographs created by the artist. As a nod to the uncertainty of the medium’s empirical authority, Maymon approaches visual history in sculptural and performative terms, infusing his creative process into the already charged stature of the images selected. His technique merges existing visual texts with additional worlds of content, referring the reader to materials which are external to the main text; the image, the original and the reproduction are no longer distinct concepts, but rather components in ongoing processes of continual reconsideration, which both reject the privileging of the finished image and situate reappraisal as an act of semantic innovation. Reading the history of art through reproductions, which are traditionally meant to document and preserve past heritage, exposes the dynamic political forces which have facilitated changing ways of seeing. This edition builds upon this continual translation by collapsing the exhibition into an artist book. The walls of the Museum are transformed into pages, where the viewer zooms in and out of the images, guided by the exhibition’s numerical system, which stands in for the book’s page numbers. In addition, each work receives a new layer of meaning through a series of philosophical aphorisms written by Raphael Zagury-Orly and Joseph Cohen, which deviate entirely from the work’s original context, situating the project as a visual meditation on the many ‘archaeological’ layers of time, genre and space.

The ‘Further Reading’ exhibition was presented at The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Nov 2015 — Feb 2016, curated by Nili Goren.

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The thick red coloured strip divides the image in half, as if to attract or repel each other? And what could be the relation here between the two images? Do they situate each other, or is there a differentiation? If yes, what is the nature of their differentiation? If no, how do they relate to each other? Perhaps this: the nudity of the “shimmering body” symbolizes the beauty and the fragility that the Other possesses, or rather, the Otherness? Perhaps the Otherness is the beauty of the “shimmering body”? Perhaps the Otherness is the beauty of the Other. In this case, we can imagine how the beings are represented in each step of this shimmering body’s dance.

Nietzsche: “One must have music in one’s self to make the world dance.”

An image in an image: one cannot see here, at work, the process of concealment and revelation. The image shows an image, in it self, partly concealed, and thus partly revealed, and yet containing and expressing, at least, one further image, and at least the shadow of yet another image. The image in the image is concealed and revealed by being inserted in a field as well as by being folded onto itself dissimulating both the face and the sex of this “subject” that which is dissimulated in this image represents a line around the disharmonious ambiguousness of “what we see before us” to enter into the clear, transparent, lucid comprehension of the reason, meaning, significance of what it is, has always defined the inherent structure of what it means to “understand” or “model” thinking, by our journey from simple sensibility to heightened intuition, from mere awareness to justified knowledge. And yet again, when one carefully and meticulously brings one’s gaze to this thick red-colored strip, seemingly dividing the cave from the open, separating obscurity from light, what else does it reveal?

It not only reveals a line of division or separation: it shows rather an interspersed, subtended, incised, porous, permeable “space” where the self is subject to a derogulation, and thus where our traditional understanding of “education” and “knowledge” is incessantly destabilized: similarly the classical and traditional differences between the “fake” and the “true”, between the “conceived” and the “revealed”, are undermined. Our gaze is invited to see in place of the difference between “effect” and “cause”, and the passage from one to the other, from non-being to being, an “in-determination” of such – and thus of any such – dividing hegemonies and schemas of oppositions. At this point of a blurred and indistinct foreground, the very questions of “falsity” and “truth”, and thus “knowledge”, are re-played, re-enacted, re-pose. One can only imagine how and towards which orientation this blurred and porous strip, which ceaselessly destabilizes the traditional divide between “darkness” and “light”, will reformulate our traditional image of what it means to “know”. We can only imagine where it will carry our gaze and where it will transport our thinking.

Does this image show an object of virility, a symbol of strength, a sign of phallic domination? Or does it rather display a new image in exposure, as though the Other’s gaze, as “subject”, as “signifier” and “signified”, between the strength of the phallic object and the feehness of the replacement it symbolizes as well as actualizes, Rami Maymon sought to accentuate the ambiguity and deepen the abyss of incessant questioning of this unresolved and perhaps unresolvable tension. Indeed, it would be most sighted to see in this image a definite characterization of strength, force, virility or inversely a clear determination of weakness and feehness. Yet again, Rami Maymon troubles our vision of what is shown in and through this image. For what is seen as force would perhaps be here identified as the least strength. And what could be thought of as the greatest strength would lie in being wholly indistinguishable from feehness and fragility. Indeed, how do we determine the strength or weakness of this Other in this image? Perhaps Rami Maymon shows the distortion of the image – distortion of the object as well as distortion of its frame. And through this distortion, opens the space for the renewal of a decision and novel determination of who is to be called strong and who is to be called weak. Here is disseminated the incessant proliferation of questions addresses to all simple binary discourses. The desire would be to arrive at a modality of thinking where from radical indecision one can see the possibility, the positivity of a decision capable of justly thinking, who is weak and who is strong without opposing weak and strong and yet without confounding them into a simple indifference.

As with all writing, we stem from a single hypothesis here in the apposition of the spherical world and the shimmering body. What occurs in this collision of these two images? Do they attract each other, repel, or neither? What could be the relation here between the “world” and the nudity of the shimmering body? Perhaps this: the nudity of the “shimmering body” symbolizes the beauty and the fragility that the Other possesses, or rather, the Otherness? Perhaps the Otherness is the beauty of the “shimmering body”? Perhaps the Otherness is the beauty of the Other. In this case, we can imagine how the beings are represented in each step of this shimmering body’s dance.

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5

Forms are never stable, they always already fluctuate. Even as they seem marked and strictly demarcated, bordered, fixed and clearly traced, and where each of its lines are streamlined and defined, forms are always and already uncertain. Erik Satie, the French composer, entitled one of his works “Three pieces in the shape of a pear.” The title of this work was his response to critics who denounced his musical compositions as lacking and being void of form. Erik Satie’s ironic response: as if one could formalize – give a stable and fixed form to – a musical work? And here, in this image too, all is shown as to how that form is always situated at a limit. The image shows something of the form, certainly, it shows its own most hidden, concealed, dissimulated uncertainty. The expansion and abundance of the motifs and structures of nature here show where and how the form defaults from itself, takes leave of itself, and is thus perpetually fleeting, volatile, impermanent and elusive. We know: humans always believe they have recognized a form where in truth there is none. Perhaps here the overflowing movement of the ruptured and broken object is the uncertainty of the forms, uneasily overfilling the very possibility of the form to remain defined in itself. We have said: to recognize a form is to seek the truth of the image in its framed formalization. They conceive truth as the certainty of a form and the truthfulness of a formalization. It is the language of the traditional and age-old conformity between an object or a world of objects and their representations that is here in play.

Question: what if the occurrence of a form did not correspond to the model or the horizon we are, in some way, always anticipating, predicting or foreseeing? A “form” which would displace, stretch, distort, and confound our habitual categorizations of the world? Would such a “form” still be called a “form”? One must believe yes. Such a “form” would be persistently destabilizing the possibility of framing and defining a “form”. The trouble erupting out of this “form” and the discomfort it instills in the rapport between perceiving subject and object tears open a possible path of thinking and reinscribing in ever-changing “form”, one which does not resemble any former, known or even knowable “form”.
autonomous intention. Humans are not autonomous beings, they are not subjects in the modern sense of the word. Humans are here acted through rather than acting, they are moved rather than acting subjects. And, in this sense, what characterizes, typifies, exemplifies humans is that they are not intentional, they do not have a planned horizon or intent, of normative meaning or law. Their intentions come from elsewhere, from another place than their own place. Where do these human intentions come from? They come from and in spirits and divinities. We will see that these spirits or divinities will not remain what they are, that they will shift and change, go through a process of de-stylisation, destabilisation, evolution, metamorphosis and transformation. What will this process give? How are we to see this becoming of spirits and divinities? How are we to deal, speak, interact with these? For these spirits and divinities have not left us. They are constantly returning to us, addressing us, haunting us. Question: how and where, why and who or whom is haunting us? And furthermore, what is this spectacle? What is this ghost? What is a spectacle or a ghost? And can we even pose the question in this traditional copulative form? Are we not constrained to other modes of thinking the question capable of addressing this “I know not what” which is not entirely reducible to a presence simply dismissed as an absence? Neither a being nor a non-being, neither a reality nor a non-reality, neither a living being nor a non-living being. What then to speak of this spectacle or this ghost – how to speak of it? So impossible to attempt. And hence, when something happens, when something befalls you, when you are struck by something (a sickness, for example), we say, in another Semitic language, Aramaic, to the Amharic Ethiopian, that is to say in Arabic, “majnoon”, which means “crazy”, “mad”, a certain “madness”, literally “enjoyed”, captured by a “jin”, as if a “jin” took possession of the self, grabbed or seized you, conquered and apprehended you. The current manner of saying “mad” is thus to say one is “taken”, “captured”, “seized”, “caught”. The “jin” has taken hold of the interiority of one’s self. We say thus “mad,” to say that is seized by a “jin”, by a spirit or a deity? What is a deity? Could we easily distinguish between the “god” and a generalised and maintained or maintained, but perhaps we are being spoke, rather than through the form which is “I…” pose the question: what could differentiate the god from what refers it to one religion or one genealogy? Could it not be this absolute event of the “jin” (spectre, phantom, genie) which ascribes an undecidable movement between masculine and feminine? Is it not God and the feminine who are indeed over to the experience of this other power? That is, of this power incessantly displacing the traditional and oppositional divide of gender. This power, this power which in its own right, both gives and takes power – cutting one off from all sovereignty and yet subjecting one to its sovereignty.

Dora Maar, pictured here in 1936 by Man Ray. Rami Maymon interventions in the image by incorporating further shadows and streams of white light, setting-up an entire dramatisation, warping Dora Maar’s gaze, highlighting the distrust, but also the fear, the menace. As if Rami Maymon were here incorporating Dora Maar’s own most arrogant artistic gesture, this uncanny, tragic approach to the illusion of vision. From the image of Dora Maar in the guise of the “jin” we can tell if the “subject” is in solitude or waiting on the Other’s arrival – or if the “subject” is in solitude. While “subject” here as the “beginning” of philosophy. One must believe – for how one can know assuredly – that the event of the “beginning” says ‘something’ wholly other than its “origin” or “provenance”. This is why the “beginning”, the face as “beginning” erups in our common and deep, ineradicable and tenacious quest for an “origin” or a “provenance”. In this sense, we ought, perhaps, to think beyond the logic of provenance and precisely at the point where this “logic” of the origin is exceeded and overwhelmed by the unrepresentable and unspeakable face of the Other. Why do we say unrepresentable and unspeakable? Not only because our faculty of representation, our subjective capacity of representing the Other, always and already fails when facing the event of the face of the Other, but also because three lies, always and already, an unrepresentable in the face of the Other. As if the “in itself” of the face of the Other was in itself unrepresentable. This is why Levinas never poses the ontological question of what is the unrepresentable face of the Other, but rather goes straight towards a whole other question, other than ontology and/or metaphysics, an art work that artwork has nothing to do with the Other of the Other. By so doing, Levinas marks how and why the face of the Other cannot be reduced to a plastic form, as in a “portrait”. For the face of the Other, the exposition of its absolute nudity occurs, the bare and fragile vulnerability which always displays a forlornness, a loneliness, and always a singularity of the death of the Other. The face of the Other always shows the death of the Other. But the inevitability and singularity of the Other’s death can be incitement to nothing less than the murder of the Other. It can provoke one to erase the face of the Other. Here, however, lies the paradox: the revelation of the face of the Other also, simultaneously, commands “Thou shalt not kill” comes out of the face of the Other, from its unrepresentability, from its irrepresentable, from its unthinkable unrepresentability, the responsibility for the death of the Other and thus the urgency of responding to the Other.

For instance, in this image, could anyone truly, meaningfully, assuredly determine one single, unique, delimited “form”? Or are we still subject to seeing various shapes of, perhaps, already configurations playing off one another in what seems to be an inherent movement where no beginning or end can be indicated or fixated? This image pictures one of these undifferentiate forms always playing on the limit of formalization itself by incessantly concealing more than one form in its very presentation. It is not however a form without form. It is rather wholly and entirely a form as it conceals within itself future forms, that is forms yet to appear and perhaps also unnoticeable and unrecognizable forms. Not only do the angles and the lines strike in this image – so does its inherent light. Or to be more precise, the unceasing play of the different shades of light ranging from obscurity to brilliance, all contained within the sole image, is also salient. What occurs in this play of light and shade? Perhaps it presents another yet immemorial play: that other space, perhaps open up the space of another question. Could we emit the hypothesis that Rami Maymon sought to open up another space, perhaps open up the space of another question. But the question, what Rami Maymon sought to open up is a space where questioning finds its source when faced with that which is рефlect, or is given itself – intent. This is why, thus marks the necessity of always implementing a distance within the order of representation. As if Rami Maymon wanted to take a chance, that is to give its chance to the Other, always disturbing and incessantly displacing the traditional form of representation – That Other so necessary to unsettle and disrupt the traditional form of representation – that Other so necessary to authorize and allow another image – the image to come – always and already experiencing and confronting the indeterminate.

Who could tell? Who could state what the expression here, the gaze, the slanted head, the slightly opened mouth, reveals? Who can claim to say what traverses this face? What life lies hidden in this visage? Ecstasy, anger, indifference, pain, suffering, passion, delight, pleasure… even the colour is ambiguous. Who can tell if the “subject” is in solitude or waiting on the Other’s arrival? Or is it itself? Indeed. While “subject” here as the “beginning” of philosophy. One must believe – for how one can know assuredly – that the event of the “beginning” says ‘something’ wholly other than its “origin” or “provenance”. This is why the “beginning”, the face as “beginning” erups in our common and deep, ineradicable and tenacious quest for an “origin” or a “provenance”. In this sense, we ought, perhaps, to think beyond the logic of provenance and precisely at the point where this “logic” of the origin is exceeded and overwhelmed by the unrepresentable and unspeakable face of the Other. Why do we say unrepresentable and unspeakable? Not only because our faculty of representation, our subjective capacity of representing the Other, always and already fails when facing the event of the face of the Other, but also because three lies, always and already, an unrepresentable in the face of the Other. As if the “in itself” of the face of the Other was in itself unrepresentable. This is why Levinas never poses the ontological question of what is the unrepresentable face of the Other, but rather goes straight towards a whole other question, other than ontology and/or metaphysics, an art work that artwork has nothing to do with the Other of the Other. By so doing, Levinas marks how and why the face of the Other cannot be reduced to a plastic form, as in a “portrait”. For the face of the Other, the exposition of its absolute nudity occurs, the bare and fragile vulnerability which always displays a forlornness, a loneliness, and always a singularity of the death of the Other. The face of the Other always shows the death of the Other. But the inevitability and singularity of the Other’s death can be incitement to nothing less than the murder of the Other. It can provoke one to erase the face of the Other. Here, however, lies the paradox: the revelation of the face of the Other also, simultaneously, commands “Thou shalt not kill” comes out of the face of the Other, from its unrepresentability, from its irrepresentable, from its unthinkable unrepresentability, the responsibility for the death of the Other and thus the urgency of responding to the Other.

These questions force us to enter into the curious ambiguity, the paradoxical double-play between the “known” and the “unknown”, all brought into one “event-image” or “image-
event”. We can advance by saying: the “unknown” is precisely that which all thinking must confront in order to begin. Derrida used to say that a thought which only thinks the “known”; which only thinks that which it already knows. But only when it has purified itself in the realm of the “possibly known”, is an instrument, an economical, and managerial type of thinking. For this thinking represents “questioning” and “dissemination” as a fundamentally problem-solving, strategic, “policy-making” scheme.

This is an important point. It means to mark that thinking and art (is it that which we term “thinking” and “art”) requires a constant and incessant confrontation with the unthinkable, the unknowable, the unrepresentable. If thinking settles for the conversion of the knowable, if art is reduced to the management of the represenatable, the production of that which is unambiguously visible, what is then left of thinking? What is then left of art? Thinking becomes then the simple economical operation of “making things work” according to a logic which never confronts the multiple concreteness of events in history. In truth, to organize thinking by invoking, for example, thinking’s adjustment to a “principle of reality” for which there is no exterior, no outside, nothing beyond, one could easily reduce thinking to a simple managerial operation – as if thinking was the systematic, obvious, straightforward application of a predisposed and predetermined concept to anything and everything, to any event and every catastrophe.

I want here to relate this to the question of catastrophe: would there not be something of a catastrophe when thinking is reduced to such an operation, and consequently, to such an operative agenda? Not only because such a thought would negate, at its root, the very possibility of inventing a novel horizon where one could think without predetermination and from the event which it would be exposed to. I is not somewhat catastrophic when we are operating as if our historical catastrophes (World War I, Shoah, Tchernobyl, Fukushima, to name here but a few radically different from one another) are all emanating from a same place, that is, from a self-assumed, self-supposed, self-sufficient, self-possessed (or “facultative”, as Hegel would have it) world of thinking which discloses only the “place” of what we naively call a “principle of reality” and disturbs the equally naïve “principle of identity”, it also undermines the very possibility of setting norms, of postulating values, or of elaborating “value judgments”.

In the Philosophy of History (1822–1823), G.W.F. Hegel exposes the “place” of what he terms the “African character” in this most violent quotation, whose violence is always attuned to the development of Spirit’s historical meaningffulness. “The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which we have hitherto used as the basis of categories – the category of Universality. In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence – as for example, God, or Law – in which the interest of man’s volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the Knowledge of an absolute Being is also a Higher commandment for him, and which, therefore, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thoughts of reverence and magnification of what we feel – if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. The sacred and circumstantial accounts of Missionaries completely confirm this, and “Mahomedanism appears to be the only thing which in any way brings the Negroes within the range of culture.” (English trans., J. Sibree, New York, Dover, 1936, p. 93.) And again, at the point of moving on, of moving away from Africa in the depiction of Spirit’s historical epochs of phases and eras and moments, Hegel takes particular care to associate Africa from the very historical development of Spirit. “At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it had no movement or development to offer. History is not reducible to anything that is in the most remote part – belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilization, but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we already indicate by Africa is the Unhistorical. Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the “real”, as a principle of reality, and hence of awakening both the “real” and the “ideal” to a wholly other diction. We are seeking to force the “real” and the “ideal” to formulate and express themselves always and already otherwise. Why do we insist on the impossible? Because it demands and commands an entire re-questioning and, re-examination of, the central notion of what we call a human “faculty”. This insistence on the impossible is not understandable as a norm or as a moral commandment for an amorphous, anonymous, undifferentiated consciousness, but as what we naively call a “principle of reality” and disturbs the equally naïve “principle of identity”, it also undermines the very possibility of setting norms, of postulating values, or of elaborating “value judgments”.

One main trait of Judaism is the proscription of grave images taken from Exodus 20:4: “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” People today tend to interpret thinking as the possibility of “preservation”, rather than see it as a negative and condemnationary, repressive and suppressive law. This proscription of grave images operates in the “ideal” level of representation, foreclosing passages in Hegel’s philosophical writing and label them as circumstantial, historically contextualized, somewhat accidental, as sometymething which can be simply, as sometymething which can be simply ignored. However, as we have seen, today tended to do, return to Hegel’s systematic expression of Spirit as historical meaning when exclusions of “Africans”, to whom we could also add “Women” and “Jew”, are inextricable from Spirit’s self-appropriation and self-recognition as History.

Is it to assert that from a sameness to which a “principle of reality” is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the “real”, as a principle of reality, and hence of awakening both the “real” and the “ideal” to a wholly other diction. We are seeking to force the “real” and the “ideal” to formulate and express themselves always and already otherwise. Why do we insist on the impossible? Because it demands and commands an entire re-questioning and, re-examination of, the central notion of what we call a human “faculty”. This insistence on the impossible is not understandable as a norm or as a moral commandment for an amorphous, anonymous, undifferentiated consciousness, but as what we naively call a “principle of reality” and disturbs the equally naïve “principle of identity”, it also undermines the very possibility of setting norms, of postulating values, or of elaborating “value judgments”.

The biblical proscription of grave images – coupled with the critique of presence – opens thought to another realm of meaning and consequently another language that of “revelation” (liturah) and “alliance” (brit). In this sense, “revelation” and “alliance” will serve as the key Hebraic terms for a break with the logic of “presence” and the representational mode of the subject, and with the contractual ethics emanating from reconstituted personality. In this sense, the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai furnishes here the frame of reference: God gives the Law to Moses, allowing him to “see” in this gift what can be translated as the “back” (abraham) of God, but which could also be conveyed as “Otherness” (aher). This second translation means ultimately that God’s gift, the Law, can only be given as such when it is not seen, not visible, shown or manifested but remains latent, the “hidden” from which is given. The Law commands where it is not seen or perceived, presented or represented. Enriched by this interpretative reading of the gift of the Law as revelation, we can approach the figure of the Other as Other, its ethical commandment, only as the latter is not visible as such, not reducible to presentation or representation. As if the Other is not seen but heard; does not oppose, but speaks and commands. Which means: the Other’s ethical commandment is given as an irreducible asymmetry of identity, which makes the Other’s ethical commandment irreducible to presence. It is in this very movement where the other source of meaning is called to erupt singularly in being and not being singularly, such that one could approach the positivity of the biblical proscription of representation: to perpetually question the logic and the horizon of “presence” – of which structures experience per se which is formulated as the fundamental element of the cognitive subject. The biblical proscription of grave images – coupled with the critique of presence – opens thought to another realm of meaning and consequently another language that of “revelation” (liturah) and “alliance” (brit). In this sense, “revelation” and “alliance” will serve as the key Hebraic terms for a break with the logic of “presence” and the representational mode of the subject, and with the contractual ethics emanating from reconstituted personality.

These terms inscribe an irreducible asymmetry in identity, forcing it to revert to its radical Other, that Other source of meaning which the intentional pretention and the constitution of a horizon of “presence” always and already obliterates and negates. “Revelation” is understood not as manifestation, not as being presented, even less as constituted phenomenon, but more profoundly as the representational structure of givingness as such which inscribes the radical irreducibility of Otherness in everything which happens and, hence, we ought never here plainly contest the regime of “presence” and the logic of representation. We seek rather to express thinking to a source of meaning irreducibly other to presence in presence. It is in this very movement where the other source of meaning is called to erupt singularly in being and not being singularly, such that one could approach the positivity of the biblical proscription of representation: to perpetually question the logic and the horizon of “presence” – of which structures experience per se which is formulated as the fundamental element of the cognitive subject.

Does an artwork have a frontal, exposed side which would stand in opposition to the invisible and concealed? Does an artwork have a prioritized and preferred side differentiated from a hinder side?

This question may seem out of place, out of sync, untimely, most particularly as we think and write on form and about the form.
to hang, on an exhibition wall. Perhaps Rami Maymon sought not as one would normally or traditionally expect photographs parallel to one another and suspended, almost free-floating – Rami Maymon exhibits images 17 and 18 horizontally; they are posture of the artwork, something of the seeing gesture of other face or rear flank of the artwork? What secret lies in that of what the Western artistic tradition had always considered to be the most singular folds and interstices.

And hence a question: who would have thought that from the parents of the political prisoners in Moscow's Loubianka jail: “A woman waits her turn. The people who approached the counter had turned their backs on the Loubianka and its scorching sun; they changed their raised shoulders and stretched shoulder-blades sprung out, and seemed to scream, cry, sob.” Hence, an artwork cannot, and never could, only be apprehended from its, frontal, exposed face. Following Vassili Grossman and Emmanuel Levinas, we could say that the back and exposed side also embodies the artwork, it perhaps embodies the fragility of the artwork in its most singular folds and interstices.

And hence a question: who would have thought that from the unexposed side of the artwork one could see the whole Other of what the Western artistic tradition had always considered to be the site of all of that to see and to be seen? And further: what would occur if we retraced the frontal “intentionality” and sought out the reverse side, the other margin, the unimagined, the unexpected from the unexposed side of the artwork, something of the frame, the intention and the posture of the codes of Western artistic tradition are replayed.

17/18
Rami Maymon exhibits images 17 and 18 horizontally; they are placed below each other, each enlarged (perhaps 30 cm) above the floor of the exhibition space. They lie flat, parallel to one another and suspended, almost free-floating – not as one would normally or traditionally expect photographs to hang, on an exhibition wall. Perhaps Rami Maymon sought to show how these particular images relate to a void, an empty space beneath them. What could this exhibition mode mean for the particular images 17 and 18? Perhaps, again, Rami Maymon sought to reveal how empty space emerges out of its “without ground”), how they never shew, never can show themselves from a fixed, stable and firm foundation or grounded and rooted floor. As if these images were never fixed or fixable, but had always to float indeterminably as occurrences out of a free-floating void.

However, Rami Maymon does not leave the empty space underneath images 17 and 18 entirely void. He places pottery vases (which he himself made) in the spaces beneath the images, as if and only as if in a white space body, the back and the reverse which is fully and entirely “visage” in all of its absolute fragility. Not only is the back side a “visage”, in this sense, but it is perhaps more than any other body part. For it is immediately embodies the extreme precariousness of the Other. This is why Levinas also seized by this other passage from Life and Fate where Vassili Grossman describes the visits by the parents of the political prisoners in Moscow’s Loubianka jail: “A woman waits her turn. The people who approached the counter had turned their backs on the Loubianka and its scorching sun; they changed their raised shoulders and stretched shoulder-blades sprung out, and seemed to scream, cry, sob.” Hence, an artwork cannot, and never could, only be apprehended from its, frontal, exposed face. Following Vassili Grossman and Emmanuel Levinas, we could say that the back and exposed side also embodies the artwork, it perhaps embodies the fragility of the artwork in its most singular folds and interstices.

And hence a question: who would have thought that from the unexposed side of the artwork one could see the whole Other of what the Western artistic tradition had always considered to be the site of all of that to see and to be seen? And further: what would occur if we retraced the frontal “intentionality” and sought out the reverse side, the other margin, the unimagined, the unexpected from the unexposed side of the artwork, something of the frame, the intention and the posture of the codes of Western artistic tradition are replayed.

17
Art performs, occurs, acts, stands at the “limits of truth...” A curious expression: to stand “at the limits of truth”. We find it in a text written by Denis Diderot (1713-1784) entitled Essay on the Life of Seneca (1778), and succinctly interpreted, deployed in all of its aporetic effects in Aporia in 1990) by Jacques Derrida. Regardless of the subject matter of this essay, “The Life of Seneca, the curious expression “The limits of truth,...”? “I stand at the limits of truth...” is disquieting for the history of Western thought. Why? Because, firstly, it insinuates that truth itself has a limit, that truth is itself limited and, furthermore, limits itself in its affirmation of itself? For the entire nature of truth and for the relation between truth and knowledge. Does it not also mark that art and justice remain entirely undetermined by truth, and consequently, are never constituted solely by knowledge?

18
The French expression “se tenir à la limite de la vérité” (“to stand at the limits of truth”) is open to more than one interpretation: it can mean to be wholly and absolutely in and within truth, close to truth and in accordance with its normative instance, respectively of its protective safeguards, limits and limitations. You stand upright in truth, keeping the line of truth and for truth, without deviation and without derogating from the right posture, without violating the truthful lineage. Faithfully. But it can also mean to be as close as one can be to falsity, to obscurity, and to losing the track of truth. To “stand at the limits of truth” could mean to be borderline about the truth, to dangerously stand on the edge of truth, and hence to be at that point where we are already elsewhere than in truth, and thus perilously approaching inaccuracy, error, falsity. Standing at a point of truth could also mean being closer to falsity than to truth.

How to think thus within this at least double expression, where being in truth and being in falsity remains undetermined and undecided, where truth and non-truth are not yet fixed or determined and furthermore where it is never clear where one stands at the limits of truth: in truth or already outside it? From this indecision, this undecidability, between truth and non-truth, we are forced to pose the question or rephrase it in a text written by Denis Diderot (1713-1784) entitled Essay on the Life of Seneca, the curious expression “The limits of truth,...”? “I stand at the limits of truth...” is disquieting for the history of Western thought. Why? Because, firstly, it insinuates that truth itself has a limit, that truth is itself limited and, furthermore, limits itself in its affirmation of itself? For the entire nature of truth and for the relation between truth and knowledge. Does it not also mark that art and justice remain entirely undetermined by truth, and consequently, are never constituted solely by knowledge?

19
In the well-known discussion article on Lebanon in Negotiations (English trans. M. Jouhini, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995), Gilles Deleuze says: “One does indeed find folds everywhere: in rocks, rivers, and woods, in organisms, in the head or brain, or souls in thought, in what we call the plastic arts. Everything that doesn’t make itself up...” And Deleuze continues: “Straight lines are all alike, but folds vary, and all folding proceeds by differentiation. No two things are found the same way, no two rocks, and there’s no general rule saying the same thing will always fold the same way. Folds are in this sense everywhere, without the fold being a universal. It’s a differentiation, a differentiation.”

It is perhaps this very idea which haunted Rami Maymon when he took this image and crumpled it up, placing it on the ground and letting the exhibition space fold it. Perhaps not in a traditional rug of the Middle Atlas desert, perhaps Rami Maymon sought to show how the traditional ways of fixing and framing on boundaries and limits – those drawn up and instituted, for example, in an atlas or encyclopaedia – only stand on enigmatic ground which always remains artificial. What is highly unsettling here is less than Rami Maymon’s subtle insistence on the impossible fixity of matter, of the real, of that which is present before us. By showing this folded and wrinkled image of a moment in an image of an exhibition space, Rami Maymon perhaps seeks to reveal the incessant and inherent metaphysical form of what pretends to be fixed and fixed upon. Following again Deleuze: “The concept of fold is always something singular and can only get anywhere by varying, branching out, taking new forms. You’ve only to consider, or better still, to see and touch mountains as formed by their folding for them to lose their solidity, and for millennia to turn back into what they are, not something permanent but timelessly there, yet different from that which is than from the continual movement of something that seems fixed. In Leibniz’s words: a dance of particles folding back on themselves.” (Ibid., pp. 156-157).

This singular image in this exhibition does not constitute a central piece around which all other works revolve. Rather, this single image reveals the ideality and thereby to the pure movement of works interacting without ground or sole source of signification. As if this image, opposing out the pretension to fixity or fixed ground, repeatedly sought to bring us to this singular and yet non-universal idea: images conceal their own infinite movement of incessant secretive folds.

20
One of the last phases of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, before the work concludes with the inversion of Schiller’s poem On affranching (which, as already noted, is a mere revelation of unity) recalls the various, different and always singular manifestations or representations, ‘instants’ or ‘moments’ of Spirit through ‘modes of consciousness’,” which in turn are moments of a long meditation on this double, speculative and dialectical idea. Spirit is its History and History is nothing other than the truth internalize (while it speaks and thought) its own signs, manifests and deploys itself. For Hegel, all singular and particular ‘events’ in History are also to be grabbed and seized as essential moments in the development of its meaning. No exception can interrupt or suspend this essential movement.
of History always comprehending and already recognizing itself as the deployment of the ‘meaningful’. In Hegel, the speculative reconciliation is always and already absolute among ‘History’, ‘Meaning’, ‘Spirit’ and so forth. Precisely that which is already inside the thing assures this triad’s own-most signification and intentionality.

What then is the goal? Hegel answers: “The goal, which is the concreteness of Spirit known itself as Spirit, finds its pathway in the recollection of spiritual forms (Geister) as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their own life, or as a self-representing representation of the presence of Spirit in History and as History, that is, the representation of the fullness of meaning in and as History. According to the different modes of manifestation in the History of meaning: ‘Art’, ‘Religion’ and ‘Philosophy’. Each marks a particular moment in the ‘self-recognition’ of Spirit. What interests us here is the first mode of these manifestations: ‘Art’, and furthermore, how, for Hegel, ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’ represent the lowest, most immediate, forms of Art. How and why does Hegel determine these, ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’, as the most elementary forms of Art? And what does such a determined judgment about ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’ mean for us today, irreducible to the simple form by which we understand ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’? And with this we might already have arrived at the answer. What we are seeking are the great metaphysics of History, ancient or contemporary, and propose a historicity where we would abandon History, isolate ourselves outside History into some Great Beyond without actuality. Nor are we seeking to oppose these metaphysics of History by the concept that it, History, would only be a simple series of circumstantial or coincidental events. We are not talking about a step outside History, its ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’ is always ‘transcendental’. History was at all possible, or even desirable. But neither are we putting forth a simple reversal, a simple passage from one determination of History (the onto-theological determination of History) with another, a post-metaphysical thinking of History, (where there would be no possible determination of History). Rather, the aim is not the opposition of a simple reversal/reversal/substitution which has always reduced the ‘historicity of History’ to one sole directing meaning. The aim: To escape the manner in which the great philosophical ideologies of History negated, annulled, locked up and closed up, the history of History by comprehending its essential movement. And thus, the further aim: question the curious manner with which we ‘clear’ our historical conscience by furnishing it with the role of a rationalizing and function of an inherent production of meaning. Question the ease by which we give ourselves a ‘calm and pacified good conscience’ capable of redirecting the spiritualization of History in the narrative of a legitimation.

Here lies a shift. Not a shift which would mark an epoch, a change of ‘culture’, or the shift of a negative into a positive, purposeful, ethical relation to the Other – questions all situated beyond the legitimation of a judgment capable of setting out “what is right” and “what is wrong”. A “face to face” confrontation with the Other – should it be from the perspective of the legitimation of a judgment of justice, of the ethical responsibility to the Other, without surrendering to the immense and powerful logic of forgiveness which always tends to reduce every crisis to a ‘transcendence’.

This also means posing questions in regard to the equally immense and powerful logic, working within forgiveness, of sacrifice, of the sacrifice of the self or of the other, of the self and of the other in the proliferation of a pacified historical becoming. The affair of catastrophe is to pose impossible questions, questions of art, of an ethical responsibility towards the Other – questions that are transvalued, transformed, affirmed and mean the contrary of what we are perpetrating, we seek claiming the contrary of what they are perpetrating, we seek claiming the contrary of what we are perpetrating, we seek.

Etymologically, it is composed of the word klopeteion (the “hidden”, “the concealed”, “the secret”) and the privative prefix apo (“un”). Apokalypsis marks thus the break through which becomes visible what has remained hidden. As the secret is enlightened, revealed, brought out into the open, into the visible and the manifest.

In truth, Hegel’s question is also a metaphysical one: what have we thought, spoken, written of History is wholly and entirely “apocalyptic”, that is, has always been, through the proliferation of “crises” to be overcome and surpassed, a secularization of a profoundly religious theme, that of the “Apocalypse”, where the hidden essence and Spirit of History is revealed, brought out into the open, the clear, the seen. Or what is the effect of this metaphysical-allegorical turn of this mythological-cosmological-narrative of a legitimization of History, which is essentially levels out, neutralizes, flattens the very questions stemming from the exigency of justice, of art, of a certain ethical relation to the Other – questions all situated beyond the legitimation of a judgment capable of setting out “what is right” and “what is wrong”. A “face to face” confrontation with the Other – should it be from the perspective of the legitimation of a judgment of justice, of the ethical responsibility to the Other, without surrendering to the immense and powerful logic of forgiveness which always tends to reduce every crisis to a ‘transcendence’.

What, then, is the ‘goal’ for us? We have just said that of what is said, “Nihilism is ecstasy!” What could this phrase possibly mean?

It means that nihilism incessantly transforms, turns, converts what is meant into its other. Nihilism always and already leaves the meaning open, a meaning remaining open, a meaning conceiving and concealing and meaning revealed itself in what is “said”: Nihilism forces the “self” to come out of itself and embody the other. By making of me and my essence a true essence, a true essence and my essence, my essence and the other, my essence and all other, so that I pass beyond metaphysics and once again I am and I have already passed. What was the other in the beginning now comes back: the other as my other is already not my other. And consequently, ‘Art’ is perfectible essence. History is indeed, for us today, irreducible to the simple form by which we understand ‘art’. And furthermore, how, for Hegel, ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’ represent the lowest, most immediate, forms of Art. What does such a determined judgment about ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’ mean for us today, irreducible to the simple form by which we understand ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’? And with this we might already have arrived at the answer. What we are seeking are the great metaphysics of History, ancient or contemporary, and propose a historicity where we would abandon History, isolate ourselves outside History into some Great Beyond without actuality. Nor are we seeking to oppose these metaphysics of History by the concept that it, History, would only be a simple series of circumstantial or coincidental events. We are not talking about a step outside History, its ‘architecture’ and ‘sculpture’ is always ‘transcendental’. History was at all possible, or even desirable. But neither are we putting forth a simple reversal, a simple passage from one determination of History (the onto-theological determination of History) with another, a post-metaphysical thinking of History, (where there would be no possible determination of History). Rather, the aim is not the opposition of a simple reversal/reversal/substitution which has always reduced the ‘historicity of History’ to one sole directing meaning. The aim: To escape the manner in which the great philosophical ideologies of History negated, annulled, locked up and closed up, the history of History by comprehending its essential movement. And thus, the further aim: question the curious manner with which we ‘clear’ our historical conscience by furnishing it with the role of a rationalizing and function of an inherent production of meaning. Question the ease by which we give ourselves a ‘calm and pacified good conscience’ capable of redirecting the spiritualization of History in the narrative of a legitimation.

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This also means posing questions in regard to the equally immense and powerful logic, working within forgiveness, of sacrifice, of the sacrifice of the self or of the other, of the self and of the other in the proliferation of a pacified historical becoming. The affair of catastrophe is to pose impossible questions, questions of art, of an ethical responsibility towards the Other – questions that are transvalued, transformed, affirmed and mean the contrary of what we are perpetrating, we seek claiming the contrary of what they are perpetrating, we seek claiming the contrary of what we are perpetrating, we seek. And yet, these questions of justice, of art, of ethical responsibility towards the Other? require us to question as if nothing ought ever be proposed or reposed or restored by the Other, a metaphysics which may resolve itself in a comprehension of History, and thereby acclaim the apocalyptic end of History. This “hypertext” of refusal to view the Other, a refusal to speak of a being of History, seeks precisely to deconstruct and dismantle the possibility of a simple consolation in History. Certainly, in our History, in our spirit in the Apocalypse, in our awareness and knowledge, conditioned values are transvalued, transformed, affirmed and mean the contrary of what they seemingly assert, in these times when we are at a loss for any assurance, and where our institutions are always claiming the contrary of what they are perpetrating, we seek
for example, is entirely structured around the idea of protection by the different protective modalities. Hegel’s concept of "Right", against the protection which comes from the assurance offered to stand against the necessity of protecting ourselves. In This is not the place, and we would not be able to, nor would we wish to come in this future light? And is this future light coming to shine in the advent of this light? Who will be the human to come in this future light? And is this future light coming to shine on humanity, carry it and hold it, cherish it and protect it or is it, on the contrary, coming to destroy and efface humanity itself? Are we here on the side of humanism, of post-humanism or of a yet unknown and unidentifiable humanity?

JOSEPH COHEN

Certainly these questions recall the classical idea of humanity, and confront us with what we perceive happening everywhere today. To put it quite baldly: what is actually happening is precisely what is called 'post-humanism': today it is not entirely "contradictory" to humanism, and, in truth, projects itself in line with the latter. We can then perhaps try to imagine on what idea of Right "post-humanism" is both at the same time a reformation and a surpassing of the classical idea of humanity. And for at least two reasons: firstly, post-humanism is a reformulation of humanity in that it embodies the desire and leading idea proper to humanity: that of its perfectability and universalization. Indeed, post-humanism intends to structure a perfect identity of all humans – one in which all conform to a universally recognizable "sameness". This reformulation of the classical idea of humanity is not a mere "passing through" or "interruption" or "break". It means, at the same time, to do away with, to negate and erase the lines which separate us, seeks to accomplish the classical ideal of humanity in embodying the universal values of humanity – universalist values such as transparency and immortality – but, at the same time, inevitably reduces humans to their lowest common quality. Post-humanism means thus to reformulate, in a strictly monolithic, monolinguistic, flat, perfectly transparent manner, at once the human past, present and future. And indeed post-humanism takes on the task of "bringing" and "elevating" human finitude to a perfectly comprehended, self-identical, and also, immortal, being whose pretensions to perfection are definitively put aside. Language and death: it is a singular, unsubstitutable "event" of the human. It seeks to surpass human finitude in the pretension to eliminate, in its identity, those "events" which mark its finitude.

RAFAEL ZAGURY-ONLY

Post-humanism, in its will to surpass humanism, is thus its reflection of the other. The idea that the human is ultimately transparent to himself and to the world, to everything which surrounds him, which circumscribes violence, but rather "exposed nudity" where what is questioned is not how to circumscribe violence, but rather which reason, which space, which form of the violence of "Right" is, which possibility and necessity we must at times, sometimes, confront. We must subscribe to insurance policies; insurance is necessary – car insurance, life insurance, damages and risk insurance, against all types of catastrophes – and we must do assure ourselves against risks, crises, catastrophes of all kinds which could affect our life, our everydayness.

And of course, we must here add language… It is one of the most troublesome plainspeaks in the philosophical and technical language. In the exercise of its own will to do away with these fundamental traits of human finitude, and of all that remains abstract, post-humanism is thus structured and determined by perfectibility which is entirely grounded in the idea that the human is ultimately transparent to himself and to the world, to everything which surrounds him, which circumscribes violence, but rather "exposed nudity" where what is questioned is not how to circumscribe violence, but rather which reason, which space, which form of the violence of "Right" is, which possibility and necessity we must at times, sometimes, confront. We must subscribe to insurance policies; insurance is necessary – car insurance, life insurance, damages and risk insurance, against all types of catastrophes – and we must do assure ourselves against risks, crises, catastrophes of all kinds which could affect our life, our everydayness.

But as Derrida so clearly foresaw: someone who always requires insurance, subscribing to all kinds of policies, who constructs his own "world" of assurance, of protective, insuring insurance, someone who wishes to keep his space with insurance and assurance would be in a "delirium" as grave as one who would not subscribe to any insurance whatever. Indeed, what would be a life entirely made of insurance strategies? Our choice is always between at least two deliriums – the delirium of insurance against everything and the delirium of living with no assurances at all. Despite this "necessity of protection" guarded and safeguarded by our insurance, a necessity which is justifiably so, incessantly redefined and perfected, some would even say critically questioned – the "questions of justice, of art, of an ethical responsibility towards the Other" we find urgent to pose, from a wholly other source. They emanate from the foremost exposure to the risk of losing everything and everyone. They emanate from an entirely other impulse then the one proclaiming the "necessity of protection". They occur, these "questions", from the experience of the unsubscribable, unsecreted, and unthinkable within the space of reason, of insurances, of assurances, norms or values – they come, these "questions", from the experience of the unsubscribable, unsecreted, and unthinkable within the space of reason, of insurances, of assurances, norms or values. An "exposed nudity" which precisely is what one seeks to exclude, one which seeks to surpass, one which seeks to circumscribe violence, but rather why the circumscription of violence is always and already carrying something else, another agent than what it is trying to on sight. They are necessary for the certain experience of the loss of assurances, of the absence of norms or values, program and agenda, is necessary for the possibility of thinking. And of thinking what is meant, what is wished, what is desired, what is strategic also in these assurances, these norms and values, these programs and agendas. More than once we have thought that to deliver oneself entirely to the possibility of the Concept, to the faculty of anticipating everything which comes, appears, occurs, was as dangerous, as perilous, as hazardous as to deliver oneself to the complete absence of the Concept.

Will the light illuminate or erase the human face? What is the face of humanity in this white and shifting light that approaches? What face draws itself in the advent of this light? Who will be the human to respond to this future light? Who will be the human to come in this future light? And is this future light coming to shine on humanity, carry it and hold it, cherish it and protect it or is it, on the contrary, coming to destroy and efface humanity itself? Are we here on the side of humanism, of post-humanism or of a yet unknown and unidentifiable humanity?
the negation, and, at least, the reduction of the singularity of the individual languages which are each our own. Of course, post-humanism seeks to assure and insure a universal, “true” communication, one in which there is no ambiguity, no vagueness, and consequently, no breakdown, no crises, no violence in language. And again nothing is here more “humanist”, an aspiration and a concretization of a universalized language where all propositions are meaningful to all, where this “sameness” grounds a linguistic community where there is no distance between intention and verbalization and thus where the “values” of truth and comprehension are guaranteed. And who could here contest such an aspiration?

JOSEPH COHEN

A question, however: does this not also mean the reduction and the destruction of language itself? Does this not entail the negation of the very condition of language? It is not because humans participate in a linguistic transparency where each word used relates perfectly to intention, definition and verbalization, that they speak to each other, desire each other. Would it not be the contrary? Humans speaking to each other through the profound impossibility of understanding each other. And finally, death… To overcome the always imminent “event” of death remains, for post-humanism, the most recurrent and sturdiest of obsessions. Why? Not only because death instills fright and trembling, but mainly and primordially because it is the most radical individualizing and unsubstitutable mark of human finitude. And thus of human singularity. It is the most individualizing and unsubstitutable “event” for it is utterly unknown and undeterminable. Indeed, nothing can be known of death, about death or in death and yet, despite this unknowability, death is the most “known” “event” in human existence: each and every human knows of our death. But death, as the condition of possibility of our experience of the world, the very opening and aperture by which the world is experienced, is too easily confused with experience itself to the point where humans imagine having an experience of death itself. Death becomes a “phenomenon” amongst others, a “phenomenon” whose very negativity can be surpassed or overcome. Hence, for post-humanism death becomes a problem to solve and resolve, to surpass and overcome. It no longer maintains itself as a singular aopta of experience itself, a question for which no light could simply clear and resolve in the clarity of its radiance.

Are they going upwards or downwards? Who is ascending and who is descending? Are we ascending or descending? Who could ever say who is rising and who is falling? Could there ever be such an affirmation as: “Of course, I am ascending and not descending” or, on the other hand, “Of course, I am descending and not ascending”? Could one ever state, clearly and distinctly, “I know where I am heading, up or down.” By these questions, we are seeking to already question how and why the dialectic “to descend in order to better ascend” entirely integrates common language and has become the unquestionable essence and motor of certain contemporary discourse. We are already levelling towards this very dialectic a suspicion. Naturally, this dialectic is common place today: one descends to retrieve one’s self from one’s fall and rise beyond it to a higher and more accomplished identity. This dialectic, we know, has pervaded the entire history of philosophy and we could even call it today – although profoundly robust – quite banal, used-up, over-used. But does this dialectic ever promise anything other than the repetition of itself? Could this dialectic ever embody another promise than the simple application of its own determination? Of what it means to fall and rise? Of what it means to fall in order to rise, to always rise from a fall? Would it not be time that we already level towards this very dialectic a suspicion? Would it not be time that we already level this dialectic a suspicion? Could this uniqueness ever embody another promise than the simple application of its own determination? What would such a promise say? Where and how and why would it occur? What would be its sign?